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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

GENESIS

**THE BOOK O.F
THE BEGINNINGS**

Volume IV

C. C. CRAWFORD, Ph.D., LL.D.

College Press, Joplin, Missouri

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

- art.*, article
cf., compare
ch., chapter
chs., chapters
edit., edition
e.g., for example
esp., especially
et al., and others
ff., following
fn., footnote
Gr., Greek
Heb., Hebrew
ibid., the same
i.e., that is
in loco, in the proper place
l., line
ll., lines
Lt., latin
infra, below
Intro., introduction
op. cit., in the work cited
p., page
pp., pages
par., paragraph
per se, by or of itself
sect., section
supra, above
s.v., under the word
trans., translated
v., verse
vv., verses
viz., namely
vol., volume

SPECIFIC ABBREVIATIONS (BIBLIOGRAPHICAL)

- ACB Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Twentieth American Edition (revised by Stevenson). (Funk and Wagnalls, New York).
- ACR Wilhelm Moeller, *Are the Critics Right?* Trans. by C. H. Irwin. (Revell, New York, 1899).
- AD J. W. McGarvey, *The Authorship of Deuteronomy*. (Standard, Cincinnati, 1902).
- AOT Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1954).
- ARI W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*. (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1956).
- ASV, or ARV American Standard Edition of the Revised Version of the Bible (1901).
- AtD Gaalyahu Cornfeld (Editor), *From Adam to Daniel*. (Macmillan, New York, 1961).
- AV Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible
- BA J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- BA Emil G. Kraeling, *Bible Atlas*. (Rand McNally, Chicago, 1956).
- BBA Charles F. Pfeiffer, Baker's *Bible Atlas*. (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- BC J. W. McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*. (Standard, Cincinnati, 1910).
- BCOTP C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, Vol. I. Translated from the German by James Martin. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids).
- BE George Gamow, *Biography of the Earth*. (Mentor Book, New American Library, New York, 1948).
- BGJI Julian Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis: A Jewish Interpretation*. (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1927).
- BMBE Ashley S. Johnson, *The Busy Man's Bible Encyclopedia*. (College Press, Joplin).
- CC C. S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*. (Macmillan, 1943).
- CDHCG John Peter Lange, *Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical Commentary: Genesis*. Trans. from the German, with Comments, by Tayler Lewis and A. Gosman. (Scribners, New York, 1868).
- CEHS H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*. (Harper, New York, 1928).

- CG Adam Clarke, *Commentary: Genesis*. (Waugh and Mason, New York, 1832).
- CHB J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. (Macmillan, 1909, 1950).
- Conf. Augustine, *Confessions*. Pusey Translation. (Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1907).
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- Cr Arnold Guyot, *Creation*. (Scribners, 1884).
- CS A. Campbell, *Christian System*. (Christian Board of Publication, St. Louis, 1835).
- CU George Gamow, *The Creation of the Universe*. (Mentor Book).
- CVSS Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. (Eerdmans, 1954).
- CWB Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (in one volume). (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- DC James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*. (Scribners, 1939).
- DD H. W. Everest, *The Divine Demonstration*.
- DGL Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*. (Augustine's Treatise on Genesis).
- DG William Robinson, *The Devil and God*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, New York and Nashville, 1945).
- EA Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action*. (Mentor Book).
- EB Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *The Emphasized Bible*. (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1959).
- EB Isaac Errett, *Evenings with the Bible*. (Standard, Cincinnati; now available from Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville).
- EBC Marcus Dods, *The Expositor's Bible: Genesis*. (Armstrong, New York, 1895).
- EHS Alexander Maclaren, *Exposition of Holy Scriptures: Genesis*. (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1904, 1912).
- ELD William Smith and Theophilus D. Hall, *English-Latin Dictionary*. (American Book Company, and Harper, 1871).
- EM Gilbert K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*. (An Image Book, Doubleday, 1925).
- EOM Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*. (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944).
- ET Ernest C. Messenger, *Evolution and Theology*. (Macmillan, 1932).
- FBM O. T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*. (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1943).

- FPOTC D. E. Sharp, *Franciscan Philosophy at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century*. (Oxford University Press, 1930).
- FSAC W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Second Edition. (A Doubleday Anchor Book, 1957).
- FYPR Hamlin Garland, *Forty Years of Psychic Research*. (Macmillan, 1936).
- GB Charles Shook, *The Gist of the Bible*. (Standard, Cincinnati),
- GBBD Charles F. Kraft, *Genesis: Beginnings of the Biblical Drama*. (Board of Missions, The Methodist Church, 1964).
- GEL Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. New Edition, Revised by Jones and McKenzie. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1843, 1948).
- GP C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*. (Victor Gollancz, London, and Dover Publications, New York, 1936).
- HC Robert Ulich, *The Human Career*. (Harper, 1955).
- HDT Jules Lebreton, S.J., *History of the Dogma of the Trinity*, Vol. I. Trans. by Algar Thorald from the Eighth Edition. (Benziger Brothers, 1939).
- HHH *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*. Trans. by Evelyn-White. (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1929).
- HSGP John Owen, *The Holy Spirit: His Gifts and Power*. (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954).
- HHH H. I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*. (Wm. Jewell Press, Liberty, Missouri, 1949).
- HU Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*. (Harper and Row, 1961).
- IBG Cuthbert A. Simpson, Walter Russell Bowie, *The Interpreter's Bible: Genesis*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952).
- ICCFTh James Everett Frame, *The International Critical Commentary: First Thessalonians*. (Scribners, 1953).
- ICCG John Skinner, *The International Critical Commentary: Genesis*. (Scribners, 1910).
- ICCH James Moffatt, *The International Critical Commentary: Hebrews*. (Scribners, 1924, 1952).
- IGOT Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*. (Zondervan, 1951).
- IH Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Third Revision, trans. by J. W. Harvey. (Oxford, 1925).
- IHR C. H. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*. (Harvard University Press, 1924).
- ISBE *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. James Orr, editor. (Howard-Severance Co., Chicago, 1915).

- ISA Herbert Wendt, *In Search of Adam*. (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1955).
- JCHE Meade E. Dutt, *Jesus Christ in Human Experience*. (Standard, Cincinnati).
- Lang. Edward Sapir, *Language*. (Harvest Book: Harcourt, Brace, 1921, 1949).
- LAP Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*. (Princeton University Press, 1947).
- LCL Loeb Classical Library of the Greek and Latin writings, in the original and in English translation. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge).
- LD Harper's *Latin Dictionary*. Andrews's Freund, revised by Lewis and Short. (American Book Company; Harper, 1879; copyright, 1907, by Margaret Lewis).
- LIP Harold W. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*. Third Edition. (American Book Company, 1959).
- LOTB Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*. (Sunday School Times Co., 1907).
- LOT Julius A. Brewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, Third Edition. Revised by Emil G. Kraeling. (Columbia University Press, 1962).
- LP Alexander Campbell, *Lectures on the Pentateuch*. (H. S. Bosworth, Cincinnati, 1867).
- MC C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (Macmillan, 1952).
- MDNSA A Cressy Morrison, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*. (Revell, New York, 1944).
- MDCB Theodore Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*. (Scribner, Armstrong and Company, New York, 1874).
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- MFJH Max Lerner, *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*. (Modern Library Edition, 1954).
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- MU Alexis Carrell, *Man the Unknown*. (Harper, New York, 1935).
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- NBS Sir James Jeans, *The New Background of Science*. (Macmillan, New York,).
- NMG Oliver L. Reiser, *Nature, Man and God*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1951).
- NMR George P. Fisher, *The Nature and Method of Revelation*. (Scribners, 1890).
- NPW Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*. (Macmillan, 1933).
- NU Fred Hoyle, *The Nature of the Universe*. (Mentor Book, 1957).
- OG Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The One God*. Trans. by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B., S.T.D. (Herder, St. Louis, 1943).
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- PC F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*. (Harcourt, Brace, 1937).
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- PCTH P. J. Cloag, *Pulpit Commentary: Thessalonians*.
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- PURT Erich Frank, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth*. (Oxford, 1945).
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- RTOT Albert C. Knudson, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1918).
- RS H. C. Christopher, *The Remedial System*.
- RSFI W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*. (Appleton, New York, 1889).
- RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
- SBG W. E. Powers, *Studies in the Book of Genesis*. (Christian Alliance Publishing Company, New York, 1928).
- SH C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*. Trans. from the German by Richard and Clara Winston. (Knopf, 1956).
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- SOTI Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. (Moody Press, Chicago, 1964).
- SR Robert Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*. (Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1868).
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- TMB J. W. Monser, *Types and Metaphors of the Bible*. (F. L. Rowe, Cincinnati, 1936).
- TMV Sir James Jeans, *This Mysterious Universe*. New Revised Edition. (Macmillan, 1943).
- TSMR Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Translated by Audra and Brereton. (Henry Holt, 1935).
- TP Nathaniel Micklem, *The Theology of Politics*. (Oxford, 1941).

- UBG William Henry Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*. (Scribners, 1895).
- UDE Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*. (Sloane Associates, New York, 1948).
- VS George Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*. (Hodder and Stoughton, New Work).
- WLP E. V. Miller, *Within the Living Plant*. (Blakeston Company, Toronto, 1952).
- WMIA John Gillin, *The Ways of Men: An Introduction to Anthropology*. (Appleton-Century, 1948).
- WPNT A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. In six volumes. (Broadman Press, Nashville, 1930).

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- AC Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*, trans. by Pierre Loving. Payson and Clarke Ltd., New York, 1928.
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- BG Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis*. Shield Bible Study Series, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1963.
- BMS Henry M. Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science*. Moody Press, 1958.
- BS Godet, *Biblical Studies*. Out of print.
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- CAL Edw. F. Campbell, Jr., *The Chronology of the Amarna Letters*. Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1964.
- CBL Kitto, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*. Out of print.
- CDD G. K. Chesterton, *Chesterton Day by Day*, Second Edition. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, et al, 1912.
- CG F. E. D. Schleiermacher, *Christliche Glaube*.
- CR Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Romans*. Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1975.
- CR F. A. Filby, *Creation Revealed*. Revell, 1963.
- DBI Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*. Out of print.
- DEAM J. D. Thomas, *The Doctrine of Evolution and the Antiquity of Man*. Biblical Research Press, Abilene, Texas, 1963.
- DHS John Owen (1616-1683), *Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Earlier issues undated. Reissued by Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954.
- DM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*. Paris, 1957.
- EE Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. by Galantiere and Philan. Pantheon Book, 1948. Image Book, 1957.
- EG H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 2 vols. Baker, 1942.
- EHS F. E. Marsh, *Emblems of the Holy Spirit*. Pickering and Inglis, London, 1888, 1923.
- Exst. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism*. Trans. by Frechtman, New York, 1947.
- FG John W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel*. Standard Publishing, Cincinnati.

- Fl Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Flood*. Concordia, St. Louis, 1951.
- FM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*. Trans. by Denny, Harper, 1964.
- GEOTP Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Second Edition. University of Chicago Press, 1949.
- GF Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Genesis Flood*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1966.
- GP Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Trans. from the original Arabic by Friedlander. Dover, 1956.
- GPE Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*. Trans. by Evans. Bruce, Milwaukee.
- GPS T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*. Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1928.
- HBD *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Sixth Edition. By Madeleine S. and J. Lane Miller. New York, 1959.
- Herm. D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*. Standard, Cincinnati. Out of print.
- HSHS W. E. Biederwolf, *A Help to the Study of the Holy Spirit*. Revell, New York, 1904.
- HU Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*. Trans. by Bartholomew. Harper, 1965.
- ICR John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. by Battles. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 2 vols., 1960.
- IHI William Jennings Bryan, *In His Image*. Revell, 1922.
- ILSM Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *Introduction to Logic and the Scientific Method*. Harcourt, Brace, 1934.
- IRP John Wild, *Introduction to a Realistic Philosophy*. Harper, 1948.
- ISA Herbert Wendt, *In Search of Adam*. Trans. from the German by Cleugh. Houghton Mifflin, 1956.
- JB *The Jerusalem Bible*. Alexander Jones, Editor. Doubleday, 1966.
- KV *Knowledge and Value*, edited by Sprague and Taylor. Harcourt, Brace, 1959.
- LPh *Living Philosophies*. "A series of intimate credos." Simon and Schuster, 1931.
- LS J. W. N. Sullivan, *The Limitations of Science*. Mentor Book, 1949.
- MOT Abba Hillel Silver, *Moses and the Original Torah*. Macmillan, 1961.
- MP Will Durant, *The Mansions of Philosophy*. Simon and Schuster, 1929.
- NBD J. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*. Eerdmans, 1962.
- NG C. H. Mackintosh ("C.H.M."), Notes on Genesis. First Printing, 1880; Twenty-sixth Printing, 1959. Loizeaux Brothers, New York.
- OBH B. S. Dean, *Outline of Bible History*. Standard, Cincinnati.
- OK Glenn Negley, *The Organization of Knowledge*. Prentice-Hall, 1942.

- OTH William Smith and Wilbur Fields, et al, *Old Testament History*. College Press, Joplin, Missouri, 1967.
- PA Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Patriarchal Age*. Baker, 1961.
- PC William Henry Roberts, *The Problem of Choice*. Ginn, Chicago, 1941.
- PHD James R. Illingworth, *Personality: Human and Divine*. Bampton Lectures for 1894. Macmillan, London, 1923. A small book, now out of print, but a classic in its field.
- PLS John G. Kemeny, *A Philosopher Looks at Science*. Van Nostrand, 1959.
- PPI Gordon W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, Holt, 1937.
- RH *The Restoration Herald*, Cincinnati, Ohio
- RMNC M. M. Davis, *The Restoration Movement of the Nineteenth Century*. Standard, 1914.
- RSB Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Ras Shamra and the Bible*. Baker, 1962.
- SBS Henry M. Morris, *Studies in the Bible and Science*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, 1966.
- SHS C. Gordon Brounville, *Symbols of the Holy Spirit*. Out of print.
- SIB *The Self-Interpreting Bible* (in four volumes), James W. Lee, Editor. N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, New York and St. Louis, 1896.
- SMP Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. Scribner, 1936.
- STC R. M. MacIver, *Society: A Textbook of Sociology*. Farrar and Rinehart, 1937.
- TAB Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Tell El Amarna and the Bible*. Baker, 1963.
- TBHB A. P. Weiss, *A Theoretical Basis of Human Behavior*, R. G. Adams Co., Columbus, Ohio, 1925.
- TP Robert E. Brennan, O.P., Ph.D., *Thomistic Philosophy*. Macmillan, 1941.
- TWC Edw. Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*. University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- WSAE Robert T. Clark and James D. Bales, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*. Baker, 1966.
- YGOT Robert W. Gleason, S.J., *Yahweh: The God of the Old Testament*. Prentice-Hall, 1964.

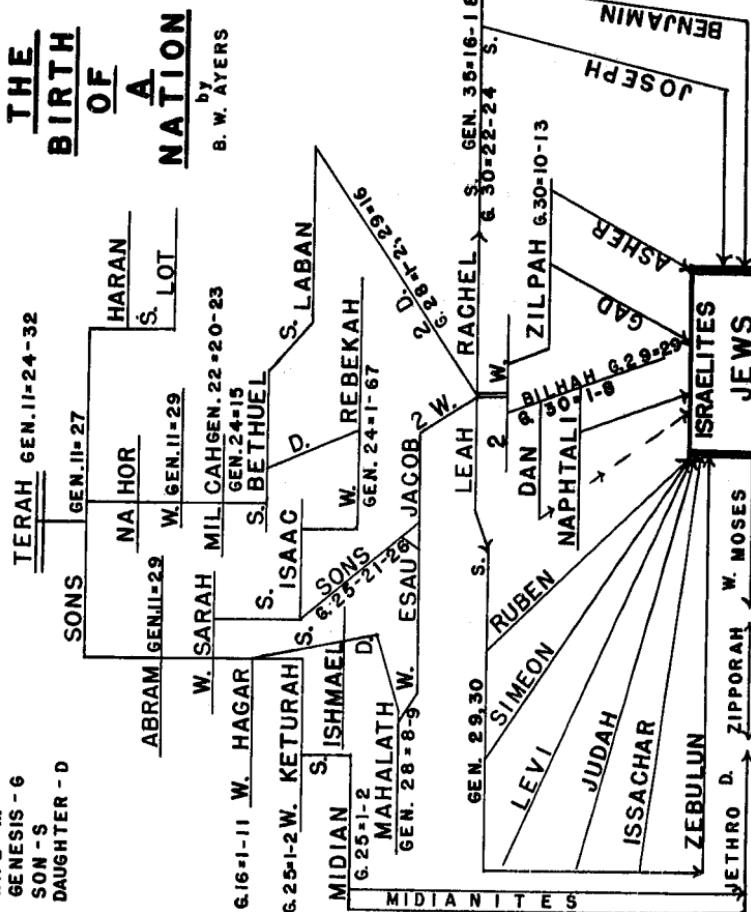
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- AOTW John Gray, *Archaeology and the Old Testament World*. Harper Torchbook, 1962.
- BWDBA Charles Pfeiffer, Editor, *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1966.
- CECG Robert Jamieson, *Critical and Experimental Commentary, Genesis*. Vol. I of the complete Commentary on the Bible by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.
- COTH G. F. Maclear, *A Classbook of Old Testament History*. Macmillan, London, 1881.
- COTP, or KDCOTP Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament*, Vol. I, translated from the German by James Martin. Reissued by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- DB John D. Davis, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Fourth Revised Edition. Reprinted by Baker, Grand Rapids, 1962.
- ELBT Samuel Noah Kramer, section "The World of Abraham," in *Everyday Life in Bible Times*. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 1967. A work which literally makes alive the story of the Patriarchal Age. Thoroughgoing, profoundly interesting, entertaining, and beautifully illustrated. A book for your permanent library.
- FBE Fairbairn's *Imperial Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Patrick. Art., Vol. III, p. 66, by Duncan H. Weir, on the names *Hebrew*, *Israelite*, etc. Complete work in six volumes, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1957.
- GL George M. Lamsa, *Gospel Light: Comments from the Aramaic and Unchanged Eastern Customs on the Teachings of Jesus*. A. J. Holman Company, Philadelphia, 1939.
- HEW John Owen, *Hebrews—The Epistle of Warning*, Reissued by Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1955.
- HH Frank Sanders, *History of the Hebrews*, Scribners, 1914.
- HSB Harold Lindsell, Editor, *Harper Study Bible*. Harper and Row, New York, 1946, 1952, 1962, 1964. An excellent work.
- IOT Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Revised Edition, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964. An exhaustive refutation of the critical theories of the Old Testament books.
- JIBG Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, *A Jewish Interpretation of the Book of Genesis*. Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1920.

- NG Frederick W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1877.
- NSB Orville J. Nave and Anna Semans Nave, *Nave's Study Bible*, 81st Edition. Moody Press, Chicago, 1907.
- NTCH R. Milligan, *New Testament Commentary: Hebrews*. Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1875.
- OHH J. Barton Payne, *Outline of Hebrew History*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1954.
- OOH Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1942.
- OTS Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*. Harper and Row, 1960.
- PCJ *The Pulpit Commentary: Joshua*. Exposition by J. J. Lias. New Edition. Wilcox and Follett, Chicago.
- RS H. Christopher, *The Remedial System*. Transylvania Press, Lexington, Ky., 1876; John Burns, St. Louis, 1880.
- SC A Cohen, Editor, *The Soncino Chumash*. The Soncino Press Ltd., London, Sixth Edition, 1966.
- SHANE S. J. Schwantes, *Short History of the Ancient Near East*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1965.
- SH C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*. Knopf, New York, 1956.
- SJL Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, *Studies in Jewish Literature*, Kohler Volume, George Reimer, Berlin, 1913.
- WNCD Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam, Springfield, Mass. 1949 Edition.

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GENESIS

**THE BOOK OF
THE BEGINNINGS**

PART THIRTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF ISAAC:
THE TWINS AND THE BIRTHRIGHT
(Gen. 25:19-34)

1. Introduction

Having concluded the account of all that needed to be known about Ishmael and his progeny, the inspired historian now turns to the main theme of the Bible, that is, the history of the Messianic Line as continued through Isaac. "The collateral branch is again put first and then dismissed" (TPCC, 52). V. 19 of this section marks the opening of another chapter in the story of the unfolding of God's Eternal Purpose.

We are pleased to introduce this Volume (IV) with the following excerpt verbatim (SIBG, 254): "REFLECTIONS—Before I part with Abraham, the celebrated patriarch, let me, in him, contemplate Jesus the everlasting Father. How astonishing his meekness—his kindness to men—his intimacy with, fear of, obedience to, and trust in his God! He is the chosen favorite of JEHOVAH—the father and covenant-head of innumerable millions of saved men. To him all the promises relative to the evangelical and eternal state of his church were originally made. All obedient at his Father's call, he left his native abodes of bliss, and became 'a stranger and sojourner on earth,' not having where to lay his head. At his Father's call, he offered himself an acceptable sacrifice to God; by his all-prevalent intercession, and supernatural influence, he offers men salvation from sin and from the hand of their enemies; and, after long patience, he wins untold disciples in the Jewish and Gospel church. In his visible family are many professors, children of the bond-woman, the covenant of works, who, in the issue, are like Ishmael, or the modern Jews, whose unbelief brings them to misery and woe; others are chil-

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dren of the free-woman, the covenant of grace, and are, like Isaac, begotten to God because of their faith in Christ. Now let me observe, how invigorating is a strong faith in God's promise; for God delights to add abundant blessings to such as, by courageous believing, give him the glory of his power and faithfulness. Often the best of men have little remarkable fellowship with God in old age, but must live even to the end by faith, and not by sight; while wicked families are loaded with temporal mercies for the sake of their pious progenitors. Promised events are often ushered in by the most discouraging appearances; and mercies must be long prayed and waited for ere they be granted. It is good when husbands and wives unite their supplications; for to spread our griefs before a throne of grace is the greatest and surest relief. How often much trouble and vexation attend what is too eagerly desired! But how tender is God, in fixing the temporal, and even eternal, states of persons according to their faith! And how early are children known by their doings! Yet in their education great care is to be taken in consulting their tempers and dispositions. Parents frequently expose themselves to future troubles by their partial regard to children. But why should we set our hearts on them, or any other worldly comfort, when we must so quickly leave them by death? At that time it should be the concern of parents so to dispose of their effects, that there may be no disputes after they are gone; and such deserve to have most assigned them as are likely to make the best use of it. How often the wisest worldlings act the most foolish part, while 'the Lord preserveth the simple!' How marvelously God overruleth the sins of men, to the accomplishment of his purpose or the advancement of his glory! How dreadful, when men, even those who have had a religious education, gratify their sensual appetites at the expense of the temporal and eternal ruin of themselves and their seed; and when God

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permits them to be afterwards hardened in their sin, and standing monuments of that affecting truth, that numbers of the descendants of God's children are sometimes left out of his church, and unacquainted with their parents' blessings!" (John Brown, D.D., LL.D.)

2. *Review*

It will be recalled that Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, was born in the south country (the Negeb), doubtless at or near Beersheba (Gen. 21:14, 31), when his father was 100 years old and his mother about ninety (17:17, 21:5). When the divine Promise was made to Abraham that Sarah should bear a son, after she had passed the age of childbearing, Abraham laughed, with some degree of incredulousness, it should seem, although some commentators hold that it was joyous laughter (17:17-19). When the Promise was reiterated later, by a heavenly Visitant, at this time Sarah, who was eavesdropping, "laughed within herself" with laughter that bespoke sheer incredulity, for which she was promptly reprimanded by the Visitant (18:9-15). Then when the Child of the Promise was born, Sarah joyfully confessed that God had prepared this laughter for her and her friends (21:6). To memorialize these events and the faithfulness of God, Abraham named the boy Isaac ("laughing one," "one laughs"). Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day (21:4), and as the Child of Promise he had higher privileges than Ishmael had, Abraham's son by the handmaid, Hagar (17:19-21, 21:12, 25:5-6). Later, to exhibit (prove) Abraham's faith, God commanded him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. "Isaac was then a youth (22:6), perhaps 25 years old, as Josephus says, but he filially acquiesced in the purpose of his father. When Abraham had laid him upon the altar, and thus shown his readiness to give all that he possessed to God, the angel of the Lord forbade the sacrifice and accepted a ram instead, thus testifying against child-sacrifices practised by

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the Canaanites and many other idolatrous peoples, and teaching to all men that human sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord (22:1-18)," (DDB, 337). This was an unparalleled demonstration of personal faith on Abraham's part. Tradition puts the offering on Mount Moriah in the Old City of Jerusalem—present site of the Dome of the Rock. "Abraham left the servants and walked in silence to the hilltop. Isaac carried the wood and Abraham the knife. After a time the boy asked his father, 'Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' Abraham replied that God would see to it. As Dr. Speiser puts it, 'The boy must by now have sensed the truth. The short and simple sentence, *And the two of them walked on together*, covers what is perhaps the most poignant and eloquent silence in all literature.' At the last moment—but only at the last moment—an angel stayed Abraham as he raised his knife to destroy his son and all his hopes. The awful ordeal was over" (ELBT, 98).

Abraham, now well advanced in years, bought for its full value from Ephron the Hittite the Cave of Machpelah, near the oak of Mamre, with the field in which it stood, and there he buried Sarah. Here Abraham himself was buried by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael; also were buried there later, Isaac and Rebekah, his wife, and Jacob and his wife Leah. Abraham's last care was for the marriage of his son Isaac to a woman of his own kindred, to avoid a possible alliance with one of the daughters of the Canaanites. He sent the aged steward of his house, Eliezer, formerly of Damascus, on the long journey to Haran, in Mesopotamia, where Nahor, Abraham's brother, had settled. Providentially, at the end of the journey, a sign from God indicated that the person he sought was a maiden named Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor. "The whole narrative is a vivid picture of pastoral life, and of the simple customs then used in making a marriage contract, not without characteristic touches of the ten-

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dency to avarice in the family of Bethuel, and particularly in his son Laban (Gen. 24:30). The scene of Isaac's meeting with Rebekah seems to exhibit his character as that of quiet pious contemplation (24:63). Isaac was forty years old when he married, and his residence was by *Beer-la-hai-roi* (the well of *La-hai-roi*) in the extreme south of Palestine (Gen. 25:62, 26:11, 20) (OTH, 89). "The courtship of Rebekah is one of the highlights of the sagas of the Patriarchs" (HBD, 603). "The story of the wooing of Rebekah is a literary masterpiece. Its sketch of the faithful, trusted steward, of the modest, brave, beautiful maiden and of the peace-loving husband is imitable. It is almost like a drama, each successive scene standing out with vividness. It has much archaeological value, also, in its mention of early marriage customs, of the organization of the patriarch's household, and of many social usages. Religiously it suggests the providential oversight of God, who directed every detail. Chapter twenty-four of Genesis with chapters eighteen and twenty-two are worth reading frequently" (HH, 39). To Isaac Abraham gave the bulk of his great wealth, and died, apparently at Beersheba, "in a good old age, an old man, and full of years" (25:8). His age at death was 175 (25:7). His sons Isaac and Ishmael met at his funeral and buried him in the Cave of Machpelah (25:1-10). Ishmael survived him just 50 years, and died at the age of 137 (25:17). Thus the Saga of Abraham came to its end. Shall we not firmly believe that his pilgrimage of faith was crowned with a glorious fulfilment in that City to which he was really journeying—"the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God"? (Heb. 11:10, Gal. 4:26, Rev. 21:2).

Isaac continued to live in the south country (24:62). "In disposition he was retiring and contemplative; affectionate also, and felt his mother's death deeply" (DDB, 337). (Cf. Gen. 24:63, 67). But after all, this seeming

tendency toward introversion may have been lack of strength of character: it should be noted how susceptible he was to Rebekah's machinations. His life was the longest of those of the Patriarchs: he married at the age of 40, and died at 180 (25:20, 35:28); yet though the longest, it has been described rightly as the least eventful. In comparison with the careers of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, that of Isaac manifests the earmark of mediocrity.

3. *The Birth of the Twins (25:19-26)*

19 And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife. 21 And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she was barren: and Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, wherefore do I live? And she went to inquire of Jehovah.

23 And Jehovah said unto her,

Two nations are in thy womb,

And two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels:

And the one people shall be stronger than the other people;

And the elder shall serve the younger.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26 And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

V. 19—the usual formula for introducing a new section: see under *toledoth* (in the index).

A Second Delay in the Fulfilment of the Messianic Promise occurs here, vv. 19-21. In Abraham's case, the

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delay continued until some time after Sarah had passed the age of childbearing; in the case of Isaac and Rebekah, it continued through the first twenty years after their marriage. During this time Isaac was "entreating" Yahweh, because his wife continued to be "barren." Again, in this continuing "test" (proof) of his faith, Isaac followed in the steps of his father: he maintained implicit faith in God. And he kept on speaking to God about the matter. ("God's delays are not necessarily refusals"). With this prolonged barrenness of Rebekah we might well compare the cases of Sarah, and Rachel (29:31), the mothers of Samson (Judg. 13:2), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:2), and John the Baptizer (Luke 1:7). "The protracted sterility of the mothers of the patriarchs, and other leading men amongst the Hebrew people, was a providential arrangement, designed to exercise faith and patience, to stimulate prayer, to inspire a conviction that the children born under extraordinary circumstances were gifts of God's grace, and specially to foreshadow the miraculous birth of the Savior" (CECG, 188).

The Pre-natal Struggle of the Twins (vv. 22-23). When the conception actually occurred and Rebekah felt the twins struggling in her womb, "she went to inquire of Yahweh." According to Abraham Ibn Ezra, her complaint, "wherefore do I live?"—literally, "why then am I?"—meant, Why in view of my longing for children must my pain be so great? Immediately there was an answer from God. How was this divine answer communicated? Some modern interpreters would have it that there was a sanctuary at hand, where there was an altar at which such "oracular" utterances were received. Some will say that Rebekah resorted to a native Philistine shrine at Gerar, others that "presumably this sanctuary was at Beersheba" (26:33; cf. Exo. 33:7-11). We see no valid reason for such an assumption. "The opinion . . . that she repaired to a native Philistine shrine at Gerar, supported by the

tithes of all Monotheists in that district, is inconsistent with her relation to Jehovah, the covenanted God of the Hebrews; and the hypothesis that in the family place of worship at Beersheba there might have been an oracle, is equally at variance with the usages of that early period. A great many conjectures have been made as to the mode of her consultation—some, as Luther, supposing that she would apply to Shem; others, to Melchizedek or to Abraham (20:7), who was still living. But she could not inquire either by shrine or by prophets (Exod. 18:15; 1 Sam. 9:9, 28:6; 2 Ki. 3:11), for both of these belong to the institutions of the theocracy. The only solution of the difficulty is, that Rebekah had prayed earnestly for light and direction, and that she had received an answer to her prayers in the way usual in the patriarchal age—in a vision or a dream" (CECG, 188-9). It is significant that the Divine communication here follows the form of the speech of the "angel of Jehovah" to Hagar (16:10-12) in that both are couched in parallelisms. "Whether communicated directly to herself, or spoken through the medium of a prophet, the Divine response to her interrogation assumed an antistrophic and poetical form, in which she was informed that her unborn sons were to be founders of two mighty nations, who, 'unequal in power, should be divided in rivalry and antagonism from their youth'" (PCG, 317).

The struggling of the twins in Rebekah's womb presaged that they and their posterity would live at variance with one another, and differ greatly in their religion, customs, laws, etc. The Edomites (Idumeans), descended from Esau, were at first the stronger people (ch. 36), but the Israelites, sprung from Jacob, under David (2 Sam. 8:14), again under Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:11, 12), and finally under John Hyrcanus, about 126 B.C., subdued them. Indeed Hyrcanus subjugated them completely and put them under a Jewish governor (Josephus, *Antiq.* 13,

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9, 1). (*Idumea*, "pertaining to Edom," was the name used by the Greeks and Romans in slightly different spelling, for the country of Edom). As a matter of fact, Jacob's obtaining the birthright and the blessing (25:29-34; 27:29, 37, 40) rendered him and his posterity superior to Esau and his Edomite seed.

The Birth and Naming of the Twins (vv. 24-26). The first to come forth from the womb was named *Esau* which means "hairy"; the name *Edom*, which was given to Esau and which became the name of his descendants, the Edomites, means "red." (Cf. v. 30, 36:1-8). "That redness and hair marked the present strength of Esau's body, and the savage and cruel disposition of him and his posterity (27:11, 40, 41; Obad. 10; Ezek. 25:12, 35:1-9)." Rashi derives *Esau* from *Asah* ("he made") and so translates the name, "completely made," meaning that he was developed with hair like a child several years old (SC, 141). "And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold of Esau's heel." "Jacob took hold of his heel, as if he would have drawn him back, so that himself might have been born first, or as if he would overthrow and suppress him, as he afterwards did, v. 33, ch. 27. And rightly was he named *Jacob*, a *heel-holder*, or *supplanter*, on that account, ch. 27:36" (SIBG, 254). "Popular etymologies: Esau is red, *admoni*, his other name being Edom, v. 30, 36:1, 8; he is like a mantle of hair, *se'ar*, and is destined to dwell in the land of Se'ir, Numb. 24:18. According to this passage, Jacob *Ya'aqob*, gets his name from gripping the heel ('aqeb) of his twin, but in Gen. 27:36 and Hos. 12:3-4 the name means that the child has supplanted ('aqab) his brother. In fact, however, the probable meaning of the name (abbreviated from *Ya'aqob-El*) is 'May Yahweh protect!' (JB, 43, n.). Skinner (ICCG, 359-360) on v. 25: "tawny or red-haired is a play on the name Edom; similarly, all over like a mantle of hair is a play on Se'ir the country of the Edomites."

Mount Seir is the range of mountains extending southward from the Dead Sea, east of the rift known as the Arabah, almost to the Gulf of Aqabah. Mount Seir is first mentioned in Scripture as being inhabited by the "Horites" (Gen. 14:6); these were the Hurrians, non-Semites, who, between 1750 and 1600 B.C. invaded N. Mesopotamia from the eastern highlands and spread over Palestine and Syria. They are a people now well-known from the cuneiform tablets from ancient Nuzi and other sites. The mention of Esau's removal to Mount Seir follows immediately the account of Isaac's death and burial (35:27-29, 36:1-9). The Israelites were forbidden to enter this region, as Jehovah had given it to Esau for a possession (Deut. 2:1-12; cf. Josh. 24:4). Chieftains of the Horites were called "the children of Seir in the land of Edom" (Gen. 36:20-30; cf. Ezek., ch. 35, esp. v. 15; also 1 Chron. 4:42, 2 Chron. 20:10, 22-23). Esau is represented as having dispossessed the Horites of Mount Seir (Gen. 32:3, 36:20ff.; Deut. 2:1-29, Josh. 24:4). Undoubtedly these various passages indicate the fusion of cultures that almost always followed invasion or infiltration of an inhabited area by a different people: the tendency of the invaders to adopt many of the customs and laws of the people whom they dispossessed is an oft-repeated fact of history. We have noted heretofore the influence of Hurrian culture in the events related in Genesis in the lives of the patriarchs; we shall see this influence again in the story of Jacob and Esau *in re* the disposition of the birthright. (See Speiser, ABG, 194-197). Other interesting facts of the history of Seir are recorded in the Old Testament. We read, for example, that Simeonites pushed out the Amalekites who had hidden in Seir (1 Chron. 4:42-43). The majesty of God was associated with the awesome grandeur of Mt. Seir (Deut. 33:2, Judg. 5:4). King Amaziah of Judah (c. 800-783 B.C.) went to "the Valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand," and then proceeded to

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pay homage to their gods (2 Chron. 25:11-24). Isaiah tells us that his words, "Watchman, what of the night?" came out of Seir (Isa. 21:11).

4. *The Prophetic Communication* (v. 23)

Before proceeding with our study we must underscore here the very heart and core of the Divine communication to Rebekah. It is embodied in the last sentence: "And the elder shall serve the younger."

This has been interpreted by Calvanistic theologians to mean that God's choice of Jacob over Esau in the Messianic development was completely arbitrary on His part. For example, note the following statement: "Isaac's family is a further example of divine election, v. 23, even seemingly arbitrary. The choice, before birth, of Jacob over Esau indeed concerned national status, not salvation, Mal. 1:2-4; but it illustrates God's bestowal of saving faith, a matter of pure race, irrespective of human worthiness, Rom. 9:10-13" (OHH, 43). Cf. TPCC, 52: "The younger son is again chosen, for God's will, which, though not understood by us, is supreme (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11)." Kraeling (BA, 81) sees here "an underlying substratum of national history mirrored in the basic idea that Esau (Edom) was outstripped by Jacob (Israel)." It was only natural, however, that Edom as the elder people, "should have had the more glorious history." He suggests, therefore, that *three parallel explanations* are offered, in the over-all story we are now considering, why it did not happen that way: "1) God willed it so, and predicted it even before the ancestral brothers were born (Gen. 25:23); 2) Esau sold his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34); 3) Jacob rather than Esau obtained the history-moulding blessing of the dying Isaac (Gen. 27:27f.)" We see no reason for these more or less labored attempts to explain the Divine communication to Rebekah about the varying fortunes of her twins, when, as a matter of fact, if verse 23 is taken simply as *prophetic*, all difficulties seem to vanish. The

communication was to this effect: two sons were to be born, namely Esau and Jacob, and they were to become the progenitors of two peoples; moreover, the nation sired by the elder son was to "serve" the nation to be sired by the younger son. The word of Yahweh here had reference, not to individuals, but to nations (peoples): this fact is accepted by practically all Biblical scholars. Esau never served Jacob in his entire life; on the contrary, it was Jacob who gave gifts to Esau at the time of their reconciliation (Gen., ch. 33). The meaning of the passage is that God, as He had both perfect right and reason to do, had selected Jacob, and not Esau, to become the ancestor of Messiah. The statement, "the elder shall serve the younger," was simply a prophetic announcement that at a future time the Edomites (descendants of Esau) should become servants of the Israelites (descendants of Jacob): the prophecy is clearly fulfilled in 2 Sam. 8:14. The Apostle Paul, in Rom. 9:12-13, combines two different Scriptures. The first, it will be noted is Gen. 25:23, the verse we are now considering. But the second is found in Mal. 1:2-3, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." This statement was uttered several hundred years after both Jacob and Esau had long been dead. It referred to the two nations or peoples: it simply points out the fact that the Edomites suffered divine retribution because of their sins (cf. Gen. 32:3, ch. 36; Num. 20:14-21; Isa. 34:5-8; Obad. 1:21, etc.).

Did God arbitrarily select Jacob instead of Esau to become the ancestor of Messiah? Of course not. The individual human being is *predestined to be free*. By virtue of having been created in the image of God, he has the power of choice, that is, within certain limits, of course, particularly within the limits of his acquaintanceship. (One could hardly choose anything of which one has no knowledge. Could a Hottentot who has never heard of ice, ever choose to go skating?). It follows, therefore,

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that the totality of man's free acts constitutes God's foreknowledge. Strictly speaking, God's knowledge embraces—in a single thought—all the events of the space-time world; hence, He can hardly be said to *foreknow*, but rather, speaking precisely, to *know*. If it be objected that foreknowledge in God implies fixity, we answer that the argument still holds, that the fixity is determined by man's free acts and not by arbitrary divine foreordination. To hold that God necessitates everything that man does, including his acceptance or rejection of redemption, is to make God responsible for everything that happens, both good and evil. This is not only unscriptural—it is an affront to the Almighty. (Cf. Ezek. 18:32, Jn. 5:40, 1 Tim. 2:4, Jas. 1:13, 2 Pet. 3:9). Foreordination in Scripture has reference to the details of the Plan of Redemption, not to the eternal destiny of the individual. The elect are the "whosoever will's," the non-elect, the "Whosoever won't's." (Rev. 22:17).

In Rom. 9:11, we are told expressly that God did choose before their birth which of the two sons of Isaac should carry forward the Messianic Line; hence, election in this instance was specifically "not of works, but of him that calleth." Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of subsequent history, it did turn out to be one of works (works of faith, cf. Jas. 2:14-26) in the sense that their respective acts proved the one ancestor (Jacob) to be more worthy of God's favor than the other (Esau). Hence, in view of the fact that men are *predestined to be free*, surely we are right in holding that this superior quality of Jacob's character was foreknown by God from the beginning. Although it may appear at first glance that the choice was an arbitrary one, our human hindsight certainly supports God's foresight in making it. Of course, Jacob's character was not anything to brag about, especially in the early years of his life, but from his experience at Peniel, he

seems to have emerged a changed man with a changed name, Israel (32:22-32); certainly it was of nobler quality than that of Esau, as proved especially by their different attitudes toward divine institutions—rights and responsibilities—such as those of primogeniture (Exo. 13:11-16, Deut. 21:17). Hence the Divine election in this case was not arbitrary in any sense, but justly based on the Divine knowledge of the basic righteousness of Jacob by way of contrast with the sheer secularism ("profanity") of Esau. (We may rightly compare, with the antics of Esau, the unspiritual attitude of church leaders—the "clergy"—and church members toward the ordinance of Christian baptism. Think how this institution has been changed, perverted, belittled, ignored, and even repudiated by the professional "theologians" throughout the entire Christian era!).

"It is important to observe that God chose Jacob, the younger, to be over his brother Esau before they were born. Before the children were born, neither having done anything good or bad, it was God's declared purpose that the older should serve the younger (Rom. 9:10-13, Gen. 25:23). Subsequent events may lead us to condemn Jacob for his fraudulent methods of obtaining the family blessing. But that which Jacob sought was his by divine decree. Certainly God was within His sovereign right to make this choice. And assuredly the characters of Jacob and Esau that subsequently emerged showed God's wisdom and foreknowledge in choosing Jacob" (Smith-Fields, OTH, 92-93). Let us not forget, however, that the choice was *not* an arbitrary one, but a choice emanating from the divine foreknowledge of the worthiness of Jacob above Esau, as demonstrated by what they did—the choices they made—in real life. *How can God use any man effectively who has little or no respect for His ordinances?* (The birth of Jacob and Esau took place before Abraham died. Abraham

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was 160 years old, and Isaac sixty, at the time the twins were born, Gen. 21:5, 25:26, 25:7). (See my *Genesis*, II, pp. 237-264).

5. Esau the Profane (25:27-34).

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. 28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint: 30 and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 31 And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright. 32 And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me? 33 And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. 34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.

V. 27—In due time the twins were born. Esau grew up to become “a skilful hunter, a man of the field.” And Jacob “was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.” From the very first these boys were opposites in character, manners, and habits. The older was a man of the field, leading a roving, unsettled kind of life; the younger preferred a quiet domestic life, dwelling in tents, attending to his father’s flocks and herds. Esau becomes experienced in hunting, as opposed to Jacob who is a man “of simple tastes, quiet, retiring.” “The over-all contrast, then, is between the aggressive hunter and the reflective semi-nomad” (Speiser, ABG, 195). “Jacob was ambitious and persevering, capable of persistence in selfish scheming or in nobler service; the latter, although frank and generous, was shallow and unappreciative of the best things. In the long

run God can do more with the former type of men" (Sanders, HH, 39). Thus it will be seen that the descriptions of the two boys are clearly antithetical. This contrast, moreover, persisted through the centuries between their respective progenies, the Israelites and the Edomites. As previously noted, the latter were inveterate enemies of the former, thus authenticating God's pronouncement through Malachi, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Mal. 1:1, cf. again Rom. 9:13).

V. 28. "*Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison.*" "Isaac, himself so sedate, loves the wild, wandering hunter, because he supplies him with pleasures which his own quiet habits do not reach" (MG, 368). "*And Rebekah loved Jacob.*" "Rebekah becomes attached to the gentle, industrious shepherd, who satisfies those social and spiritual tendencies in which she is more dependent than Isaac," and thus "the children please their parents according as they supply what is wanting in themselves. Esau is destructive of game; Jacob is constructive of cattle" (MG, 368). "Persons of quiet and retiring disposition, like Isaac, are often fascinated by those of more sparkling and energetic temperament, such as Esau; mothers, on the other hand, are mostly drawn towards children that are gentle in disposition and homekeeping in habit" (PCG, 320).

In those days, we are told, it was not an uncommon thing for the huntsman to come half-starved to the shepherd's tent and ask for some food. In these circumstances the "man of the field" was pretty largely at the mercy of the tent-dweller. This seems to have been the condition in which Esau found himself, and when he scented the "pot-tage" which Jacob was boiling in his tent, he rushed inside and shouted, "Feed me some of that red stuff, I pray, for I am faint with hunger." "*Jacob stewed something:* an intentionally indefinite description, the nature of the dish being reserved for v. 34" (ICCG, 361). "Let me gulp

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some of that red stuff there," cried Esau, "some of that red seasoning," literally, "some of that red red . . ."—in his excitement Esau seems to have forgotten the name of the dish. "*Therefore was his name called Edom,*" that is, "because he had eaten the soup which was of a red brown color (*adom*)—another play on words" (JB, 43). "The name Edom, signifying *red*, at once marked his origin and color, and his excessive lust after the red pottage, and his selling his birthright to obtain it" (SIBG, 254). "Both marks characterize his sensual, hard nature" (Lange, CDHCG, 499). "It quite accords with the Oriental taste to fasten upon certain incidents in the life, or upon peculiar traits in the character, of individuals, as the foundation of a new name or soubriquet. The Arabians are particularly addicted to this habit. So are all people in an early state of society; and there is no ground to wonder, therefore, at the names of Isaac's sons being suggested by circumstances attending their birth, apparently of a trivial nature, especially as no fault can be found with them on etymological grounds" (CECG, 190). "Therefore his name was called Edom. There is no discrepancy in ascribing the same name both to his complexion and the color of the lentile broth. The propriety of a name may surely be marked by different circumstances. Nor is it unnatural to suppose that such occasions should occur in the course of life. Jacob, too, has the name given to him from the circumstances of his birth, here confirmed" (A. Gosman, Lange, *ibid.*, 500).

It is not surprising to read that Jacob took advantage of this opportunity to drive what we might properly call a "hard bargain." Jacob said, "Sell me first thy birthright," v. 31. Esau answered, in substance, "Oh well, I am about to die of hunger," or perhaps, "I am risking my life daily in the hunt," etc., "of what use would the birthright be in any case?" (A good example of rationaliza-

tion). "Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob," v. 33. As it turned out, there was no hard bargain at all; there was not even any haggling on Esau's part; with jaunty non-chalance, he tossed away, as if it were not worthy of his concern, the most precious privilege that God conferred on the firstborn—the right of primogeniture, the birthright.

What was the birthright? That is, what did it include?

"The birthright was of little practical importance when there was an only son. Isaac was Abraham's only true heir, Ishmael not being of the seed of promise. Thus Isaac was the only one in the line of promise and the natural heir of his father's possessions. But Isaac's wife bore him two sons, Esau and Jacob. Now the birthright assumed greater significance. Esau, as the firstborn, should have been the one through whom the people of God descended. But he foolishly sold that birthright for carnal considerations and lost it to Jacob. Jacob claimed the privileges of the birthright and from him came the twelve tribes of Israel. The firstborn received a double portion of the inheritance (cf. Deut. 21:16-17), and, at least before the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood, the firstborn in each family exercised the priestly prerogatives in the home after his father's death" (HSB, 42). "This birthright entailed upon the possessor a double portion of the paternal inheritance (Deut. 21:16-17); a claim to his father's principal blessing, and to the promise of Canaan, and a peculiar relation to God therein. . . . Altogether this is a most painful narrative. One does not know whether most to condemn the folly and recklessness of Esau, bartering his birthright for a mess of pottage; or the unbrotherly spirit and grasping selfishness of Jacob, refusing to a fainting brother a mouthful of food until he had given him all he possessed" (SIBG, 254).

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The birthright in this instance was of extraordinary significance. Esau's "impatience was natural, for food is not readily procured in an Eastern tent, and takes time to prepare. Jacob seized the occasion to obtain Esau's birthright as the price of the meal; and Esau consented with a levity which is marked by the closing words of the narrative: 'thus Esau *despised* his birthright.' For this the Apostle calls him 'a *profane* person, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright,' and marks him as the pattern of those who sacrifice eternity for a moment's sensual enjoyment (Heb. 12:16). The justice of this judgment appears from what the birthright was, which he sold at such a price. If he had received the birthright, he would have been the head of the family, its prophet, priest and king; and no man can renounce such privileges, except as a sacrifice required by God, without 'despising' God who gave them. But more than this: he would have been the head of the *chosen* family; on him devolved the blessing of Abraham, that 'in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed'; and, in despising his birthright, he put himself out of the sacred family, and so became a '*profane* person.' His sin must not be overlooked in our indignation at the fraud of Jacob, which . . . brought its own retribution as well as its own gain" (OTH, 93). Disregard for positive divine ordinances (such as the birthright and the paternal blessing, in patriarchal times) is known in Scripture as *profanity* (from *pro*, "before" or "outside," and *fanum*, "temple," hence unholy); consequently this is the vilest insult that can be perpetrated against God—a fact which the sophisticated, the "respectable," the worldly wise of humankind are usually too biased to understand or too proud in their own conceit to be willing to admit. This is the charge leveled against Esau: his profanity was such that he blithely and unconcernedly sold his birthright for a bowl of beans (Heb. 12:16, "mess of meat"). And this general irreligiousness of the paternal character

seems to have passed down to his offspring (Num. 20:14, 21; Judg. 11:16-17; 2 Sam. 8:14; Ps. 137:7; Ezek. 25:12-14, 35:1-15; Amos 9:11-12; Joel 3:19; Obad. 1-20; 1 Tim. 1:9).

Note the oath, v. 33. "An oath is prostituted when it is exacted and given to confirm an improper and sinful contract; and a person is chargeable with additional guilt when, after entering into a sinful engagement, he precipitately confirms it by an oath. This is what Esau did: he despised or cared little about it in comparison of present gratification to his appetite: he threw away his religious privileges for a trifle; and hence he is stigmatized by the apostle as a 'profane person' (Heb. 12:16, cf. Phil. 3:19). 'There was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dearly bought as the broth of Jacob' (Bishop Hall). That Esau deserved to be superseded in his honors, in consequence of his irreligious character, cannot be denied nor doubted; for it is principally or solely on this transaction that the charge of profanity is founded. But what was justice on the part of God was cruelty on the part of Jacob, who had no right to make Esau the instrument of his own degradation and ruin. Besides, it was impolitic as well as wrong. For he might have concluded that, if God had not ordained him to possess the envied honors, he could never obtain them; and, on the other hand, if it was the decree of Providence, a way would be opened for his obtaining them in due time. Jacob's heart was right, but he sought to secure good ends by bad means" (CECG, 190). Lange (CDHCG, 500): "If Jacob's demand of an oath evinced ungenerous suspicion, Esau's giving of an oath showed a low sense of honor."

The pottage of lentils. "The red lentil is still a favorite article of food in the east; it is a small kind, the seeds of which, after being decorticitated, are commonly sold in the bazaars of India. Dr. Robinson, who partook of lentils, says that he found them very palatable and could

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well conceive that to a weary hunter, faint with hunger, they would be quite a dainty (*Bib. Res.*, I, 246). Kitto also says that he has often partaken of red pottage, prepared by seething the lentils in water, and then adding a little suet to give them a flavor, and that he found it better food than a stranger would imagine; 'the mess,' he adds, 'had the redness which gained for it the name of *adom*' (*Pict. Bib.*, Gen. 25:30, 34.)" (OTH, Smith-Fields, 93, n.). This *pottage* brewed by Jacob was a soup, we are told, made of a decoction of lentils or small beans, called '*adas*', which were and are extensively grown in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine (cf. 2 Sam. 17:28, 23:11). (They were also included in Ezekiel's recipe for bread-making in an emergency, Ezek. 4:9). "It is probable that Jacob made use of Egyptian beans, which he had procured as a dainty; for Esau was a stranger to it; and hence he said, 'Feed me, I pray thee, with that red, red (thing).' The Hebrew 'red,' includes the idea of a brown or chocolate color. This lentil soup is very palatable, particularly when accompanied with melted butter and pepper; and to the weary hunter, faint through hunger, the odor of the smoking dish must have been irresistibly tempting" (CECG, 189).

V. 34. Esau "*did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way.*" A rather pathetic description of a character and life given over, one might say exclusively, to sensual self-satisfaction; yet a life that is paralleled millions and millions of times in practically every generation! Dr. Chappell, in one of his books of sermons on Old Testament characters, writes of Esau under the caption, "The Story of a Fine Animal." The title is especially fitting.

6. *Interesting Appraisals of the Characters of Esau and Jacob.*

Speiser (ABG, 195): "Esau is depicted as an uncouth glutton: he speaks of 'swallowing, gulping down,' instead of eating, or the like." Skinner (ICCG, 362): "Esau's

answer reveals the sensual nature of the man: the remoter good is sacrificed to the passing necessity of the moment, which his ravenous appetite leads him to exaggerate. . . . The climax of the story is Esau's unconcern, even when he discovers that he has bartered the birthright for such a trifle as a dish of lentil soup . . . if Esau was defrauded, he was defrauded of that which he was incapable of appreciating." Again, *ibid.*, the name *Edom* is 'a memento of the never-to-be-forgotten greed and stupidity of the ancestor' (Gunkel)."

Murphy (CG, 369-370): "Jacob was no doubt aware of the prediction communicated to his mother (v. 23), that the elder should serve the younger. A quiet man like him would not otherwise have thought of reversing the order of nature and custom. In after times the right of primogeniture consisted in a double portion of the father's goods (Deut. 21:17), and a certain rank as the patriarch and priest of the house on the death of the father. But in the case of Isaac there was the far higher dignity of chief of the chosen family and heir of the promised blessing, with all the immediate and ultimate temporal and eternal benefits therein included. Knowing all this, Jacob is willing to purchase the birthright as the most peaceful way of bringing about that supremacy which was destined for him. He is therefore cautious and prudent, even conciliating in his proposal. He availed himself of a weak moment to accomplish by consent what was to come. Yet he lays no necessity on Esau, but leaves him to his own free choice. We must therefore beware of blaming him for endeavoring to win his brother's concurrence in a thing that was already settled in the purpose of God. His chief error lay in attempting to anticipate the arrangements of Providence. Esau is strangely ready to dispose of his birthright for a trivial present gratification. He might have obtained other means of recruiting nature equally suitable, but he will sacrifice anything for the desire of

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the moment. Any higher import of the right he was prepared to sell so cheap seems to have escaped his view, if it had ever occurred to his mind. Jacob, however, is deeply in earnest. He will bring this matter within the range of heavenly influence. He will have God solemnly invoked as a witness to the transfer. Even this does not startle Esau. There is not a word about the price. It is plain that Esau's thoughts were altogether of 'the morsel of meat.' He swears unto Jacob. He then ate and drank, and rose up and went his way, as the sacred writer graphically describes his reckless course. Most truly did he despise his birthright. His mind did not rise to higher or further things. Such was the boyhood of these wondrous twins."

Leupold (EG, 712, 713): "Fact of the matter is, Jacob's character is one of the hardest to understand; it is complicated; it has many folds and convolutions. But in this particular incident the Scriptural point of view must be maintained: *Esau* was primarily to blame . . . Jacob was really a spiritually minded man with appreciation of spiritual values and with distinct spiritual ambitions. Especially in the matter of carrying on the line of promise from which the Savior would come did Jacob have ambitions. The aspirations apparently, however, were begotten by the divine word of promise (v. 23). Yahweh had destined Jacob to pre-eminence. Jacob gladly accepted the choice and aspired to attain the treasure promised. His eagerness was commendable. His choice of means in arriving at the desired end was not always above reproach. He felt he had to help the good Lord along occasionally. He was not fully confident of God's methods for arriving at the goal. He felt the need of occasionally inserting a bit of assistance of his own. Such an attitude was one of mistrust: confidence in human ingenuity rather than in divine dependability—in one word—unbelief. But his spiritual aggressiveness was by no means to be despised, nor was it wrong. Approaching this incident with these facts in

mind, we seem compelled to assume one thing in order to understand Jacob's request. It appears, namely, that the subject of the birthright . . . had been under consideration between the brothers on a previous occasion. It would also seem that Esau had made some derogatory remark about its value, or had even spoken about his own readiness to part with the privilege. Otherwise we can hardly believe that Jacob would have made this special request without further motivation, or that Esau would have consented to the bargain without more ado. This, indeed, puts Jacob into a more favorable light, but so does our text (v. 34). Indeed, there is left on Jacob's part a measure of shrewd calculation in so timing his request that he catches Esau at a disadvantage, a form of cunning which we must condemn without reservation. Yet the act does not call for such strong criticism as: he was 'ruthlessly taking advantage of his brother, watching and waiting till he was sure of his victim.' (*Dods.*)" Again, (*ibid.*, 715): "The last part of the chapter, vs. 27-34, seems to us to come under a head such as Spiritual Aggressiveness, or even, The Right Goal but the Wrong Way. In any case, it should especially be borne in mind that the one censured by the text is Esau not Jacob."

Incidentally, there are commentators, Leupold included, who hold that the material blessings of the covenant may not have been fully revealed as far back as Jacob's time. According to Mosaic law of *a later date* the right of the firstborn involved a double portion of the father's inheritance (Deut. 21:17) and supremacy of a kind not wholly defined over his brethren and his father's house (Gen. 27:29, cf. 49:3). It would be well to note in this connection also the *deference* manifested by Jacob to Esau after the former's return from Mesopotamia (cf. 33:1-12).

Again, it is now known that under Hurrian law—a likely source of some of the patriarchal customs—the elder son "could be designated as such by the testator contrary

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to the actual order of birth," that is, inheritance could be "regulated by a father's pronouncement irrespective of chronological precedence" (Speiser, ABG, 195, 213). "Selling inheritance rights far under value, has a Hurrian parallel: in Nuzi a brother transferred rights to a whole grove for only three sheep, apparently under duress" (OHH, 43). The rigidity of the details of primogeniture seems not to have been firmly established until after the organization of the Theocracy.

Marcus Dods (EBG, 261-265): "It has been pointed out that the weakness in Esau's character which makes him so striking a contrast to his brother is his inconstancy. Constancy, persistence, dogged tenacity is certainly the striking feature of Jacob's character. He could wait and bide his time; he could retain one purpose year after year till it was accomplished. The very motto of his life was, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' (Gen. 32:26). He watched for Esau's weak moment, and took advantage of it. He served fourteen years for the woman he loved, and no hardship quenched his love. Nay, when a whole lifetime intervened, and he lay dying in Egypt, his constant heart still turned to Rachel, as if he had parted with her but yesterday. In contrast with this tenacious, constant character stands Esau, led by impulse, betrayed by appetite, everything by turns and nothing long. Today despising his birthright, tomorrow breaking his heart for its loss; today vowing he will murder his brother, tomorrow falling on his neck and kissing him; a man you cannot reckon upon, and of too shallow a nature for anything to root itself deeply in. . . . Esau came in hungry from hunting, from dawn to dusk he had been taxing his strength to the utmost, too eagerly absorbed to notice his distance from home or his hunger; it is only when he begins to return depressed by the ill-luck of the day, and with nothing now to stimulate him, that he feels faint; and when at last he reaches his father's tents, and

the savory smell of Jacob's lentils greets him, his ravenous appetite becomes an intolerable craving, and he begs Jacob to give him some of his food. Had Jacob done so with brotherly feeling there would have been nothing to record. But Jacob had long been watching for an opportunity to win his brother's birthright, and though no one could have supposed that an heir to even a little property would sell it in order to get a meal five minutes sooner than he could otherwise get it, Jacob had taken his brother's measure to a nicety, and was confident that present appetite would in Esau completely extinguish every other thought.

"Which brother presents the more repulsive spectacle of the two in this selling of the birthright it is hard to say. Who does not feel contempt for the great, strong man, declaring he will die if he is required to wait five minutes till his own supper is prepared; forgetting, in the craving of his appetite, every consideration of a worthy kind; oblivious of everything but his hunger and his food; crying, like a great baby, Feed me with that red! So it is always with the man who has fallen under the power of sensual appetite. He is always going to die if it is not immediately gratified. He *must* have his appetite satisfied. . . . But the treacherous and self-seeking craft of the other brother is as repulsive; the cold-blooded, calculating spirit that can hold every appetite in check, that can cleave to one purpose for a lifetime, and, without scruple, take advantage of a twin-brother's weakness. Jacob knows his brother thoroughly, and all his knowledge he uses to betray him. He knows he will speedily repent of his bargain, so he makes him swear he will abide by it. It is a relentless purpose he carries out—he deliberately and unhesitatingly sacrifices his brother to himself. Still, in two respects, Jacob is the superior one. He can appreciate the birthright in his father's family, and he has constancy. Esau might be a pleasant companion, brighter and more vivacious than Jacob on a day's hunting; free and open-handed,

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and not implacable; and yet such people are not satisfactory friends. Often the most attractive people have similar inconstancy; they have a superficial vivacity, and brilliance, and charm, and good nature, which invite a friendship they do not deserve. . . .

"But Esau's despising of his birthright is that which stamps the man and makes him interesting to each generation. No one can read the simple account of his reckless act without feeling how justly we are called upon to 'look diligently lest there be among us any profane person as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright.' Had the birthright been something to eat, Esau would not have sold it. What an exhibition of human nature! What an exposure of our childish folly and the infatuation of appetite! For Esau has company in his fall. We are all stricken by his shame. . . . Born the sons of God, made in His image, introduced to a birthright angels might covet, we yet prefer to rank with the beasts of the field, and let our souls starve if only our bodies be well tended and cared for. . . . Not once as Esau, but again and again, we barter peace of conscience and fellowship with God and the hope of holiness, for what is, in simple fact, no more than a bowl of pottage." (It is interesting to note the somewhat different picture of Esau that we find in chapter 33).

"Esau is an example of how a man with a bad reputation can be more attractive than another who has managed to acquire a good one. In the O.T. estimates Esau has a black mark, while his brother Jacob has all the marks of favor. Jacob is listed as a prince in Israel, and the father of the twelve tribes of the chosen people; but the Edomites, whom the Jews hated, were called sons of Esau. Yet notwithstanding all that, in the choice of a companion as between Esau and Jacob, almost anyone would have chosen Esau." Among the assets on the "plus side of the ledger" the following might be named: (1) his physical vigor.

"Esau was rough but he was virile, and his old father Isaac turned to him instinctively because he knew that if there was anything he wanted done, Esau could do it; and as he grew old he leaned increasingly on Esau's strength."²

(2) He was a warmhearted man. "Evidently he loved his father, as his father loved him. When Isaac was old and blind, the rough Esau was gentle with him and quick to respond to everything he wanted. . . . If Esau was careless about the particular advantages of the birthright, he was not careless about his father's blessing. He wanted that, whatever else was lost." (3) He was not the kind of man who could hold a grudge. Cf. the reconciliation with Jacob on the latter's return from Paddan-Aram (ch. 33, esp. v. 4). What, then, was Esau's basic fault? "He was a man who lived only in the immediate moment, and by the light only of what was obvious. . . . He showed that he did not care enough for life's great possibilities to pay the price of present discipline. He must have what he wanted when he wanted it, and the consequences could go hang. That was the critical weakness of Esau and that was his condemnation. He lost tomorrow because he snatched so greedily at today. Consider his descendants in every generation, including ours: the young men who cannot let any long-range dedication stand in the way of appetite; the frivolous girl who says of something trivial, 'I'll die if I do not get it'; the mature people for whom comfort always comes first and for whom anything like religious responsibility is ruled out if it is hard; the men in public office who will sell a birthright of great ideals to satisfy immediate clamor. Attractive traits will not save such people from ultimate dishonor" (IBG, 665-667).

7. *Summarizations*

"Esau was a wild, savage kind of man, spending most of his time in hunting, learning the art of war, and the like (cf. 10:9, 16:12). Jacob was a sincere, mild, plain-

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dealing man, keeping much at home, attending to his household affairs, and to his father's flocks and herds (cf. 6:9, 46:34). The early development of different propensities in Esau and Jacob is very remarkable, and the visible causes of their respective characters may be traced to the dispositions and partialities of the parents. Isaac loves venison, and first to please his father, and then to gratify his own acquired habits, Esau becomes a *cunning hunter*. Rebekah loves domestic retirement, finds her comfort in the society of her infant Jacob, and forms his future character on the model of her own. These things are to be carefully observed: (1) How early, and insensibly, some part of the character of a father or mother may be propagated in their children. (2) The consequent importance of well considering all the habits in which a child is indulged or encouraged, as part, and often the most influential part, of its education. (3) The danger of parental partialities, from which, in this remarkable instance, many of the future troubles of Isaac and Rebekah, and Esau and Jacob, arose" (SIBG, 254).

"The story of Esau's life may be written in four parts: (1) the sale of his birthright to Jacob for the mess of pottage (25:27-34), which indicated that he despised his birthright and was willing to barter it away for a small consideration; (2) the marriages of Esau which were consummated with women who were not related to his father's family, except for Mahalath who was his third wife and whom he married to placate his parents; (3) his failure to secure the patriarchal blessing just prior to the death of his father Isaac; (4) the re-establishment of brotherly relations with Jacob, and his departure from Canaan for Seir. Esau was careless, motivated by animal appetites, and revengeful after the blessing was stolen from him by Jacob" (HSB, 42). (Cf. Gen. 26:34-35, 28:6-9; 27:18-41, 33:1-18).

GENESIS

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

Esau the Profane

Gen. 25:34, Heb. 12:16-17

Much has been improperly inferred and said about Esau, from variant points of view. The notion especially that he bears "the broad seal of God's reprobation" is certainly dishonoring to God. "Surely such forget, that by representing him as hated of God and predestined to woe, with all feeling minds they must enlist pity for his wretchedness, and sympathy on account of his doom. Thus reasoning, God has been greatly dishonored, and, in opposition to His solemn asseveration, he has been declared a respecter of persons" (MSS, 315). (See discussion of Gen. 25:23, Mal. 1:2-3, Rom. 9:10-13 above). The simple fact is that God's disapprobation of Esau was based on His known (or "foreknown") profaneness of Esau's character. This profaneness certainly was not predestinated.

1. *Note the characteristics of Esau's profane barter.* As the firstborn he possessed many privileges: we find it difficult not to accept the fact that these privileges existed in patriarchal times (cf. again Deut. 21:15-17). These included (1) temporal privileges: pre-eminence of authority in the patriarchal family, and a double portion of the paternal estate; and in this case (2) *spiritual* privileges, viz., the descent of the priesthood in the family, from the firstborn (even before the Law), the genealogy of the Messiah through his seed, the peculiar and precious promises associated with the paternal *blessing* which took the form of a prophecy. All this Esau bartered for just one mess of pottage.

2. How is this profanity to be accounted for? (1) On the basis of his inconsideration. He did not weigh the matter, but acted hastily. (2) As a result of his vo-

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racious appetite. This was so strong he could not control it until food was prepared. (3) Especially as a consequence of his utter depreciation of divine ordinances. "He was a worldly and carnal man." He lived in the here and the immediate *now*. "He was deficient alike in personal piety towards God, and filial piety towards his father: the two are often wedded." Consider the Biblical examples of men and women of his ilk. E.g., Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who, as a penalty for his avarice and lying about a talent of silver and two changes of raiment, and thus bringing the prophetic office into contempt, became afflicted with leprosy (2 Ki. 5:20-27). Or, Ananias and Sapphira, who, retaining a portion of the price they had received for a piece of property, lied to the Holy Spirit about it (Acts 5:1-11). (They lied to the Holy Spirit by lying to the Apostle Peter who was inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit). And what shall we say of Judas who, for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed the Son of God into the hands of His enemies (Matt. 27:3-10, Acts 1:15-20); and of Herod, who for daring to receive the flattering adulation of the crowd, was "eaten of worms" (Acts 12:20-23). These all were surely bad bargains, equally with that of Esau. Are not millions in our day living the life Esau lived, and hence acting with equal profaneness? Those who sell themselves for vanity: note the outrageous adornments—the long sideburns, the thick beards, the foppish mustaches, the silly contention between the mini-skirters and the midi-skirters, the subservience to the fashions of the moment—what "they" say and what "they" do—the strict conformists, the slaves of passing fads who fool themselves into thinking they are just being "free." Those who sacrifice truth, honesty, goodness, for the sake of money. Those who sacrifice themselves on the altars of pleasure. Those who barter their souls for riotous liv-

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ing. In many instances, these "bargains" are worse than that of Esau. He did obtain a good—a meal; he had his hunger alleviated. But think how often the sinner receives evil, and evil only, for the fearful price he pays!

In the first place, Esau is a fine animal, "a strong, upstanding husky fellow who makes a pleasing impression upon any crowd in which he chances to be." "He is possessed of a charming physical courage and daring. I do not think Esau would count for a straw on a moral stand, but physically he was unafraid." "In the next place he is generous and open-handed and open-hearted. . . . He is a breezy Bohemian type of man. He has a way of putting all his goods in the showcase and thus often winning an applause that is not his due." (There are many in our day who seem to think that practising a vice *openly* gives it a special kind of virtue). "Now if you are a reader of modern fiction you have possibly been struck with the fondness of many of our present-day authors for the type of character that Esau represents. Did you ever notice with what delight many of our fiction writers picture the virtues of some worldling against the background of the failures and vices of some churchman? It seems to be a most joyful pastime with a certain type of author. The name of such books is almost legion. Take, for instance, *The Calling of Dan Matthews*. The only three characters in this book that the author would have us respect are an infidel doctor, a nurse who is a rank materialist and a preacher who is an utter coward and who gives up his Christ and his vocation for the love of a woman. Now there are folks that are like these, but they are not the folks who keep up the moral standards of the communities in which they live. Yet the author tires to make us believe that this is the case. . . . Take the work of that literary scavenger who took a stroll down 'Main Street.'

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He is not without ability. But he is a self-appointed inspector of street gutters and sewers. He has an eye for the moral carrion of the community. Now whom does he seek to have us respect? Who are the ones that when sickness comes do the self-forgetful and the self-sacrificing deeds of service? Not the people of faith. Not those who believe in Christ. No, there are just two characters in the book that the author thinks are worthy of our admiration. There are only two who have fine, heroic qualities. One of them is a renegade Swede who is anchored to no place and who is mastered by no principles: a physical and a moral tramp. The other is a little bunch of feminine ignorance and conceit and ingratitude. She is the wife of the physician of the book. She is the one who plays the heroine when sickness comes to the Swede's house. But she sees nothing heroic in the common duties of life. She has no appreciation of her social relationships. As a wife she is a travesty and as a mother she is a cynical joke" (MSBC, 116-117).

Esau lived his life *outside the temple*: he was profane. His sin was secularism. His life is described in one graphic statement: "He did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way." This sin—secularism—was the besetting sin of the people of the antediluvian world: "in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." This, our Lord tells us, will be the besetting sin of the age that will immediately precede His Second Coming: "so shall be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt. 25:37-39; cf. vv. 3:13, 29-31, also 16:27). (See also Gen. 6:11-13). Can it be that we are now entering upon these "last days"? "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

GENESIS

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-SEVEN

1. What special significance does Gen. 25:19 have in relation to the over-all theme of the Bible?
2. Review briefly the circumstances of the early life of Isaac?
3. How old was Isaac at the time of his marriage to Rebekah?
4. How old was Abraham at the time of his death?
5. How old was Ishmael at the time of his death?
6. In what region of Palestine did Isaac continue to dwell?
7. How would you evaluate in general the life and character of Isaac?
8. How long after their marriage did Isaac and Rebekah live without children?
9. How many instances of the wife's protracted barrenness are related in Scripture? In what sense may each of these be described as a *providential* arrangement?
10. What did Isaac do about this barrenness of Rebekah?
11. What did Rebekah herself do about the pre-natal struggle of the twins? What was probably the method of her "consultation" with Jehovah about this experience?
12. What reason may be given for rejecting the view that this consultation took place at some established oracular shrine? What were the means usually employed to communicate Divine revelations in the Patriarchal Age? Cite examples.
13. What facts were presaged by the struggling of the twins in Rebekah's womb?
14. When the older of the two was born, what was he named and why?
15. When the younger was delivered what was he named and why?

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16. How were the names "Esau," "Edom," and "Seir" associated as to meaning?
17. How was Mt. Seir later associated with the life of Esau and his descendants?
18. Who were the Horites? Where was Mt. Seir geographically?
19. What was God's prophetic communication to Rebekah? What was the most significant part of this communication?
20. Does v. 23 teach us that God's choice of Jacob instead of Esau to be the progenitor of Messiah was an *arbitrary* one? Explain your answer.
21. What three parallel "explanations" are given of this Divine choice of the younger son above the older one?
22. What do we mean by saying that "when this communication, v. 23, is considered simply as *prophetic*, all difficulties vanish"?
23. Correlate Gen. 25:23, Mal. 1:2-3, and Rom. 9:12-13. In this connection, distinguish between Divine foreknowledge and foreordination.
24. What is meant by the statement that God does not *foreknow*, but simply *knows*?
25. Discuss the distinction between *real time* and *mathematical time*. Distinguish between *time* and *timelessness*.
26. Explain our statement that God's choice in this instance proceeded from His foreknowledge of the worthiness of Jacob above Esau, and of the Israelites above the Edomites, as demonstrated by *their* respective choices and deeds.
27. How old were Abraham and Isaac respectively at the time the twins were born?
28. How did the attitudes and pursuits of the two boys become indicative of their differences of character?
29. What reasons may be given to explain Issac's preference of Esau, and Rebekah's preference of Jacob?

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- Show how these parental preferences caused domestic chaos in this household.
30. What lesson should we learn from this story about discord caused by such parental bias toward children? How was this folly of parental preference later repeated in the life of Jacob?
 31. What was the "pottage" that Jacob was cooking when Esau came to his tent?
 32. How is the name "Edom" associated with this "pottage"?
 33. What "hard bargain" did Jacob drive when Esau asked for food? Was it in any sense a "hard bargain" from Esau's point of view?
 34. What "rationalization" did Esau indulge to justify his nonchalant acceptance of Jacob's demand?
 35. What patriarchal privileges were included in the birthright? What special Messianic privileges in this particular case?
 36. On what grounds is Esau denounced in Scripture as a *profane* person?
 37. In what sense was the accompanying *oath* in this instance a source of additional guilt on Esau's part?
 38. What statement in v. 34 epitomizes Esau's attitude and life?
 39. How do Dr. Speiser and Dr. Skinner, respectively, appraise Esau's character and life?
 40. On what grounds does Leupold appraise Jacob's conduct "in a more favorable light"? Compare Murphy's appraisal.
 41. What is the significance of Deut. 21:17 in relation to the patriarchal birthright?
 42. What light is thrown by Hurrian law upon this incident of the birthright?
 43. How does Marcus Dods compare the characters of the two sons?

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44. What three important lessons do we get from this story in regard to parental influence and conduct?
45. What were the chief aspects of Esau's profane barter?
46. How is this profanity to be accounted for?
47. Review other Scriptural examples of such profanity.
48. How is this profanity exemplified in the attitude of many professing Christians toward the ordinance of Christian baptism?
49. What do we mean by saying that Esau's besetting sin was *secularism*?
50. Where do we read that secularism was the over-all besetting sin of the antediluvian world? Also that it will be the over-all besetting sin of the age immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ? What should these facts indicate to all Christians of the present generation?

PART THIRTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF ISAAC: HIS SOJOURN IN PHILISTIA

(Gen. 26:1-34)

The Biblical Record

1 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines, unto Gerar. 2 And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: 3 sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; 4 and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; 5 because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. 6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: 7 and the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, My wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. 8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die because of her. 10 And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might easily have lain with thy wife, and thou wouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. 11 And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

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12 And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and Jehovah blessed him. 13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great: 14 and he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him. 15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. 16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. 17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20 And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. 21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. 24 And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Abuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host. 27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherfore are ye come unto

me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?
 28 *And they said, We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee: and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee,* 29 *that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of Jehovah.* 30 *And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.* 31 *And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.* 32 *And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.* 33 *And he called it Shibah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.*

34 *And when Esau was forty years old he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35 and they were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.*

1. *Isaac's Migration to Gerar* (vv. 1-6). It will be recalled that Isaac was "tenting" in the vicinity of Beer-lahai-roi ("the well of the Living One who sees me," cf. 16:14) at the time of his marriage to Rebekah (24:62). Later, he journeyed to Hebron where he and Ishmael buried their father, Abraham, in the cave of Machpelah (25:9). Isaac then returned, we are told, and continued to dwell "by Beer-lahai-roi" (25:11); evidently it was here that the twins were born and Esau sold his birthright (25:11, 19-26, 27-34). This is obviously where we find him at the beginning of the account in ch. 26, prior to his removal to Gerar. But "there was a famine in the land" (26:1), a second famine, long after the first, which was the one "that was in the days of Abraham." In time of famine, people of Palestine were accustomed to migrate

HIS SOJOURN IN PHILISTIA 26:1-6

to Egypt or to the fertile Philistine maritime plain (about 50 miles long and 15 miles wide) extending along the Mediterranean Sea from what in our time is Joppa at the north to some distance below Gaza at the south. All Semitic peoples seem to have done this: the Egyptian records are full of accounts of such migrations for the purpose of obtaining food. (Cf. for example, Abraham, Gen. 12:10; Jacob and his sons, chs. 45, 46; Elimelech and his family, in Moab, Ruth 1:1).

"And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, unto Gerar." The presence of the Philistines in this region in patriarchal times has been dubbed an anachronism by the critics. This view, however, is expressly refuted by evidence now available. In Scripture, the Philistines are said to have come from Caphtor (Amos 9:7, Jer. 47:4, Deut. 2:23; cf. Gen. 10:14—here the sentence, "hence went forth the Philistines," is commonly viewed today as misplaced by a copyist and to belong after the name "Caphtorim"). The monuments indicate that the Pelestes or Philistines invaded Palestine with other "sea peoples" around 1200 B.C. In time they became amalgamated with other inhabitants of Canaan, but the name "Palestine" (Philistia) continued to bear witness to their presence. It is further evident that the Philistines had established themselves in this region in smaller numbers long before 1500 B.C. The region around Gerar and Beersheba was occupied by them as early as the patriarchal age (Gen. 21:32, 26:1) and before the Mosaic era settlers from Crete had driven out or destroyed the original inhabitants of the region of Gaza and settled there (Deut. 2:23). The consensus of archaeological evidence in our day almost without exception identifies these "sea peoples" as spreading out over the Eastern Mediterranean world from Crete: at its height in the third and second millenia, Minoan Crete controlled a large part of the Aegean Sea. "C. H. Gordon and I. Grinz consider that these early

Philistines of Gerar came from a previous migration of sea people from the Aegean and Minoan sphere, including Crete, which is called Caphtor in the Bible and Ugarit tablets, and Caphtorian is the Canaanite name for Minoan" (Cornfeld, AtD, 72). "Biblical notices, which are commonly viewed as anachronistic by critics, place scattered groups of these people in S. W. Palestine centuries before the arrival of the main body in the first quarter of the 12th century B.C." (UBD, 859). Recently an Israeli archaeologist, D. Alon, surveyed the site of Gerar and "found evidence from potsherds that the city had enjoyed a period of prosperity during the Middle Bronze Age, the period of the Biblical patriarchs" (DWDBA, 251). "The early Caphtorian migration was one of a long series that had established various Caphtorian folk on the shores of Canaan before 1500 B.C.E. They had become Canaanized, and apparently spoke the same language as Abraham and Isaac. They generally behaved peacefully, unlike the Philistines of a later day, who fought and molested the Israelites. They were recognized in Canaan as masters of arts and crafts, including metallurgy" (Cornfeld, AtD, 72). The word "Philistine" is said to have meant "stranger," "sojourner" (sea peoples?). These people gave their name to the country where they settled, "Philistia" (Joel 3:4; cf. Amos 1:6-8, Zech. 9:5-7); from this name the Greek name "Palestine" was derived in turn. The five cities of the Philistines in Palestine were Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. Gerar, though not one of the five great urban centers, was the seat of the royal iron smelting operations producing iron swords, spearheads, daggers, and arrowheads (1 Sam. 13:19-22). (See my *Genesis*, Vol. III, pp. 387-390).

2. *Abimelech*. Cf. the incident in Abraham's life, 20:1-20. The name means "father-king" in pure Hebrew; apparently it was the customary title, rather than personal name, of the kings of Gerar, as *Pharaoh* was of the kings

of Egypt, as *Agar* was of the kings of the Amalekites (1 Sam., ch. 15), or as *Cesar* was in later times, of the Roman emperors (cf. also *Kaiser* or *Czar*, etc.). Since some seventy or eighty years intervened between the accounts in chs. 20 and 26, we must conclude that the Abimelech of ch. 26 was the successor to the Abimelech of ch. 20. Leupold (EG, 717): "The common assumption that Abimelech was a standing designation of all Philistine kings, like Pharaoh for the Egyptian, finds definite support in the heading of Psalm 34, where Abimelech is used as a title for the man who in 1 Sam. 21:10-15 appears as Achish. 'Gerar' appears to be identical with *Umm-Jerar*, about ten miles south of Gaza." (Achish was the personal name of the king of Gath, also a Philistine city). (For a discussion of the Abimelechs of these two chapters, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 390-396). For a discussion of the similarities of the stories in Gen. 12:10-20, 20:1-18, and 26:6-11, and also of the striking differences, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 396-401, and especially 405-406. We conclude that these are not three variant accounts of the same event, as claimed by some of the critics, but three different accounts respectively of three different originals).

3. *The Divine Communication to Isaac* (vv. 2-5). The situation seems to be sufficiently important to call for Divine intervention. God appeared to Isaac as well as to Abraham, but twice only to the former (here and in v. 24). The wording of Scripture here surely indicates that Isaac was contemplating a journey into Egypt such as his father Abraham had made under the same circumstances, i.e. a famine in the land. Evidently Yahweh interfered to prevent such a move. Probably his original purpose in going to Abimelech was to request permission to leave for Egypt or he may have gone to the king of Gerar to make special arrangements that would avert the necessity of his going there. At any rate, Yahweh intervened, and in doing so reaffirmed the *Abrahamic Promise*. V. 2, "You were

consecrated as a sacrifice to God and must therefore not leave the Holy Land. Set up your shepherd's tent here and do not fear for lack of pasture" (SC, 144). The Oath, v. 3, was made directly and separately with each of the patriarchs. "By remaining in the country you will take possession of it, to be able to transmit it to your children, and thus My oath will be confirmed" (SC, 143). "It had been previously announced to Abraham that Isaac was to be his sole heir; and now that, on the death of his father, he had succeeded to the patrimonial inheritance, he was to receive also a renewal of the Divine promise which guaranteed special blessings of inestimable value to him and his posterity. The covenant securing these blessings originated entirely in Divine grace; but it was suspended on the condition that Abraham should walk before God and be perfect (17:1); and since he had, through the grace which had enabled him to attain an extraordinary strength of faith, fully met that condition by an obedience honored with the strongest expression of Divine approval—Isaac, his son, was now assured that the covenant would progressively take effect, the assurance being made doubly sure to him by a reference to the oath sworn to Abraham (22:16). The first instalment of this promise was the possession of Canaan, here designated 'all these countries,' from the numerous subdivisions amongst the petty tribes which then occupied the land (15:19-21); and in prospect of this promissory tenure of the land, Isaac was prohibited leaving it. . . . At all events, now that the Abrahamic covenant had to be executed, the elect family were not henceforth allowed to go into Egypt, except with the special sanction and under the immediate superintendence of an overruling Providence" (CECG, 191). V. 5—"my commandments" ("particular injunctions, specific enactments, express or occasional orders," cf. 2 Chron. 35:16), "my statutes" (permanent ordinances, such as the Passover, 'literally, *that which is graven on tables or monuments*,

cf. Exo. 12:14'), "and my laws" ("which refer to the great doctrines of moral obligations"). "The three terms express the contents of the Divine observances which Abraham obeyed" (PCG, 324-325).

"Remarkable is the scope of divine blessings that are mediated through faithful Abraham. In order to make prominent the thought that Abraham conscientiously did all that God asked, *the various forms of divine commandments are enumerated*; sometimes, of course, a divine word would fall under several of these categories. They are a 'charge' or 'observance' if they are to be observed. . . . They are 'commandments' when regarded from the angle of having been divinely *commanded*. They are 'statutes' when thought of as immutable, and 'laws' insofar as they involve divine instruction or teaching. Under these headings would come the 'commandment' to leave home (ch. 12); the 'statute' of circumcision, the instruction to sacrifice Isaac, or to do any particular thing such as (15:8) to sacrifice Isaac, or (13:17, 18) to walk through the land, as well as all other individual acts as they are implied in his attitude toward Jehovah, his faithful God. By the use of these terms Moses, who purposes to use them all very frequently in his later books, indicates that 'laws, commandments, charges and statutes' are nothing new but were already involved in patriarchal religion. Criticism, of course, unable to appreciate such valuable and suggestive thoughts, or thinking Moses, at least, incapable of having them, here decrees that these words come from another source, for though J wrote the chapter, J, according to the lists they have compiled, does not have these words in his vocabulary, and so the device, so frequently resorted to, is employed here of claiming to discern traces of a late hand, a redactor" (Leupold, EG, 719-720). (The hypothetical redactor is, of course, an indispensable factotum for Biblical critics). Speiser translates v. 5 as follows: "All because Abraham heeded my call and kept my

mandate: my commandments, my laws, and my teachings.” “Mandate” he defines as “something to be scrupulously observed,” adding, “the three nouns that follow spell out the contents” (ABG, 198, 201). Note that the same Promise, in its various details, which was originally given to Abraham, is here renewed to Isaac (cf. 12:3, 22:17, 18). Cf. v. 24: that is, “not for the sake of Abraham’s merit, but from respect to the covenant made with him, 12:2, 3; 15:8, 17:6, 7” (SIBG, 257). Cf. v. 6—Abraham’s obedience was not perfect, as we know, but it was unreserved, and as it flows from a living faith, is thus honored of God” (Gosman, in Lange, CDHCG, 505).

4. *The Threat to Rebekah’s Honor* (vv. 6-11). Because Gerar was situated in the Judean foothills south of Gaza and likely controlled the inland caravan route to Egypt, no doubt it was a commercial city. Therefore Isaac’s needs during the famine were here supplied. “The men of the place” were attracted to Rebekah “because she was fair to look upon.” Isaac, apprehensive of personal danger on account of his wife’s beauty, followed the same deceptive course that his father had adopted (12:13, 20:2) of passing his wife off as his sister. At that time Rebekah was at least thirty-five years married and the mother of two fullgrown sons who evidently had been kept in the background, perhaps engaged in pastoral and other field pursuits. But after a considerable lapse of time, Abimelech, “king of the Philistines,” happened to be “looking out at a window” and saw, “and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife” (literally, he was “fondling” her, and certainly not in the manner by which a brother would show affection for his sister). Whereupon Abimelech constrained Isaac to admit that she was his wife, charged him with the impropriety of his conduct, and commanded his own subjects to refrain from harming either of them on pain of death. “Knobel pronounces this story to be a duplicate account of a similar incident in the life of

Abraham. But a close examination will show that the circumstances here detailed are different from those of the earlier transaction. Although the name of the principal personage in both narratives is Abimelech, a royal title, it is highly probable, considering that an interval of about seventy years had elapsed, another king was reigning in Isaac's day; then Rebekah was not taken into the royal harem; and there was a difference also in the way in which her conjugal relation to Issac was discovered. Altogether the stories are marked by distinctive peculiarities of their own; and though it is striking, it cannot appear improbable that, in the same country and at the same court, where Oriental notions as to the rights of royalty obtained, incidents of such a description should, from time to time, occur. Issac's conduct, however, in this affair, has been made the subject of severe animadversion by the friends as well as the foes of Revelation, as a compound of selfishness and weakness, as well as of cold indifference to his wife's honor, for which the same apology cannot be made as in the earlier case of Abraham. But *Waterland* ('Scripture Vindicated'), after a full and dispassionate examination of the circumstances, gives his verdict, that the patriarch 'did right to evade the difficulty so long as it could be lawfully evaded, and to await and see whether Divine Providence might not, in some way or other, interpose before the last extremity.' His hope was not disappointed" (CECD, 191).

Lange (CDHCG, 505-506): "In the declaration of Isaac the event here resembles Abraham's experience, both in Egypt and at Gerar, but as to all else, it differs entirely. With regard to the declaration itself, it is true that Rebekah was also related to Isaac, but more distantly than Sarah to Abraham. It is evident from the narrative itself that Isaac is not so seriously threatened as Abraham, although the inquiries of the people at Gerar might have alarmed him. It is not by a punishment inflicted upon

a heathen prince, who perhaps might have abducted the wife, but through the intercourse of Isaac with Rebekah that the true relation became known. That the Abimelech mentioned in this narrative is the same person who, eighty years before, received Sarah into his harem, appears plausible to Kurtz and Delitzsch, since it may be taken for granted that as a man gray with hair as he, did not send for Rebekah and take her into his harem. We reject these as superficial grounds. The main point is, that Isaac appears in this narrative as a very cautious man, while the severe edict of Abimelech seems to suppose a solemn remembrance in the king's house of the former experience with Abraham. The oath that follows seems also to show that the new Abimelech avails himself of the policy of his father, as well as Isaac. The windows in old times were latticed openings for the light to enter, as found in the East at the present day."

Finally in this connection, the following: "Criticism, with almost complete unanimity (we know only of Koenig as an exception) calls this a later (Isaac) version of the original (Abraham) legend, or else calls chapter 26 the original and chapter 20 derivative. Yet the differences, aside from the very plain statements of the text to the same effect, point to two different situations: here a famine, there none; here Rebekah is not molested, there Abimelech took Sarah; here accidental discovery, there divine intervention; here no royal gift, there rich recompense. Of course, criticism usually points to 12:10f. as being merely another form of the same incident. Yet at least one aspect of the critical approach can be refuted completely on purely critical grounds. For, as K.C. [Koenig's *Kommentar* on Genesis] observes, it is unthinkable that J, to whom chapter 12 as well as chapter 26 are attributed, should have preserved two versions of one and the same incident" (Leupold, EG, 721).

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5. Isaac's Successful Venture into Agriculture (vv. 12-17).

Besides planting trees, Abraham was to the end of his life a nomad. Isaac, however, begins to pursue agriculture along with his nomadic life: this venture causes commentators to classify him as a kind of semi-nomad. (The only other allusion to husbandry in the patriarchal history occur in Genesis 30:14 and 37:7). "Isaac is described as living in the city of Gerar itself. He tried his hand successfully at a season of farming and his yield was 'a hundredfold,' a statement worth recording because nomads are poor farmers as a rule. Isaac's experiment is an interesting example of a nomad beginning to settle down-to semi-nomadism. A recurring pattern in the Near East is that nomads are attracted to sown acres, where they plant their crops, thus supplementing the living they get from their flocks. So they become agriculturists; they turn into villagers, usually still grazing their flocks, for that is a noble tradition, in keeping with their origin. Isaac's career apparently marks this transition to that intermediate stage" (Cornfeld, AtD, 77).

This account agrees well with the area around Gaza: the soil is very rich, we are told. As a result, Isaac reaped from his initial venture a rich harvest, to the extent of a hundred measures ("a hundred fold"). Such a rich harvest was taken as a sign of divine favor. The man became very wealthy: "he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household." Since Abraham was very rich (13:2, 14:23) and the bulk of his property had gone to Isaac, such an increase as this in Isaac's wealth must have brought his possessions up to a startling total. His establishment of necessity required also a great number of servants. "The man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great," that is to say, he kept growing richer and richer. But a serious problem arose as a consequence of this unusual

prosperity: *the Philistines grew envious.* The statement is an intimation of the clash with them over the wells, the account of which soon follows. Hostilities began when the natives began filling with earth the wells which Abraham had dug at Gerar and which therefore belonged to Isaac. "This very act was already an indirect expulsion, for without wells it was not possible that Isaac should live a nomadic life at Gerar." As a matter of fact, Isaac's household was strong enough to constitute a threat to the safety of the Philistines had Isaac been inclined to use his power for personal ends. V. 16—the king's summons is a combination of flattery, "thou art much mightier than we," and ungraciousness, "go from us." "Isaac is a pacifist in the best sense of the word. Power is safe in his hands. He shows no inclination to abuse it. Secure in his strength but mindful primarily of his responsibilities to his God, he yields to pressure and moves farther up the valley, *i.e.*, southeast from Gerar, and there pitches his tent with the intent of staying there permanently (he "dwelt there," *i.e.*, he "settled down") (EG, 725-726).

6. *The Contention over Wells* (vv. 18-22). "The whole of the southern frontier of Palestine, called the Negeb or 'south country,' consisting of vast undulating plains, which extend between the hills of Judah and the desert of Sinai, were neutral grounds, on the natural pastures of which the patriarchs fed their large flocks, before they had obtained a permanent abode. The valley of Gerar . . . about fifty miles south of the city Gerar, is perhaps the remote extremity of that pasture land" (CECG, 192). Here Isaac "digged again"—that is, *re-opened*—the wells which had been dug "in the days of Abraham his father," and which had been "stopped" (filled up) by the Philistines. "The statement that they were wells that Abraham had first dug is not superfluous after v. 15, but clearly establishes his claim to these wells. To indicate, further, his right to these wells and to indicate

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his respect for what his father did, Isaac in every case revived their original names" (EG, 727). "The naming of the wells by Abraham, and the hereditary right of his family to the property—the change of the names by the Philistines to obliterate the traces of their origin—the restoration of their names by Isaac, and the contests between the respective shepherds for the exclusive possession of the water, are circumstances that occur among the natives in those regions as frequently in the present day as in the time of Isaac" (CECG, 192).

"The history of Isaac's sojourn in Gerar is very curious and instructive. Combining both pastoral and agricultural industry, it is not strange that he grew very great. The vast grazing plains around and south of his position enabled him to multiply his flocks indefinitely, while the 'hundred-fold' harvests furnished bread for his numerous servants; and, in addition to these advantages, the blessing of the Lord was on the labour of his hands in a manner altogether extraordinary. These things made the Philistines envy and fear him; and therefore Abimelech, king of Gerar, demanded and obtained a covenant of peace with him. Just so at this day the towns, and even cities, such as Hamath and Hums in the north, and Gaza and Hebron in this region, cultivate with great care friendly relations with the sheikhs of prosperous tribes on their borders. It appears that the country was deficient in water, and that wells, dug at great expense, were regarded as very valuable possessions. Isaac was a great well-digger, prompted thereto by the necessities of his vast flocks; and in those days this was an operation of such expense and difficulty as to be mentioned among the acts which rendered illustrious even kings. The strife for possession of them was a fruitful source of annoyance to the peaceful patriarch, as it had been the cause of separation between Abraham and Lot before him; and such contests are now very common all over the country, but more especially in these southern

deserts. It was the custom in former times to erect towers or castles to command and secure the possession of valuable watering-places; thus Uzziah built towers in connection with 'his many wells' (2 Chron. 26:9, 10). And to stop up wells was the most pernicious and destructive species of vengeance—the surest way to convert a flourishing country into a frightful wilderness. Israel was commanded thus to destroy the land of the Moabites, by stopping all the wells of water (2 Ki. 3:19, 25). It would be a curious inquiry for the explorer to seek out these wells, nor would it be surprising if they should be found bearing the significant names which Isaac gave them. All travelers agree that water is so scarce and valuable in that region, that the places where it is to be found are as well known by the Arabs as are the most flourishing towns in other parts of the country. Isaac's place of residence was the well Lahai-roi, as we read in Genesis 25:11 and 24:62—the same that was so named by Hagar (Gen. 16:14). It may have been first discovered by her, or miraculously produced by 'the God that saw her,' for the salvation of the maternal ancestor of the Arab race and her unborn son, as the fountain of Kadesh afterward was for all Israel, and perhaps that of Lehi for Samson (Num. 20:11, Judg. 15:19). It seems to have been the usual mode to designate the dwelling-place in patriarchal times, and indeed long after, by some circumstance or fact which made it memorable. Abraham dwelt under *the* oak at Mamre; Isaac at this well; Jacob hid the idols of his family under the *oak* at Shechem; and long after, Joshua took a great stone and set it up under the same oak, as I suppose. Thus, also, Deborah dwelt under *the* palm-tree of Deborah; the angel of the Lord that was sent to Gideon came down and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah; King Saul is said to have tarried under a pomegranate tree in Migron; and it is yet quite common to find a village better known by some remarkable tree or fountain near it than by its

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proper name. The knowledge of these places and things is perpetuated from generation to generation; and I doubt not many of these wells in the south could be discovered, if one had the time and liberty to explore" (LB, 559-560). (Cf. Gen. 35:4, Josh. 24:25-27; Judg. 4:5, 6:11; 1 Sam. 14:2).

Apparently, the rapid increase of Isaac's wealth brought about a need of additional wells, and so Isaac's servants began digging "in the valley" and found there a well of "springing" (living, bubbling, gushing) water. But the Philistines were keeping close watch, and immediately on hearing of the discovery they asserted their claim to the new well. "No doubt, the distance from Gerar was sufficient to establish Isaac's claim to the well, otherwise this fair-minded man would never have sanctioned the digging. Isaac's policy is in keeping with the word, 'Blessed are the meek.' He leaves a memorial of the pettiness of the strife behind by calling the well *Esek*—'Contention'—the Quarrel Well. Perhaps a mild and tolerant humor lies in the name. Yet after all, what a fine testimonial to a great man's broadmindedness and readiness to sacrifice, lest the baser passions in men be roused by quarreling" (EG, 727). Isaac's servants then moved some distance and brought in a new well: this they named *Sitnah*, i.e., "enmity," "hostility." In this case the opposition seems to have been more spiteful, more violent, as indicated by the name. "Everyone must recognize that it is magnanimity and not cowardice on Isaac's part when he yields, because Isaac had ample manpower at his command" (EG, 728). Isaac then moved even further away and his servants brought in a well which he named *Rehoboth*, i.e., "wide places," "room," rather, "plenty of room," that is to say, the Lord hath made room for us. It seems that by now the patriarch had moved beyond the territory that Gerar could legitimately claim. It is possible, too, his generous example might have shamed

the opposition. "We shall be fruitful in the land," declared Isaac, that is, in this land where we now are. Is not Isaac thinking primarily in terms of that aspect of the Divine promise stated in v. 4? "The character of Isaac is very marked and peculiar. He never traveled far from this spot during his long life of one hundred and eighty years—probably never removed from Wady Gerar and its neighboring city. There are but few acts of his life on record, and several of these are not much to his credit. He seems to have been an industrious, quiet man, disposed to wander alone and meditate—at least when he had such an interesting theme to think about as the coming of the camels with his expected bride. He preferred peace to strife, even when the right was on his side, and he was 'much mightier' than those who annoyed and injured him" (LB, 561).

7. *The Theophany at Beersheba* (vv. 23-25). We now read that Isaac "went up" from Gerar to Beersheba. (Though Beersheba is said to lie lower than Gerar, "yet the general expression for approaching any part of Palestine from the southwest is to 'go up,'" EG, 729). Here Yahweh appears again to Isaac, for covenant matters must be again considered. Isaac has conducted himself in a manner that calls forth divine approval. "Besides, Isaac's faith needs to be strengthened in the matter of the realization of the covenant promise. For one part of the promise is: numerous descendants. . . . Isaac shall have to walk by faith very largely as did Abraham. That this faith might well be established he is informed that God will surely bring this promise to pass. So we see that the situation is sufficiently important to call for the appearance of Yahweh, *the second and last that is granted to Isaac*. The substance of Yahweh's promise is: Fear not as to the realization of the promise given thee, for I am with thee, I, the God of Abraham, thy father, who never failed to make good what I promised to him; I guarantee to make thy descendants (Hebrew 'seed') numerous, for the sake

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of Abraham my servant. It is here only in Genesis that the title 'my servant' is applied to Abraham. By it another aspect of Abraham's relation to the Lord is covered: he stood in God's service all his days and faithfully did His will" (EG, 729).

Now, any place that is sanctified by a Divine appearance naturally became a sacred spot where Yahweh was wont to be worshiped (cf. 12:7-8, 13:4). Hence, following the example of his illustrious father, Isaac erected an altar, and of course offered sacrifice: a fact so obvious that it hardly need be mentioned. It is stated that "he called upon the name of Jehovah." This means, as it did from the very beginning (cf. 4:26), that Isaac acting on behalf of his entire household—as their priest—engaged in all the essentials of public worship of God characteristic of the Patriarchal Dispensation, the very heart of which was sacrifice that included the shedding of precious blood (Gen. 4:4-5, Heb. 11:4, Lev. 17:11, John 1:29, Heb. 9:11-22, Rev. 7:13-14). Because of Yahweh's manifestation at this place it became sacred to Isaac and he pitched his tent there, and as relatively permanent residence was involved, he ordered his servants to (literally) *start digging* a well there: "the success of the attempt is not reported until v. 32" (ABG, 202).

8. *The Covenant with Abimelech* (vv. 26-33). As "Abimelech" was the standing title of the Philistine kings, so "Phicol" seems to have been the standing title of the captain (or general) of the army. (Cf. 21:22f.) "As there was a lapse of seventy years between the visit of Abraham and of Isaac, the Abimelech and Phicol spoken of must have been different persons' official titles" (CECG, 193). "It is fair to conclude that Abimelech was the royal title, just as Pharaoh was in Egypt, and Caesar in Rome. *Phicol* may also have been a name of office, as *mudir* or *mushir* now is in this country. If one of these officers is spoken of, his *name* is rarely mentioned. I, indeed, never

know any but the official title of these Turkish officers" (LB, 560). Abimelech brought with him a certain *Abuzzah his friend*, that is, "his confidential adviser, or 'vizier'—an official title common in Egypt from an early period, and amongst the Ptolemies and Seleucids (I Mac. 2:18, 10:65; cf. 2 Sam., 16:16f., 1 Ki. 4:5, 1 Chron. 27:33" (Skinner, ICCG, 367). (In 1 Chron. 27:33, we find the rendering, "counsellor"). (Ahuzzath: note the Philistine ending of the name: cf. Goliath, 1 Sam. 17, also Gath). Note that one idea stands out in the conversation of these Philistines, namely, we are impressed by the fact of Yahweh's blessings which go with you continually: "they do not think it safe to be on bad terms with one who so manifestly stands in Yahweh's favor." "That the name 'Yahweh' should be used by Philistines need not surprise us. They naturally do not know Him as the One who is what this name involved. They simply take the heathen attitude: each nation serves its own God: we have heard that Isaac serves Yahweh; it must be Yahweh who has blessed His faithful follower" (EG, 731). Abimelech makes the overture. But Isaac chides him for his unkindness in sending him away and his inconsistency in now seeking a conference with him, v. 27. However, the king sees clearly now that Isaac's God is to be reckoned with: "thou art now the blessed of Jehovah"; therefore "let there now be an oath between us . . . and let us make a covenant with thee," etc. "By whatever motive the proposal was dictated—whether fear of his growing power, or regret for the bad usage they had given him, the king and his courtiers paid a visit to the tent of Isaac (Prov. 16:7). His timid and passive temper had submitted to the annoyances of his rude neighbors; but now that they wish to renew the covenant, he evinces deep feeling at their conduct, and astonishment, or artifice, in coming near him. Being, however, of a pacific disposition, he forgave their offence, accepted their proposals, and treated them to a

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banquet by which the ratification of a covenant was usually crowned" (CECG, 193).

The *oath*, v. 28, in this case was what was known as a "curse-oath," that is, "the curse invoked on violation of the covenant." The Jews in later ages "were in the habit of using vain and frivolous oaths in their ordinary talk. They swore by the temple, by the earth, by heaven, by the head, etc. So long as they did not use the name of God in these oaths, they did not deem them particularly binding. This practice is alluded to in Matt. 23:16-22" (ADB, 243). This was known as *profane swearing* (cf. Matt. 5:33-37, Jas. 5:12). The *judicial oath* was of an entirely different character. The validity of this type of oath was recognized by Jesus: indeed He allowed Himself to be put under it (cf. Matt. 26:63-68), and He responded to the solemn *adjuration*. We find also that good men, an angel, and even God Himself, made use of the "oath" for confirmation (Gen. 21:23, 24; 1 Sam. 20:42; Heb. 6:17, 18; Rev. 10:5, 6). It should be noted that the oaths were exchanged on the morning after the "feast" (vv. 30, 31) before the Philistines departed. Apparently the feast, "the common meal," was a feature of the covenant ceremony (cf. 31:53, 54) even though the oath-taking did not occur until early the next morning.

9. *The Naming of the Well* (vv. 32-33). "On the same day" the oaths were exchanged Isaac's servants found water. "This is the well mentioned in verse 25. It is possible that it is the same well which Abraham had excavated and named Beer-sheba (21:31). The Philistines had stopped it up; now Isaac reopened it and gave it the same name it had borne previously (Nachmanides). Rashbam holds that it was a different well, there being two of that name (SC, 148). 'To the rationalistic objection that 'identical names of places are not imposed twice,' we may reply, in general, that it is 'in full accordance with the genius of the Oriental languages and the literary tastes of

the people,' to suppose that a name may be *renewed*; in other words, that *a new meaning and significance* may be attached to an old name. (This is the testimony of a scholar thoroughly acquainted with Oriental manners and customs, Prof. L. J. Porter, in Kitto's Biblical Cyclopaedia, II, 132, latest edition.) This fact sweeps away a host of objections urged against this and similar cases. The whole series of events served to recall to Isaac's mind the former name and the circumstances which gave rise to it, hence he renewed it. From 26:15, 18 we learn that all the wells dug by Abraham had been filled with earth by the Philistines, but that Isaac re-opened them, and *called them by the old familiar names*. This would seem a sufficient explanation of the case before us" (ADB, 410).

"This was not the restoration of an old, but the sinking of a new well; and hence, by the formal ceremony of inauguration gone through with Abimelech, Isaac established his right of possession to the adjoining district. . . . One would naturally imagine that the place received this name [Beer-sheba] now for the first time from Isaac. But it had been so called long before by Abraham (21:31), in memory of a solemn league of alliance which he formed with a contemporary king of Gerar. A similar covenant, in similar circumstances, having been established between Isaac and the successor of that Gerar monarch, gave occasion to a *renewed proclamation* of the name: and it is accordant with the practice of the sacred writer to notice an event as newly occurred, while in point of fact it had taken place long before" (CECG, 193-194). For similar instances of twofold naming, cf. Gen. 35:6, 7, 15, with 28:18-22, as to the name *Bethel*; Gen. 35:10 with 32:28, as to the name *Israel*; Gen. 14:14 with Deut. 34:1, Josh. 19:47, Judg. 18:29, as to the name *Dan*; Num. 32:41, with Deut. 3:14 and Judg. 10:3-4, as to the name *Havoth-jair*). (For a description of the present-day Wady-es-Seba and the "two deep wells" on the northern bank, which

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are still called Bir es-Seba, the ancient Beer-sheba, see again Jamieson, CECG, 193-194, quoting Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, I, 300, 301).

Isaac called the well *Shibah*, i.e., Sheba). "On account of the covenant (connecting *Shibah* with *shebuah* ('an oath, covenant'))" according to Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105). "It was the 'seventh' well which he had dug," according to Ben Jacob Sforno, c. 1475-1550. (See SC, 148). Cf. 21:31—obviously, the name *Beer-sheba* is best interpreted "the well of the oath," rather than "of the seven." On the latter view, "seven" could have been variously interpreted, either as indicative of the seven ewe lambs given by Abraham to the Philistine king (21:28-30), or as signifying the seventh well which Isaac had dug, or as indicating that either (or both) of the patriarchs had put himself under the influence of the number *seven*, which was regarded among ancients generally as a *sacred* number. This last view is suggested by Skinner (ICCG, 326); to the present writer it seems rather farfetched. "Both points of view seem well justified: there were originally 'seven' wells; the place was the scene of an 'oath.' One account emphasizes the former; the other, the latter idea. For that matter, Isaac may well have remembered the name given to the place in Abraham's time and may have welcomed the opportunity for establishing that name. The expression 'unto this day' simply carries us up to the writer's time and is, of course, very appropriate coming from the pen of Moses" (EG, 733). At any rate Beer-sheba came to be the principal city in the Judean Negeb. It was situated at the junction of the highway running southward from Hebron to Egypt and the route that ran northeastward from Arabah to the coast. It marked the southern limit of Israelite occupation, so that the entire land came to be described as the territory extending "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. 20:1). "Beersheba still exists, and retains its ancient name in a slightly modified form.

The old wells too are there, of great depth, and of great value to the surrounding Arabs" (SIBG, 257).

10. *Esau's Hittite Wives* (vv. 34-35). At the age of forty, Esau took as wives two young women of Hittite stock who no doubt were well contaminated with prevailing Canaanite vices. According to Rashi, Esau "had been living a dissolute life until then, but now he hypocritically said he would follow his father's example and marry at the same age he had married" (SC, 148). These alliances were contrary to the will of God (Exo. 34:16, Deut. 7:3, Josh. 23:12, Ezra 9:1-3, Neh. 13:23-27, 2 Cor. 6:14-15, 1 Cor. 7:39; and of his grandfather and parents (Gen. 24:38, 27:46; 28:1, 2, 6; cf. 6:2). "Esau's incapacity for spiritual values is further illustrated by this step. He is not concerned about conserving the spiritual heritage of the family" (EG, 733). These marriages of Esau were "a grief of mind" to his parents, possibly because the young women's personal characters, "but chiefly because of their Canaanitish descent, and because in marrying them Esau had not only violated the Divine law which forbade polygamy, but also evinced an utterly irreligious and unspiritual disposition" (PCG, 332). (Cf. Acts 17:30). "If the pious feelings of Abraham recoiled from the idea of Isaac forming a matrimonial connection with a Canaanitish woman, that devout patriarch himself [Isaac] would be equally opposed to such a union on the part of his children; and we may easily imagine how much his pious heart was wounded, and the family peace destroyed, when his favorite but wayward son brought no less than two idolatrous wives amongst them—an additional proof that Esau neither desired the blessing nor dreaded the curse of God. These wives never gained the affections of his parents; and this estrangement was overruled by God for keeping the chosen family aloof from the dangers of heathen influence" (CECG, 194). Note that these wives were "a grief of mind" (according to the Septuagint, contentious

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or obstreperous) to Isaac and Rebekah. How could it have been otherwise? one might well ask. "To the various troubles which the Philistines prepared for Isaac, but which, through the blessing of God, only contributed to the increase of his wealth and importance, a domestic cross was added, which caused him great and lasting sorrow. Esau married two wives in the 40th year of his age, the 100th of Isaac's life (25:26); and that not from his own relatives in Mesopotamia, but from among the Canaanites whom God cast off. . . . They became '*bitterness of spirit*,' the cause of deep trouble, to his parents, viz., on account of their Canaanitish character, which was so opposed to the vocation of the patriarchs; whilst Esau by these marriages furnished another proof, how thoroughly his heart was set on earthly things" (BCOTP, 273).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

The Essentials of Life

Text: Gen. 26:25. Dr. Bowie (IBG, 675-676) presents some challenging thoughts concerning our text, v. 25. We have here, he writes, only the bare catalogue of what Isaac did on a particular day. However, there are three nouns in this text which have deep implications: an *altar*, a *tent*, and a *well*.

1. It should be noted that the *altar* was first. The first thing Isaac did when he moved up to Beersheba was to cause his servants to build an altar there. (Recall that the first thing Noah did on coming out of the ark was to build an altar unto Jehovah and offer the prescribed sacrifice, Gen. 8:20). "With Isaac, as with Israel in all its history, God was no afterthought." "Existence was not secular, but lifted up always to a religious reference." Isaac was doing what his father Abraham always did on moving into a new environment. *The altar was first. When a man is right with God all other matters fall into*

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place. In our affluent society today men have so much that they consider themselves self-sufficient, whereas if God did not provide the food they eat, the water they drink, and the air they breathe, they could not live five minutes. *Man is a creature.* When he loses sight of this fact, he loses his bearings and brings chaos upon himself and his fellows. *We must start with God* as the First Truth of all being. Hence if any part of life is to be worth anything, it must begin with the recognition and worship of God.

2. After erecting his altar and calling upon the name of Jehovah (in his office as the patriarch-priest of his household), Isaac then pitched his *tent* there. Naturally what went on in that tent was commonplace enough: "everyday human needs had to be provided for through the routine of ordinary work; the building of an altar could not obviate that, nor contact with the spiritual world take men out of this one." What Isaac kept in mind was "that family life—its duties, loyalties, and affections—needed always to be brought under the protection of the altar." Note, too, that Isaac had no mansion, not even a house solidly built and comfortable, adapted to present occupancy, such as men and women desire in our day. *He had only a tent.* Does not this suggest that the patriarchs were not rooted in material things; that, on the contrary, they confessed themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:12)? Are not we all just such? "In the civilization of today, complex and materially rich, there is danger that men may be so satisfied with what they already possess that they do not reach forward to that spiritual communion which pilgrim souls would seek to gain. Yet in the scale of eternal values the great man is he who knows that life here is a pilgrimage" (Job 14:1-2, Matt. 6:19-21, Col. 3:1-3, 2 Cor. 4:16-18), and that if he does not seek "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), his life

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on earth will be aimless and empty. The only happiness to which man is ordained by the very nature of his being is ultimate *union with God*, the union of the human mind with the Mind of God in knowledge and the union of the human will with the Will of God in love (1 Cor. 13:12, 1 John 3:2): that alone will be perfect happiness (cf. Matt. 5:3-12; note that the Latin word for happiness is *beatitudo*, "blessedness," hence this ultimate union with God is known as the Beatific Vision; the Latin word was coined by Cicero; Aristotle used the word *eudaimonia*, which means, literally, well-being). To achieve this Beatific Vision, one must be steadfast in growing in the Spiritual Life here (2 Pet. 3:18) as programmed for him in the Divine Word (1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 5:22-25; 1 Cor. 12:31, 13:1-13; Rev. 2:10, etc.).

3. Finally, having built his altar and pitched his tent, Isaac's servants digged a *well*. This was necessary to their existence. "Out of it must come the water to slake the thirst of men and cattle; and because of it there could be an oasis of growth and shade." Without water, physical life would come to an end soon. Hence, all through the Bible *water is a symbol for the satisfaction of a deeper thirst.* (Cf. Ps. 42:1, Isa. 55:1; John 4:14, 7:37-39).

Digging the Wells of the Fathers

Gen. 26:18. As stated heretofore, "digging again" here meant re-opening of the wells which Abraham had caused to be dug in previous years. Abraham, a powerful prince of the preceding generation had dug these great wells in Philistia when he was sojourning there. The supply of water was abundant and sufficient for generations to come. But the wells had been stopped up by the envious Philistines. Another great famine descended upon the same area in the time of Isaac. Isaac knew that there was an abundance of sparkling water flowing beneath the obstructions which had been placed in the old wells. He

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therefore did not dig new wells, but set about restoring (re-opening) the old wells. Having done this, Isaac's servants set about digging elsewhere in the valley and "brought in" (as men say in the oil fields) a well of springing (living) water, v. 13.

We all know that water is necessary to the existence of every living thing, including man himself. Because of this fact, the prophets especially, and many other Scripture writers, were wont to use wells and rivers of water as metaphors of the life-giving sources of salvation. Isa. 12:3—"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isa. 41:18—"I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Cf. again John 4:13-14, 6:35, 7:37-39; also Rev. 22:1-2. This living water—the Water of Life to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6)—poured forth from the old Gospel well, for the first time, on the first Pentecost after the Resurrection: it was on this day that the *facts* of the Gospel were proclaimed for the first time (1 Cor. 15:1-4, Acts 2:22-24), that the commands of the Gospel were stated for the first time (Acts 2:38), that the promises of the Gospel were communicated to man for the first time (cf. Luke 13:5, 2 Cor. 7:10, Rom. 10:9-10, Gal. 3:27, etc.), and that the *ekklesia* came into being, vitalized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41-42, 46-47). During the lifetime of the Apostles multitudes drank of this life-giving flow, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated alike. The Pentecost multitude, the people of Samaria, the Roman centurion and his household, the Ethiopian treasurer, the seller of purple from Thyatira, the Philippian jailor, the fanatical Saul of Tarsus, Crispus the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, and many others, including "a great company of the priests," alike drank of this living water and went on their way rejoicing. (Cf.

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Acts 6:7, 2:41, 8:12-13, 10:1-44, 8:26-39, 16:11-15, 16:27-34; 9:1-22, 18:8). The supply of the water of the Life Everlasting in this old Gospel well was sufficient to quench the spiritual thirst of obedient believers of all ages. (Cf. John 6:63, Matt. 7:24-27; John 5:40, 10:10, etc.).

As the centuries rolled on, however, the ugly face of human authority reared itself above the glorious image of the Logos. Man presumed to improve upon what the Spirit had revealed in the New Testament. The debris of human wisdom, tradition, and creed (stemming from the attempt to explain Christian doctrine by the use of philosophical gobbledegook and to improve upon the design of the ordinances of Christ by borrowings from the pagan mystery religions) continued to accumulate from generation to generation. Human interpretations, human speculation, human tradition filled the old Gospel well with the debris of "the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1:19-21). The result was apostasy, heresy, clericalism, sectism, and all the devices that Satanic ingenuity could muster to destroy the structure of the Church of Christ as it existed at the beginning. Theologians, priests, cultists, sectists alike departed from the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and hewed for themselves and their misguided followers *broken cisterns* that held no relief for deep spiritual thirst.

Following the "Protestant reformations," a group of spiritual leaders, by name Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and other spiritually-minded men who developed a keen appreciation of the simplicity of apostolic Christianity, its laws, its ordinances and its fruits, set out like Isaac of old to re-open the wells of the apostolic fathers and bring to men again the Water of Life that flowed from the old Gospel well that was opened on Pentecost. Not reformation, said they, but only *restoration* will revive the spiritual power that

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characterized the life of the church of the first century. Back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, said they, indeed back of Roman Catholicism, back of Greek Catholicism, all the way back to Pentecost, and to the permanent features of *the New Testament pattern* of the church. The movement which resulted from their work came to be known as the Restoration movement. The message of this movement was essentially a plea for the recognition and acceptance of the Lordship of Christ over His church. This message became known as a *Plea*, a plea for Christ.

The chief thing in Catholicism is the *machine*, the visible hierarchy; in fact, Catholicism *is* the machine. The chief thing in Protestantism is the *creed*. True, men are breaking away from the creeds, yet the fact remains that the so-called "Protestant" systems have been built upon their respective creeds and the traditions of the fathers founded on these creedal statements. But the fundamental thing in Christianity as taught and practised by the Apostles and the first Christians was, not the machine (there was no ecclesiastical hierarchy in the apostolic age), not the creed (there were no stereotyped creeds until after the Apostles had passed from the stage of human events), but *the personal Christ* Himself. Christ was, and is, Christianity; and Christianity was, and is, Christ. That He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and that He ascended to the Father and was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, 10:39-43, 17:29-31, Rom. 10:9-10)—this was the essence of the apostolic message. Christ was all in all apostolic preaching (Acts 8:12, 8:35, 16:31, etc.). (Cf. also 2 Tim. 1:12, 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 2:20, Rev. 19:11-16).

As the Restoration movement stands for the reproduction of New Testament Christianity, it follows that the central thought and theme of its preaching is likewise the *personal Christ*. The Restoration movement differs from

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Catholicism in that it repudiates all ecclesiastical machines; it differs from Protestantism in that it rejects all human names, creeds and ceremonials. It is a protest, not only against Catholicism, but also against those things which Protestantism has borrowed from Catholicism that are not to be found in the New Testament church. The fundamental message of the movement is the preeminence of Christ. The Restoration plea may be defined in a single sentence as a plea for Christ. This plea comprehends the following particulars:

I. *The name of Christ.* The Restoration message pleads that the name of Christ may be worn by His people, to the exclusion of all human designations, for these reasons: (1) it is the name in which they are baptized, Acts 2:38; (2) it is the divine name, because Christ is divine; (3) it is the preeminent name, Phil. 2:9-11; (4) it is the only name in which we can be saved, Acts 4:12; (5) it is the name which was divinely bestowed upon the disciples, Acts 11:26; (6) it is the name in which we should do everything that we do, Col. 3:17. Human names are denounced by apostolic authority, *i.e.*, as *religious* designations, I Cor. 3:4-5, Rom. 8:6-8. The name "Christian" is both Scriptural and catholic; it is the only name upon which the followers of Jesus can unite.

You and I have no credit at the Bank of Heaven. Suppose you were to step up to the window in that glorious Bank and present a check for your soul, what would the Great Teller say? He would tell you that your check must have an endorsement. Then, suppose you were to offer as endorsement the name of Paul, or Peter, or Martin Luther, or John Wesley, or Alexander Campbell—would any of these names be sufficient security for your soul? No—you would find them insufficient. There is one Name, and one only, that will be recognized at the Bank of Heaven—the name of Jesus Christ. In it there is salvation, but in no other.

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"Tis noble to be a Christian,
 'Tis honor to bear the name,
To know that we're honored in heaven,
 Is better than earthly fame.

The name implies one is noble,
 It means he is honest and true;
It means his life is Christlike—
 Does it mean all this in you?"

II. *The Person of Christ.* The Restoration message includes the *Person* of Christ as the one sufficient creed for all Christians. The word *creed* comes from the Latin verb, *credo*, meaning "I believe." The only article of faith imposed upon Christians in New Testament times was personal belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matt. 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10, etc. But belief in Christ as the Son of God includes acceptance of the fact of His *personal atonement* for sin. That He offered His body as a living sacrifice, and shed His blood for the remission of sins, are the two facts of the atonement; and the atonement was sufficient because His Person was divine. Matt. 26:28, Rom. 3:24-25, Heb. 9:22, 10:20; John 1:14, etc. The creed of Christianity is the personal Saviour.

Human creeds are incomplete statements and can not be universally accepted. At best they are nothing but the opinions of uninspired men. They set limits upon intellectual progress. They divide God's people by submitting tests of fellowship separate and apart from God's Word; they are written and enforced without divine sanction. They are superfluous and unnecessary. If a creed contains less than the Bible, it doesn't contain enough; if it contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it teaches what the Bible teaches, it isn't necessary because we have the Bible. Human creeds are the un-

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inspired products of theological speculation and contribute tremendously to the spread and perpetuation of denominationalism.

The true creed of the church of Christ is a Person. It could not be otherwise, logically. Faith does not center in a dogma, nor in an institution. I do not believe in baptism as such, but I believe in the Christ who instituted baptism and to please Him I shall be baptized according to His example. I do not believe in the Lord's Supper, but I do believe in the One who said, "Do this in memory of me," and I shall exert every effort to be in my accustomed place when the memorial feast is spread on each Lord's Day. We do not believe in things, but in *persons*. Therefore, says Paul, "For I know him *whom* I have believed," 2 Tim. 1:12.

This divine creed is Scriptural—no question about that. It is also catholic, *i.e.*, universally accepted by all who are worthy of the name Christian. It is the all-embracing creed. It includes everything in God's revelation to man, and embraces everything in man's relation to God. It is as high as heaven, as broad as the human mind, and as inclusive as the illimitable spaces. "This creed was not made at Nice, nor at Westminster, nor at Augsburg. The creed of the living church of the living God is *the living, ever-living Christ*. Christ is our creed; that is a simple creed; that is a growing creed; that is a heaven-sent creed." (Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, p. 85).

III. *The Word of Christ.* The Restoration message includes the word of Christ as the sufficient book of discipline for His church. The word of Christ is the New Testament, John 16:14-15, 20:21-23. It is quite sufficient to furnish the Christian unto every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. I recall a lady, who had been reared a strict denominationalist, asking me on one occasion for the "book of rules" of the church which I was serving as minister. I could do nothing but offer her a copy of the

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New Testament; this I did, even at the risk of having been pronounced discourteous. *Truth* is sometimes more needed than *courtesy*.

The New Testament is the Christian's book of discipline. He should have no other—he needs no other. If the Scriptures are sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works, written disciplines of human origin are unnecessary. Take this divine discipline and follow it. Are you inquiring what to do to be saved? Read John 3:5. If Jesus says you can not enter into the kingdom without being born of water and the Spirit, then *how can you?* Read Acts 2:38. What the Holy Spirit has joined together by the conjunctions, "and" and "for," let no theologian put asunder. May every Christian follow the apostolic exhortation, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," Col. 3:16.

IV. *The Authority of Christ.* The Restoration plea is essentially a plea for the *authority* of Christ. This is fundamental. Most of our present-day religious controversies are not over questions of interpretation, but questions of authority. The Bible teaches that God delegated all authority to Jesus, who, in turn, delegated the same authority to His apostles and clothed them with the infallible presence of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and to protect them from error in revealing His word to mankind, John 16:13-14. There is no evidence anywhere in the Bible that divine authority was ever delegated to any one else; in fact divine authority ended with the work and revelation of the apostles. All authority in Christianity is vested in Christ. Matt. 28:18, Eph. 1:22. Every local church is a *theocracy democratically administered*. In matters of faith and doctrine it is an absolute monarchy subject to the will of Christ which is the absolute law from which there is no appeal. In matters of expediency, or method, it is a democracy subject to the wish and will of the majority. The "historic episcopacy"

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has no authority to make any changes in the teaching of Christ: therefore I am not an Episcopalian, but a Christian. The presbytery has no authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Presbyterian, but a Christian. Not even the congregation has any authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Congregationalist, but a Christian. (How utterly absurd that the Board of Officers of any church of Christ should even discuss such a question as the reception of the "pious unimmersed!" That question was settled for us by Christ and the apostles almost twenty centuries ago. We are presumptuous to even consider or discuss it). I do not believe in baptism, but I do believe in the Christ who commands me to be baptized; therefore I am not a Baptist, but a Christian. I believe that everything in the local church should be done "decently and in order," but I do not believe that the church should be named after the *methods* used; therefore I am not a Methodist, but a Christian. Again, who instituted the ordinances? Our Lord instituted them; therefore, He alone has the right to alter them, to make changes in their observance, or to take them away. The Pope did not institute baptism; therefore the Pope has no right to annul baptism or to substitute something for baptism. The church did not institute baptism or the Lord's Supper; therefore the church has no right to change these ordinances in any way. They are the ordinances of *Christ* which are to be perpetuated by the church.

Restore the authority of Christ over His church and bring all professing Christians to accept His authority, and you will have solved many of the problems which harass modern Christendom. You will have swept away all popes, councils, synods, presbyteries, conferences, associations and assemblies which, in the past, have presumed to speak with authority. You will have swept Catholicism off the face of the earth and you will have destroyed every

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vestige of humanism that lingers in Protestantism. When all professing Christians recognize the exclusive authority of Christ over His church, Christian unity will soon be a reality. May God hasten the day when He shall reign on earth even as He now reigns in Heaven!

V. *The Church of Christ.* The Restoration message includes a plea for the restoration of the *church of Christ*. The modern world is so befogged by "churchanity" that Christianity has largely become obscured. We hear so much in these days about Luther's Church, Calvin's Church, Wesley's Church, and so on, we are liable to forget—in fact the world at large has almost forgotten—that our Lord Himself established a church. This church came into existence on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 30. Matt. 16:18—here he speaks of it as His church. It is the church of Christ and the only church to which I care to belong. Let us go back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, back of Rome, back of Constantinople, all the way back to Jerusalem and find, reproduce and restore the church of Christ, or, using the adjectival form, Christian Church. This is the supreme objective of the Restoration movement of the nineteenth century.

VI. *The Ordinances of Christ.* The Restoration plea has a specific message with reference to the ordinances of Christ. It says they are not ordinances of the church, but ordinances of Christ to be perpetuated by the church as sacred trusts committed to the church for safekeeping.

The ordinances of Christ are three in number: (1) *Baptism*, to test the loyalty of the penitent believer. (2) *The Lord's Supper*, to test the loyalty of the Christian. (3) *The Lord's Day*, which is a memorial of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

True obedience does a thing commanded, does it without question, and does it in the way the author of the command wants it to be done. I might illustrate as follows: A gentleman who is about to die calls his two sons to his bedside. He tells them he owns a farm out in Kansas, that he has made extensive plans for the development of that farm, but

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that death threatens to prevent the execution of his plans. He asks for a map of the farm. He tells the boys just how he wants the farm developed. He points out on the map the spot where the house is to be erected, also the spot where the barn is to be built. Pointing to a certain place on the map, he says: "This is all bottom land. I have prepared it for corn and I want you to plant corn there next spring when you begin to develop the land. Up here on this rolling ground I want you to sow the wheat because it is especially prepared for wheat. Then along the road here is a patch of new ground. The soil is fresh and fertile and I have planned to put an orchard on this spot. "Now, boys," said he, "after I am dead and gone, I shall depend upon you to develop the farm according to the plans I have given you." The sons agree to do so, and in a few days thereafter the father dies. Several months later the boys decide to go to Kansas and take a look at the farm. Taking the map with them, they make what would be called in modern language a "survey." They find the place where the house is to be erected and they agree it is an ideal location. They next find the spot where the barn is to be built and again they agree. They take a look at the bottom land and they see it is quite evident that this is the ground which will produce the corn. They take a look at the rolling land and again they are of the same mind and judgment. They express their astonishment at the wise judgment manifested by the father; thus far they are in complete accord with his plans. By and by they stroll over the patch of new ground. John looks at it for a moment and Bill looks at it, then they look at each other and shake their heads. John says: "It seems to me that father has slipped just a bit in selecting this spot for an orchard. It is full of roots and stumps that will retard the growth of the trees. Besides, it is right here along the road and all the bad boys in the neighborhood will be clubbing the apples, pears, and peaches. I think we had better put the orchard back from the road," etc. Bill is of the same opinion. Now I have a problem in mathematics for you. That father gave his sons five specific commands. The commands were very clear-cut; there was no danger of their being misunderstood. In how many of these commands did the boys obey their father? You say, They obeyed him in four particulars, but disobeyed him in one. No, my friends, *they didn't obey him in anything.* They accepted his judgment in the four particulars because *it so happened that their judgment coincided with his;* but when it came to the last item, they did not agree with the father's judgment, and instead of obeying him without question, they followed their own judgment in the matter. How like people today! They are perfectly willing to believe and repent of their sins; but when they come to the baptismal water, they stop and say, "This is a matter for me to decide in my own conscience," and in many cases they follow their own preference or inclination instead of submitting to the ordinance of Christ in the way it was performed in New Testament times.

That Christian baptism was immersion, under the preaching of the apostles, is readily admitted by scholars of all denominations. There is no more clearly established

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fact in church history than this. No man of any standing in the world of scholarship questions it for a moment. Moreover, *immersion* is the only catholic baptism: one who has been buried with Christ in baptism will be accepted in any church in Christendom with but one or two exceptions. There is no argument about immersion; all are agreed that it is baptism; the argument is all over the matter of substitutes for baptism. In other words, the controversy is not over what baptism is, but over what baptism is *not*. Why not accept the baptism that is unquestionably Scriptural and that is universally admitted to be right?

The plea of the Restoration movement is that the ordinances may be restored to their proper place and significance in the faith and practice of the churches of Christ.

VII. *Unity in Christ.* One of the most important items in the Restoration message is the plea for Christian unity—not union, but unity. There is a great difference between *union* and *unity*. Someone has facetiously remarked that by tying two cats together by the tail and throwing them over a clothesline one would have a union, but not much unity. Our Lord prayed for the unity of His people, John 17:20-21. The apostles condemned division in no uncertain terms, I Cor. 1:10-13, 3:1-5. The church of the New Testament was a united church, Eph. 4:4-6.

It is quite evident that the present divided condition of Christendom is the direct antithesis of the ideal for which our Lord prayed. It is equally evident that divisions are wasting the church and nullifying the effects of gospel preaching. As John R. Mott has said, "The price that has been paid for a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world."

Someone inquires: Is Christian unity possible? If Christian unity is impossible, then our Lord prayed for an

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impossibility. Moreover, if Christian unity does not come to such an extent as to include all who claim to be Christians, it will be due to the fact that *men will not allow it to come.*

The question arises here: How did Christ, through the apostles, go about the task, in New Testament times, of building a *united body*? This is a worth-while question. The answer is very clear. The first thing the apostles did under the guidance of the Spirit, was to bring into existence a local church of Christ which was a united church. See Acts 2:44-47, 4:32. Note that the "multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This church in Jerusalem was a wonderfully united church. In establishing such a united church of Christ, it should be noted that the apostles did not make their appeal to the Pharisees, nor to the Sadducees, nor to the Herodians, etc., *as sects*. No—they made their appeal to *individuals* to come out of Judaism; those who obeyed the gospel were then added together into a local church and as other individuals came from time to time they were added to the original group. Thus there was a united church of Christ in Jerusalem. The next step was to establish churches of the same faith and order in adjoining cities and towns. By and by there was a church of Christ in Antioch, another in Samaria, another in Philippi, another in Thessalonica, and so on. In this manner the united church of Christ spread over the entire known world even before the death of the Apostle Paul. How was it all done? It started with a *united local church in Jerusalem; thence the lines were extended by establishing local churches of Christ in other cities; and the sum total of all the members of these united local churches constituted the united universal church of Christ.*

Herein lies a great lesson for the churches of Christ of the present century. Not only the Scriptures, but observation and experience as well, proclaim the absolute

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folly of appealing to any denomination or denominational group, as such, in the matter of bringing about unity. The appeal must be made to individuals to come out of denominationalism and to unite in Christ. This was the method used in apostolic times and by divine authority. It was the method used by the pioneers of the Restoration movement and the Word of God prevailed mightily. Churches of the New Testament order sprang up all over the country in an incredibly short time. Later, out of an exaggerated conception of religious courtesy, the method was changed from *proclamation* to *negotiation*. The result has been temporary stagnation. It should be remembered that a merger of denominations is not unity. The ideal for which Christ prayed is not achieved in a "league of denominations," it can be achieved only by the elimination of denominational barriers and the breaking down of denominational walls. I look upon the time and energy that is being spent at present negotiating with the self-constituted leaders of denominationalism, in vain endeavors to achieve consolidation through human schemes of union, as nothing but sheer waste of effort. The thing to do is to rekindle the fires of evangelism; to extend the lines into every community in the land; and leave the results with God. Preach the Word to individuals; plead with them to abandon sectarianism and to become one in Christ Jesus; go here, there, everywhere with the New Testament message; until the whole Christian world shall come to recognize and accept the New Testament basis. Then, if it should turn out that the ideal for which Jesus prayed can not be achieved to the extent of taking in the whole of Christendom, due to the prejudices and perversities of mankind, we may have the satisfaction of knowing that it shall have been realized, to a limited degree at least, in the unity of the churches of Christ; and we shall be comforted by knowledge of the fact that when the Son of man cometh, He will find the faith on the earth (Matt.

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24:14). The present-day ecumenical movement has been dubbed rightly, "a conglomerate of conflicting units" (Bulletin by Harry L. Owens, San Antonio, Texas.)

VIII. *Consecration to Christ.* The last, but by no means the least, item of the Restoration message, is a plea for personal consecration to Christ.

Baptism is not the end, but just the beginning, of Christian life and service. It is only the consummation of the divine plan whereby we are adopted into the family of God. It is the act in which we "put on" Christ. Gal. 3:27, John 3:5, Rom. 8:14-17. Following baptism we are given the Spirit of adoption as the earnest of our inheritance, and this indwelling Spirit endows us with the privilege of calling God our Father. Baptism is the final act of primary obedience through which we are saved from a state of alienation and by means of which we obtain the right to approach our Father through Christ, our High-Priest, in daily confession and prayer. I John 1:9, Heb. 10:19-22, etc.

In other words, baptism is the consummating act of conversion. Conversion is the complete surrender of self and substance to God, the submission of the human will to the divine. New converts thus inducted into the body of Christ must "continue stedfastly" in the essentials of Christian worship, Acts 2:42; they must grow in divine grace, 2 Pet. 1:5-11; they must bring forth in life and conduct the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Gal. 5:22-25. They must work out their own salvation, Phil. 2:12; they must fight the good fight of faith; they must press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God; they must run the race with patience. The crown of life is promised only to those who endure, Rev. 2:10, the "overcomers."

The Restoration ideal not only demands the proclamation of first principles; it also includes going on to perfection. It takes in the Lord's Supper, prayer, liberality,

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meditation, consecration, personal piety and zeal. It includes everything essential to a devout Christian life.

"There's a sweet old story translated for man,
 But writ in the long, long ago,
The gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
 Of Christ and His mission below.

"Men read and admire this gospel of Christ
 With its love so unfailing and true;
But what do they say and what do they think
 Of the gospel according to you?

"Tis a wonderful story—this gospel of love
 As it shines in the Christ life divine,
And oh, that its truth might be set forth again
 In the story of your life and mine.

"You are writing each day a letter to men,
 Take care that the writing is true,
'Tis the only gospel some folk will read—
 The gospel according to you."

"God highly exalted him and gave unto him a name that is above every name." And to think that He loves us so much He is willing to extend us the privilege of wearing that name! That privilege is yours this very moment if you will but accept Him as your Savior and obey him in Christian baptism. Allow Him to enter your heart and assume authority over your soul. No privilege vouchsafed a human being is comparable to this! May God help you to decide—now!

The wells of the fathers must *be kept open*: no ecumenical conglomerate must be permitted to fill them with theological rubbish. The pure water of the primitive Gospel, the true Gospel, the only Gospel, must be allowed to flow in all its pristine purity. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. This must be the positive

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message sounding out from every pulpit that dares to call itself Christian, from now unto the end, His Second Coming, even until the redeemed shall join with the angels before the Heavenly Throne in proclaiming praise to His matchless name:

“O that with yonder joyful throng,
We at His feet may fall,
We'll join the everlasting throng
And crown Him Lord of all.”

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-EIGHT

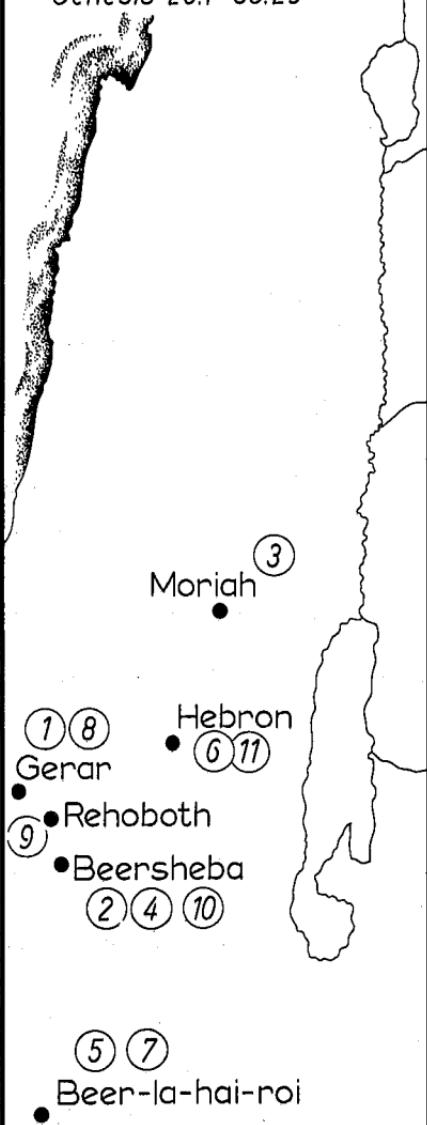
1. Where was Isaac “tenting” when he married Rebekah?
2. Where was the Philistine maritime plane geographically?
3. Who were these Philistines who infiltrated the region around Gerar in earliest times? From what region did they come? By what name are they otherwise known in the ancient records?
4. Name the five cities of Philistia? Of what special significance was Gerar?
5. What was the meaning of the word “Philistine”? What was the origin of the name “Palestine”?
6. What Divine assurance was vouchsafed Isaac at this time? What did God prevent his doing and why?
7. To what place did God tell Isaac to go?
8. How did Isaac's experience with Abimelech in regard to his wife Rebekah differ from Abraham's experience with the king's predecessor in regard to Sarah?
9. What reasons have we for accepting these stories as two separate accounts of two separate episodes?
10. What was the result of Isaac's venture into agriculture?
11. What did Isaac do about the wells which had been dug by Abraham?

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12. What were the names of the new wells dug by Isaac and what did each name signify?
13. What was the substance of the Divine communication at Beersheba?
14. How many times in Isaac's life did Yahweh appear to him?
15. What was the probable significance of the terms "Abimelech" and "Phicol"?
16. What was the substance of the covenant of Isaac with Abimelech?
17. Distinguish what was Scripturally known as *profane* swearing and what was known as *judicial* swearing? Cite scriptures to authenticate this distinction.
18. What was the character of the oaths exchanged between Isaac and Abimelech?
19. What was the other feature of the covenant ceremony? What light does this incident throw on Isaac's character?
20. What was the name given to the last well "brought in" by Isaac's servants?
21. How may we relate the naming of this well to the similar naming in Gen. 21:31?
22. Cite other instances of twofold naming in the Old Testament. How is this to be explained?
23. What was the location of the ancient city of Beer-sheba? Does it still exist? What role did this city play in the geography of Palestine?
24. At what age did Esau first marry? From what ethnic group did Esau select these two wives?
25. What do these facts of Esau's marriage indicate as to his character?
26. How did Esau's marriage affect his parents?
27. Name and describe the essentials of life as specified in v. 25.

THE JOURNEYS OF ISAAC

Genesis 20:1-35:29



LIFE OF ISAAC

1. *Gerar*
 - a. Birth: Gen. 20:1; 21:1-22.
 - b. Rejection of Ishmael; 21:8-21.
2. *Beersheba*
 - a. Command to sacrifice Isaac; 21:32-22:2.
3. *Moriah*
 - a. Sacrifice of Isaac; 22:8-20.
4. *Beersheba*
 - a. Death of mother; 23:1-20.
5. *Beerlahairoi*
 - a. Marriage to Rebekah; Ch. 24.
6. Trip to *Hebron* and back
 - a. Death and burial of Abraham; 25:7-10.
7. *Beerlahairoi*
 - a. Birth of twin sons; 25:11, 19-26. Birthright sold; 25:27-34.
8. *Gerar*
 - a. Lie about Rebekah; 26:1-11.
 - b. Great crops and herds; 26:12-17.
 - c. Disputed wells; 26:18-21.
9. *Rehoboth*
 - a. Undisputed wells; 26:22
10. *Beersheba*
 - a. Covenant with Abimelech; 26:26-33.
 - b. Esau's wives; 26:34-35.
 - c. Blessing given to Jacob; Gen. 27.
 - d. Jacob sent away; 28:1-5.
11. *Hebron*
 - a. Reunion with Jacob; 35:27.
 - b. Death and burial of Isaac; 35:28-29.

PART THIRTY-NINE

THE STORY OF ISAAC: THE TWINS AND THE BLESSING

(Genesis 27:1-45)

The Biblical Account

1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Here am I. 2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. 3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison; 4 and make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. 6 And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7 Bring me venison, and make me savory food, that I may eat, and bless thee before Jehovah before my death. 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory food for thy father, such as he loveth: 10 and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless thee before his death. 11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. 12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13 And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. 15 And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 And Rebekah took the goodly gar-

THE TWINS AND THE BLESSING 27:15-29

ments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son; 16 and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: 17 and she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? 19 And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because Jehovah thy God sent me good speed. 21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. 22 and Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24 And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 25 And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. 27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said.

See, the smell of my son

Is the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed:

28 And God gave thee of the dew of heaven,

And of the fatness of the earth,

And plenty of grain and new wine:

29 Let peoples serve thee,

And nations bow down to thee:

Be lord over thy brethren,

And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:
Cursed be every one that curseth thee,
And blessed be every one that blesseth thee

30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also made savory food, and brought it unto his father; and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. 32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau. 33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with grain and new wine have I sustained him: and what then shall I do for thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me even also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. 39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling, And of the dew of heaven from above; 40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother; And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt break loose,

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That thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. 42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; 44 and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 45 until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence; why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

1. *Significance of the Patriarchal Blessing.* The "modernistic" critical explanation of this section is clearly stated by Skinner (ICCG, 368) as follows: "This vivid and circumstantial narrative, which is to be read immediately after 25:34 (or 25:28), gives yet another explanation of the historical fact that Israel, the younger people, had outstripped Edom in the race for power-and prosperity. The clever but heartless stratagem by which Rebekah succeeds in thwarting the intention of Isaac, and diverting the blessing from Esau to Jacob, is related with great vivacity, and with an indifference to moral considerations which has been thought surprising in a writer with the fine ethical insight of J (Di). [Di here stands for the German critic Dillmann]. It must be remembered, however, that 'J' is a collective symbol, and embraces many tales which sink to the level of ordinary popular morality. We may fairly conclude with Gu. [272: Gu is for Gunkel] that narratives of this stamp were too firmly rooted in the mind of the people to be omitted from any collection of national traditions." The student should not forget that

these hypothetical "writers" are all *hypothetical*; that the hypothetical Codes are likewise hypothetical, since no external evidence can be produced to confirm their existence or that of their authors or "redactors." All phases of the Documentary Theory of the Pentateuch are completely without benefit of evidential support externally, and there is little or no agreement among the critics themselves in the matter of allocating verses, sentences and phrases to the various respective writers and redactors. Hence, it follows that all conclusions drawn from the internal evidence of the text is based on *inference*, and that the inference is not necessary inference. I insert this explanatory statement here to caution the student to be wary of these analytical theories which have been spun out of the critics' separate imaginations much in the manner in which a spider spins its web out of its own being (to use an illustration offered by Sir Francis Bacon in his *Novum Organon*). There is no valid ground for not accepting these accounts of the significant events in the lives of the patriarchs at face value. They certainly serve to show us that human character (motivations, attitudes, virtues, faults and foibles) is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Cornfeld (AtD, 81) writes: "Ancient belief held that words spoken in blessing, or in curse on solemn occasions, were efficacious and had the power, as though by magic, to produce the intended result. The blessing of the father was binding, and when Isaac discovered the deceit he held his blessing to be effective, even though it had been granted under false pretences. . . . In patriarchal society, the effectiveness of the blessing was well understood. In Nuzu a man repeated in court the blessing his father had given him on his death-bed, willing him a wife. The terms of such a blessing were upheld by the Court. The Nuzu tablets recognized oral blessings and death-bed wills."

Acts of blessing may be classified as follows: (1)

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Those in which God is said to bless men (Gen. 1:28, 22:17). "God's blessing is accompanied with that virtue which renders his blessing effectual, and which is expressed by it. Since God is eternal and omnipresent, his omniscience and omnipotence cause His blessings to avail in the present life in respect to all things, and also in the life to come." (2) Those in which men are said to bless God (Psa. 103:1, 2; 145:1-3, etc.). "This is when they ascribe to Him those characteristics which are His, acknowledge His sovereignty, express gratitude for His mercies, etc." (3) Those in which men bless their fellow-men when, as in ancient times, under the spirit of prophecy, they predicted blessings to come upon them. (Cf. Jacob and his sons, Gen. 49:1-28, Heb. 11:21; Moses and the children of Israel, Deut. 33:1-29). "Men bless their fellow-men when they express good wishes and pray God in their behalf." It was the duty and privilege of the priests to bless the people in the name of the Lord. The form of the priestly benediction was prescribed in the Law: see Num. 6:24-26: here the promise was added that God would fulfil the words of the blessing. This blessing was pronounced by the priest with uplifted hands, after every morning and evening sacrifice, as recorded of Aaron (Lev. 9:22), and to it the people responded by uttering an amen. This blessing was regularly pronounced at the close of the service in the synagogues. The Levites appear also to have had the power of conferring the blessing (2 Chron. 30:27), and the same privilege was accorded the king, as the viceroy of the Most High (2 Sam. 6:18, 1 Ki. 8:55). Our Lord is said to have blessed little children (Mark 10:16, Luke 24:50). Note also that blessing occurred on the occasion of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26). (See UBD, s.v., p. 134).

Leupold obviously gives us the clearest explanation of the subject before us. He writes (EG, 737): "Esau, knowing his father's love for game, had no doubt shown this

token of love many a time before this and had noted what pleasure it afforded his father. In this instance the momentous thing is that the father purposes 'to bless' his son. Esau well understood what this involved. This was a custom, apparently well established at this time, that godly men before their end bestowed their parting blessing upon their children. Such a blessing, had it been merely a pious wish of a pious man, would have had its worth and value. In it would have been concentrated the substance of all his prayers for his children. Any godly son would already on this score alone have valued such a blessing highly. However, the blessings of godly men, especially of the patriarchs, had another valuable element in them: they were prophetic in character. Before his end many a patriarch was taught by God's Spirit to speak words of great moment, that indicated to a large extent the future destiny of the one blessed. In other words, *the elements of benediction and prediction blended in the final blessing.* It appears from the brief nature of Isaac's statement that this higher character of the blessing was so well understood as to require no explanation. From all this one sees that *the crude ideas of magic were far removed from these blessings.*" (Italics mine—C.C.). For similar instances, see Gen. 48:10ff.; 50:24ff.; Deut. 33; Josh. 23; 2 Sam. 23:1ff.; 1 Ki. 2:1ff.; 2 Ki. 13:14ff.

2. *Isaac Purposes to Bless Esau* (vv. 1-5). We have here the first reported instance of the infirmities of old age and consequent shortening of life. Isaac was then in his 137th year, a figure based on the following calculation: Joseph was thirty years old when he was first introduced to Pharaoh (41:46), and when Jacob went into Egypt, thirty-nine, as the seven years of abundance and two of famine had then passed (41:47, 45:6); but Jacob at that time was 130 years old (47:9); this means that Joseph was born before Jacob was 91; and as his birth took place in the fourteenth year of Jacob's sojourn in Mesopotamia (cf.

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30:25 and 29:18, 21, 27); it follows that Jacob's flight to Laban occurred in the 77th year of his own life and the 137th of Isaac's. (See KD, BCOTP, 273, 274, fn.). Murphy finds that Isaac was 136 years old at the time of the bestowal of the blessing. "Joseph was in his thirtieth year when he stood before Pharaoh, and therefore thirty-nine when Jacob came down to Egypt at the age of one hundred and thirty. When Joseph was born, therefore, Jacob was ninety-one, and he had sojourned fourteen years in Padan-Aram. Hence Jacob's flight to Laban took place when he was seventy-seven, and therefore in the one hundred and thirty-sixth year of Isaac" (MG, 381). What was the cause of Isaac's failing sight at this relatively early age? The Rabbinical speculations are rather fantastic and indeed amusing. Isaac's eyes were dim, according to one view, from old age; according to another "as a punishment for not restraining Esau in his wickedness, as happened to Eli"; according to other notions, "through the smoke of the incense which his daughters-in-law offered to idols"; or, "when Isaac lay bound on the altar for a sacrifice, the angels wept over him, and their tears dropped into his eyes, and dimmed them"; or, finally, "this happened to him that Jacob might receive the blessings" (SC, 150).

The approach of infirmity of sight certainly warned Isaac "to perform the solemn act by which, as prophet as well as father, he was to hand down the blessing of Abraham to another generation. Of course he designed for Esau the blessing which, once given, was the authoritative and irrevocable act of the patriarchal power; and he desired Esau to prepare a feast of venison for the occasion. Esau was not likely to confess the sale of his birthright, nor could Jacob venture openly to claim the benefit of his trick. Whether Rebekah knew of that transaction, or whether moved by partiality only, she came to the aid of her favorite son, and devised the stratagem by which Jacob obtained his father's blessing" (OTH, 94). "Isaac

had not yet come to the conclusion that Jacob was heir of the promise. The communication from the Lord to Rebekah concerning her yet unborn sons in the form in which it is handed down to us merely determines that the elder shall serve the younger. This fact Isaac seems to have thought might not imply the transference of the birthright; and if he was aware of the transaction between Esau and Jacob, he may not have regarded it as valid. Hence he makes arrangements for bestowing the paternal blessing on Esau, his elder son, whom he also loved" (MG, 381). "In the calmness of determination Isaac directs Esau to prepare savory meat, such as he loved, that he may have his vigor renewed and his spirits revived for the solemn business of bestowing that blessing, which he held to be fraught with more than ordinary benefits" (MG, 381). "It must be observed that Isaac was in the wrong when he attempted to give Esau the blessing. He could not have been ignorant of God's decree about the sons before they were born. However much we deplore the acts of Rebekah and Jacob, the greater fault was with Isaac and Esau" (OTH, 94). We suggest that the proper title for the study before us would be, "The Parents, The Twins, and the Blessing." *Both parents were more deeply involved in these transactions than were the sons themselves.*

"Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death," said Isaac; yet he lived forty-three years longer (35:28). "Without regard to the words which were spoken by God with reference to the children before their birth, and without taking any notice of Esau's frivolous barter of his birthright and his ungodly connections with the Canaanites, Isaac maintained his preference for Esau, and directed him therefore to take his things (hunting gear), his quiver and bow, to hunt game and prepare a savory dish, that he might eat, and his soul might bless him. As his preference for Esau was fostered and strength-

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ened by, if it did not spring from, his liking for game (25:28), so now he wished to raise his spirits for imparting the blessing by a dish of venison prepared to his taste. In this the infirmity of the flesh is evident. At the same time, it was not merely because of his partiality for Esau, but unquestionably on account of the natural rights of the firstborn, that he wished to impart the blessing to him, just as the desire to do this before his death arose from the consciousness of his patriarchal call" (BCOTP, 274).

"He [Isaac] seems to have apprehended the near approach of dissolution (but he lived forty-three years longer, 35:28). And believing that the conveyance of the patriarchal benediction was a solemn duty incumbent on him, he was desirous of stimulating all his energies for that great effort, by partaking, apparently for the last time, of a favorite dish which had often refreshed and invigorated his wasted frame. It is difficult to imagine him ignorant of the Divine purpose (cf. 25:23). But natural affection, prevailing through age and infirmity, prompted him to entail the honors and powers of the birthright on his eldest son; and perhaps he was not aware of what Esau had done (cf. 25:34). The deathbed benediction of the patriarchs was not simply the last farewell blessing of a father to his children, though that, pronounced with all the fulness and energy of concentrated feeling, carries in every word an impressive significance which penetrates the inmost parts of the filial heart, and is often felt there long after the tongue that uttered it is silent in the grave. The dying benediction of the patriarchs had a mysterious import: it was a supernatural act, in performing which they were free agents indeed; still mere instruments employed by an overruling power to execute His purposes of grace. It was, in fact, a testamentary conveyance of the promise, bequeathed with great solemnity in a formal address, called a BLESSING (vv. 30, 36; 22:17, 18 [Greek,

eulogese] ; Heb. 11:20), which, consisting partly of prayers and partly of predictions, was an authoritative appropriation of the covenant promises to the person who inherited the right of primogeniture. Abraham, indeed, had not performed this last ceremony, because it had been virtually done before his death, on the expulsion of Ishmael (25:5); and by the bestowment of the patrimonial inheritance on Isaac (25:5), as directed by the oracle (cf. 17:21 with 21:12, last clause). But Isaac (as also Jacob) had more than one son in *his* family, and, in the belief of his approaching death, was animated by a sacred impulse to do what was still unperformed, and his heart prompted as right—that of transmitting the honors of primogeniture to his elder son" (Jamieson, CECG, 194).

Note especially v. 4, last clause: "*that my soul may bless thee before I die.*" That is to say "that, invigorated with the savory meat, I may bestow upon thee my blessing, constituting thee heir of all the benefits promised to me and my father Abraham: vv. 27-29; ch. 28:3, 4, 48:15; Deut. 31, 33; Heb. 11:20" (SIBG, 258). "Isaac intended to bless him that God's promise to Abraham, that his seed would inherit the land, should be fulfilled through Esau. Presumably Rebekah had never told Isaac of the prophecy that the elder would serve the younger, 25:23" (SC, 150). "The expression 'that my *soul* may bless thee' does involve a bit more than the bare fact that the word 'soul' is used as a substitute for the personal pronoun. The expression actually indicates the participation of one's inmost being in the activity involved" (Leupold, EG, 738). "As if the expiring *nephesh* gathered up all its forces in a single potent and prophetic wish. The universal belief in the efficacy of a dying utterance appears often in the New Testament" (Skinner, ICCG, 369).

3. *Rebekah's Stratagem* (vv. 6-17). Rebekah *happened to be listening* (JB, 45) when Isaac was talking with his son Esau (cf. 18:10). But—did she just *happen* to be

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listening, or was she *eavesdropping*, constantly on guard to protect the interests of her favorite? Her jealousy aroused by what she overheard, "she instantly devises a scheme whose daring and ingenuity illustrate the Hebrew notion of capable and quick-witted womanhood" (ICCG, 370). Apparently her plan was formed quickly: indeed the likelihood is that she had the plan ready in case of just such an eventuality as this. Everything that follows makes Rebekah's initiative in the scheme more obvious. "She is a woman of quick decision, as she was from the moment of her first meeting with Abraham's servant as well as on the occasion of her assent to the proposition to go back to Isaac at once" (EG, 740). (Cf. 24:15-27, 55-60). As she unfolds her stratagem, Jacob obeys her at once. The fact that he sees a possible flaw, however, makes it crystal clear that he is not averse to carrying out her orders. His objection shows enough shrewdness on his part (vv. 11-12) "to throw his mother's resourcefulness into bolder relief." But it is obvious that his demurrer was not on any moral ground, but solely on the ground of *expediency*, namely, that he might get caught red-handed in trying to perpetrate the deception. To this Rebekah replied, "Upon me be the curse, my son," to which she added the demand that he *obey her voice*, that is, without question. Evidently she knew what she was doing, and so had made preparation for any eventuality. *Rebekah was truly in command of the situation: no doubt about it.* "Jacob views the matter more coolly, and starts a difficulty. He may be found out to be a deceiver, and bring his father's curse upon him. Rebekah, anticipating no such issue, undertakes to bear the curse that she conceived would never come. Only let him obey" (Murphy, MG, 381). "Jacob's chief difficulty was removed. He had been more afraid of detection than of duplicity. His mother, however, proved more resolute than he in carrying through the plan. Jacob provides the materials, Rebekah prepares them. After more than

ninety years of married life she must have known pretty well what 'his father loved' " (Leupold, EG, 743). Rebekah takes the festal raiment and puts it on Jacob: "the fact that this would have been put on Esau proves once more that the blessing was a religious ceremony." "Since the clothes were in Rebekah's charge, Esau must have been still an unmarried man" (ICCG, 370). Rebekah's part is now ended and Jacob is left on his own resources. v. 13—"The manner in which she [Rebekah] imprecates the curse cannot be justified; but, from the promise of God, and from Jacob's having obtained the birthright, ch. 25:23, 33, she was confident of a happy issue" (SIBG, 258). "The narrative stresses throughout that Esau was the elder and Jacob the younger, and this is done to the credit of Rebekah. Although a mother would normally recognize that the blessings and birthright belonged to the firstborn, she was determined that they should go to Jacob, because she perceived Esau's unfitness for them" (SC, 151).

4. *Jacob Obtains the Blessing* (vv. 18-29). Jacob, without further objection, obeys his mother. She clothes him in Esau's festal raiment and puts the skins of the kids on his hands and his neck. ("The camel-goat affords a hair which bears a great resemblance to that of natural growth, and is used as a substitute for it," Murphy, MG, 382). The strange interview between father and son now begins. "The scheme planned by the mother was to be executed by the son in the father's bed-chamber; and it is painful to think of the deliberate falsehoods, as well as daring profanity, he resorted to. The disguise, though wanting one thing, which had nearly upset the whole plot, succeeded in misleading Isaac; and while giving his paternal embrace, the old man was roused into a state of high satisfaction and delight" (CECG, 195). Isaac is reclining on his couch, in the feebleness of advancing years. His first reaction is to express surprise that the visitor could have had such good fortune in his hunting and in the

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preparation of the savory meal so quickly. Jacob blandly replied, hypocritically it would seem, "Because Jehovah thy God sent me God speed," that is, Yahweh has providentially come to my assistance. "To bring God into the lie seems blasphemous to us but the oriental mentality would see no wrong in it, being used to ascribe every event to God, ignoring 'secondary causes'" (JB, 47). (It is difficult, I think, for us to dismiss the matter so nonchalantly). "By making the utterance doubly solemn, 'Yahweh, thy God,' the hypocritical pretense is made the more odious" (EG, 745). On hearing Jacob's voice Isaac became suspicious, and bade Jacob come nearer, that he might feel him. This Jacob did, but because his hands appeared hairy like Esau's, Isaac did not recognize him; "so he blessed him." "In this remark (v. 23) the writer gives the result of Jacob's attempt; so that the blessing is mentioned proleptically here, and refers to the formal blessing described afterwards, and not to the first greeting and salutation" (BCOTP, 275). "The bewildered father now puts Jacob to a severer test. He feels him, but discerns him not. The ear notes a difference, but the hand feels the hairy skin resembling Esau's; the eyes give no testimony." Still there is lingering doubt: Isaac puts the crucial question: "Art thou my very son Esau?" The issue is joined: there is no evasion of this question (cf. Jesus and the High Priest, Matt. 26:63-64) Jacob now resorts to the *outright lie*: "I am" (v. 24). Isaac, his doubt now apparently allayed, calls for the repast and partakes of it.

The Kiss, vv. 26, 27. Originally the act of kissing had a symbolical character. Here it is a sign of affection between a parent and a child; in ch. 29:13 between relatives. It was also a token of friendship (2 Sam. 20:9, Matt. 26:48; Luke 7:45, 15:20; Acts 20:37). The kissing of princes was a symbol of homage (1 Sam. 10:1, Ps. 2:12). The Rabbis permitted only three kinds of kisses—the kiss of reverence, of reception, and of dismissal. The kiss of

charity (love, peace) was practised among disciples in the early church (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Thess. 5:26, 1 Pet. 5:4).

"The kiss appears here for the first time as the token of true love and deep affection. Isaac asks for this token from his son. The treachery of the act cannot be condoned on Jacob's part: the token of true love is debased to a means of deception. The Old Testament parallel (2 Sam. 20:9) as well as that of the New Testament (Matt. 26:49 and parallels) comes to one's mind involuntarily" (EG, 749). "The kiss of Christian brotherhood and the kiss of Judas are here enclosed in one" (Lange).

The Perfumed Raiment, v. 27. "But the smell of goatskin is most offensive. This, however, teaches that they had the fragrance of the Garden of Eden (Rashi). This comment is to be understood as follows: According to tradition, the garment had belonged to Adam, and had passed from him to Nimrod and thence to Esau. Adam had worn it in Eden, and it still retained its fragrance (Nachmanides). It was perfumed (Rashbam)" (SC, 152). (But, "we must not think of our European goats; whose skins would be quite unsuitable for any such deception. 'It is the camel-goat of the East, whose black, silk-like hair was used even by the Romans as a substitute for human hair'"—BCOTP, 279, fn.). And Isaac smelled the smell of Jacob's raiment: "not deliberately, in order to detect whether they belonged to a shepherd or a huntsman, but accidentally, while in the act of kissing. The odor of Esau's garments, impregnated with the fragrance of the aromatic herbs of Palestine, excited the dull sensibilities of the aged prophet, suggesting to his mind pictures of freshness and fertility, and inspiring him to pour forth his promised benediction; *and blessed him* (not a second time, the statement in v. 23 being inserted only by anticipation" (PCG, 338). "The aromatic odors of the Syrian fields and meadows often impart a strong fragrance to the

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person and clothes, as has been noticed by many travelers. This may have been the reason for besmearing the 'goodly raiment' with fragrant perfumes. It is not improbable, that in such a skilfully-contrived scheme, where not the smallest circumstance seems to have been omitted or forgotten that could render the counterfeit complete, means were used for scenting the clothes with which Jacob was invested, to be the more like those of Esau—newly returned from the field" (CECG, 196). "The smelling of the garments seems to have a twofold significance: on the one hand it is a final test of Esau's identity (otherwise the disguise, v. 15, would have no meaning), on the other it supplies the sensuous impression which suggests the words of the blessing" (ICCG, 371). (Note: "the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Yahweh hath blessed," v. 27). "Isaac regarded the smell of Jacob's garment as a token that God had intended to bless him abundantly, and to render him a particular blessing to others" (SIBG, 258). "After eating, Isaac kissed his son as a sign of his paternal affection, and in doing so he smelt the odor of his clothes, *i.e.*, the clothes of Esau, which were thoroughly scented with the odor of the fields, and then imparted his blessing" (BCOTP, 275).

The Blessing, vv. 27-29. Isaac now gives the kiss of paternal affection and pronounces the benediction. Murphy (MG, 382) notes the threefold character of the blessing. 1. It contains, first, *a fertile soil*. "*The smell of a field which Yahweh hath blessed*" (cf. Deut. 33:23). "*The dew of heaven*" (an abundance of this was especially precious in a land where rainfall is limited to two seasons of the year). "*Fatness of the earth*" (Num. 13:20, Isa. 5:1, 28:1: "a proportion of this to match and render available the dew of heaven"). "*Plenty of grain and new wine*" ("often combined with 'oil' in pictures of agricultural felicity; cf. Deut. 7:13, Hos. 2:8, 22). 2. It contains, second, *a numerous and powerful offspring*. "*Let*

peoples serve thee" (pre-eminence among the neighboring nations: cf. 25:23, 2 Sam. 8). "Be lord over thy brethren" (pre-eminence among his kindred: "Isaac does not seem to have grasped the full meaning of the prediction, "The elder shall serve the younger," (Murphy). But—can we be sure that Rebekah had told Isaac of this prediction, 25:23?) 3. It contains, third, *temporal and spiritual prosperity*. Let everyone that curseth thee be cursed; and let everyone that blesseth thee be blessed. "This is the only part of the blessing that directly comprises spiritual things." "In this blessing Isaac at once requested and predicted the benefits mentioned. These temporal favors were more remarkable under the Old Testament than under the New, and represented the spiritual and temporal influences and fullness of the New Covenant and of the church of God: cf. Deut. 32:2, Isa. 45:8; 1 Cor. 1:30, 3:22; Rev. 1:6, 5:10; Eph. 1:3" (SIBG, 258). "On the whole, who would not covet such a blessing? Bestowed by a godly father upon a godly and a deserving son in accordance with the will and purpose of God, it surely would constitute a precious heritage" (Leupold, EG, 751). "The blessing is partly natural and partly political, and deals, of course, not with the personal history of Jacob, but with the future greatness of Israel. Its nearest analogies are the blessings on Joseph (Gen. 49:22-26, Deut. 33:13-16)" (ICCG, 371).

5. *Esau's Bitterness and Hatred* (vv. 30-41). Note how very nearly Jacob was caught redhanded (v. 30). "He had just about closed the door, divested himself of the borrowed garments and the kidskin disguise, when his brother appeared on the scene" (EG, 751). "Scarcely had the former scene been concluded, when the fraud was discovered. The emotions of Isaac, as well as Esau, may easily be imagined—the astonished, alarm, and sorrow of the one, the disappointment and indignation of the other. But a moment's reflection convinced the aged patriarch that the transfer of the blessing was 'of the Lord,' and now

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irrevocable. The importunities of Esau, however, over-powered him; and as the prophetic afflatus was upon the patriarch, he gave utterance to what was probably as pleasing to a man of Esau's character as the honors of primogeniture would have been" (CECG, 197). Esau comes in, but it is too late. He uses practically the same words that Isaac had used (cf. "that thy soul may bless me," vv. 19, 31): this fact shows how carefully Jacob (or Rebekah) had planned the deception: "he knew about what Esau would say when stepping into his father's presence." Pained perplexity stands out in Isaac's question, v. 33, "who then is he that hath taken venison"? etc. But by the time the question is fully uttered, the illusion is dispelled: Isaac knows who has perpetrated the deception. "Isaac knows it was Jacob. Isaac sees how God's providence checked him in his unwise and wicked enterprise. From this point onward there is no longer any uncleanness as to what God wanted in reference to the two sons. Therefore the brief but conclusive, 'yea, blessed shall he be.' But his trembling was caused by seeing the hand of God in what had transpired" (EG, 753). "Jacob had no doubt perpetrated a fraud, at the instigation of his mother; and if Esau had been worthy in other respects, and above all if the blessing had been designed for him, its bestowment on another would have been either prevented or regarded as null and void. But Isaac now felt that, whatever was the misconduct of Jacob in interfering, and especially in employing unworthy means to accomplish his end, he himself was culpable in allowing carnal considerations to draw his preference to Esau, who was otherwise unworthy. He knew too that the paternal benediction flowed not from the bias of the parent, but from the Spirit of God guiding his will, and therefore when pronounced could not be revoked. Hence he was now convinced that it was the design of Providence that the spiritual blessing should fall on the line of Jacob"

(MG, 383). V. 33: "*and blessed shall be be*": "not that Isaac now acquiesces in the ruling of Providence, and refuses to withdraw the blessing; but that such an oracle once uttered is in its nature irrevocable" (ICCG, 372). (This is undoubtedly the meaning of Heb. 12:16, 17).

Vv. 34-38: "The grief of Esau is distressing to witness, especially as he had been comparatively blameless in this particular instance. But still it is to be remembered that his heart had not been open to the paramount importance of spiritual things. Isaac now perceives that Jacob has gained the blessing by deceit. Esau marks the propriety of his name, the wrestler who trips up the heel, and pleads pathetically for at least some blessing. His father enumerates what he has done for Jacob, and asks what more he can do for Esau, who then exclaims, *Hast thou but one blessing?*" Had Esau in the interim between his bartering the birthright for a mess of pottage, and this incident of the blessing, come to have a more adequate understanding of these institutions and privileges? We must doubt it. "Esau's conduct in this case does not impress us favorably. His unmanly tears are quite unworthy of him. His 'exceedingly loud and bitter outcry' is further evidence of lack of self-control. He who never aspired after higher things now wants this blessing as though his future hopes depended all and only on the paternal blessing. We cannot help but feel that a superstitious over-valuation of the blessing is involved. In fact, he now wants, as though it were his own, that which he had wilfully resigned under oath. The right to the blessing which Esau now desires was lost long ago. In fact, up to this point there was a double conspiracy afoot. Isaac and Esau, though not admitting it was so, were conspiring to deflect to Esau a blessing both knew he had forfeited, in fact, was never destined to have. But at the same time Rebekah and Jacob were consciously conspiring to obtain

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what God had destined for Jacob and what Jacob had also secured from Esau" (EG, 753).

What an emotional scene this was! How intensely dramatic! Old Isaac *trembled very exceedingly* (v. 33): was he not keenly conscious now of the *carnality* (his love of well-cooked venison) which had all along prompted his preference for Esau? Was he aware of Esau's bartering away of the birthright? Was he aware of the Divine prediction that "the elder should serve the younger"? If so, did He now realize that he was presuming to obstruct God's Eternal Purpose respecting Messiah? If so, no wonder that he trembled! As for Esau, he "cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry" (v. 34) and bawled out the words, "*Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.*" ("Jacob" means "Supplanter," literally, "Overreacher"). What a clear case of what Freudians call *projection*: Isaac could not have taken his birthright, if he, Esau, had had any respect for it! Isaac's gain was the direct consequence of Esau's profanity. And what of Jacob in this incident of the blessing? He has slunk away from the scene entirely, having accomplished his deception. We cannot help thinking he was somewhere with his mother awaiting developments, but inwardly gratified that their plans had succeeded. "The purely literary aspects of this vivid account require little comment. Tension mounts constantly as Isaac, sightless and never altogether convinced by the evidence of his other senses, resorts to one test after another: his visitor sounds like Jacob, but says he is Esau, yet the hunt took much less time than expected; the skin feels like Esau's and the food tastes right; the lips betray nothing, but the clothes smell of the chase; so it has to be Esau after all! The reader is all but won over by the drama of Jacob's ordeal, when Esau's return restores the proper perspective. The scene between Isaac and Esau,

both so shaken and helpless, could scarcely be surpassed for pathos. Most poignant of all is the stark fact that the deed cannot be undone. For all the actors in this piece are but tools of fate which—purposeful though it must be—can itself be neither deciphered nor side-stepped by man" (ABG, 213). (See *infra* on the subject of Divine election).

The Blessing of Esau, vv. 39-40. "My brother has supplanted me twice," cried Esau, "haven't you any blessing left for me, father?" "Though there is truth in what Esau says, he does not do well to play the part of injured innocence. His birthright he sold right cheerfully, and was far more at fault in the selling of it than Jacob in the buying. The blessing, on the other hand, had been destined for Jacob by God long ago, and Esau knew it" (EG, 755). *But did Esau know this?* We are told by some that Rebekah would never have kept secret from Isaac the Divine oracle of 25:23. But can we be sure about this, considering the strong-willed woman that Rebekah was? However, the meaningful blessing having been bestowed on Jacob, there was no calling it back. "A blessing in the sense in which Esau wants it cannot be bestowed, for that would require the cancellation of the blessing just bestowed" (*i.e.*, on Jacob). "Poor Esau's grief is pathetic, a startling case of seeking a good thing too late. The blessing of the father seems to be the one thing of the whole spiritual heritage that has impressed Esau. Unfortunately, it is not the chief thing" (EG, 755). "*So Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.*" So shall the lost, when they find it is everlastinglly too late, cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them "from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:15, 16).

V. 38: "*Is that the only blessing thou hast?*" cries Esau. He does not even imagine that the blessing can be revoked, but he still hopes that perhaps a second (inferior)

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blessing might be granted him. "Those tears of Esau, the sensuous, wild, impulsive man—almost like the cry of some trapped creature—are among the most pathetic in the Bible" (Davidson, *Hebrews*, 242, quoted ICCG, 373). His importunity elicits, says Skinner, what is virtually a curse, though put in terms similar to those of v. 29. Literally, it reads:

"Away from the fat places of the earth shall thy dwelling be;

And away from the dew of heaven above!"

"Here, after a noun of place, the preposition denotes distance or separation; for example, Prov. 20:3. The pastoral life has been distasteful to Esau, and so shall it be with his race. The land of Edom was accordingly a comparative wilderness, Mal. 1:3" (MG, 383). The "blessing" imported that Esau and his seed should inhabit Mt. Seir, a soil then only moderately fertile (cf. Gen. 36:1-8, Deut. 2:5). Seir was the rather rugged region extending southward from the Dead Sea, east of the valley of Arabah: "far from the fatness of the earth and dew of heaven from above" (Unger, UBD, 991, 992). The rest of Isaac's pronouncement was predictive, signifying that Esau's progeny should live much by war, violence, and rapine; should be subjected to the Hebrew yoke, but should at times cast it off. "And so it was; the historical relation of Edom to Israel assumed the form of a constant reiteration of servitude, revolt, and reconquest." After a long period of independence at first, the Edomites were defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 14:47) and subjugated by David (2 Sam. 8:14); and, in spite of an attempt at revolt under Solomon (1 Ki. 11:14ff.), they remained subject to the kingdom of Judah until the time of Joram, when they rebelled (2 Ki. 8:16ff.) They were subdued again by Amaziah (2 Ki. 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11ff.), and remained in subjection under Uzziah and Jotham (2 Ki. 14:22, 2 Chron. 26:2). It was not until the reign of Ahaz that they shook the

yoke of Judah entirely off (2 Ki. 16:6, 2 Chron. 18:17), without Judah being ever able to reduce them again. At length, however, they were completely conquered by John Hyrcanus about B.C. 129, compelled to submit to circumcision, and incorporated in the Jewish state (Josephus, *Ant.* 13, 9, 1; 15, 7, 9). At a still later period, through Antipater and Herod, they established an Idumean dynasty over Judea, which lasted till the complete dissolution of the Jewish state. (See BCOTP, Keil and Delitzsch, 279).

Esau's Vindictiveness, vv. 41-45. Esau hated Jacob: and hate is a passion never satisfied until it kills. It is scarcely to be wondered at, however, that Esau resented Jacob's deceit and vowed revenge. Esau said in his heart, "*The days of mourning for my father is at hand*; then will I slay my brother Jacob." "*The days of mourning for my father*": a common Oriental expression for the death of a parent. This, we are told, was a period of seven days. "It very frequently happens in the East that brothers at variance wait for the death of their father to avenge amongst themselves their private quarrels" (CECG, 197). "He would put off his intended fratricide that he might not hurt his father's mind" (BCOTP, 280). Another view: "In this manner Esau hoped to recover both birth-right and blessing; but Isaac nevertheless lived about forty-three years after." "Esau was afraid to attempt any open violence during his father's life. The disease under which Isaac was laboring had brought on premature debility, and it appears to have greatly affected his sight. He must have in a great measure recovered from it, however, for he lived for forty years after Jacob's departure" (SIBG, 259). "He did not wish to grieve his father by taking revenge while he was alive" (SC, 156).

Rebekah to the Rescue. In some way, or by someone, Esau's threat was made known to Rebekah, and, as usual, she was prepared to meet the crisis. She advised (in reality, ordered) Jacob to protect himself from Esau's threatened

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vengeance by fleeing to her brother Laban in Haran, and remaining there "a few days," as she mildly put it, until his brother's wrath was subdued.

"*Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?*" This refers to the law of Goelism, by which the nearest of kin would be obliged to avenge the death of Jacob upon his brother" (CECG, 198). "The writer has in view the custom of blood-revenge (cf. 2 Sam. 14:7), though in the case supposed there would be no one to execute it" (ICCG, 374). (But would not Jacob's offspring be required to do this? (Cf. Gen. 4:14-15). "Killing Jacob would expose Esau to the death penalty, through blood vengeance or otherwise" (ABG, 210). "In order to obtain Isaac's consent to this plan, without hurting his feelings by telling him of Esau's murderous intentions, she spoke to him of her troubles on account of the Hittite wives of Esau, and the weariness of life that she should feel if Jacob also were to marry one of the daughters of the land, and so introduced the idea of sending Jacob to her relatives in Mesopotamia, with a view to marriage there" (BCOTP, 280).

The recapitulation of this incident by Keil-Deitzsch is so thorough and so obviously accurate that we feel justified in including it at this point: "Thus the words of Isaac to his two sons were fulfilled—words which are justly said to have been spoken 'in faith concerning things to come' (Heb. 11:20). For the blessing was a prophecy, and that not merely in the case of Esau, but in that of Jacob also; although Isaac was deceived with regard to the person of the latter. Jacob remained blessed, therefore, because, according to the predetermination of God, the elder was to serve the younger; but the deceit by which his mother prompted him to secure the blessing was never approved. On the contrary, the sin was followed by immediate punishment. Rebekah was obliged to send her pet son into a foreign land, away from his father's house, and in an

utterly destitute condition. She did not see him for twenty years, even if she lived till his return, and possibly never saw him again. Jacob had to atone for his sin against both brother and father by a long and painful exile, in the midst of privation, anxiety, fraud, and want. Isaac was punished for retaining his preference for Esau, in opposition to the revealed will of Jehovah, by the success of Jacob's stratagem; and Esau for his contempt of the birthright, by the loss of the blessing of the first-born. In this way a higher hand prevailed above the acts of sinful men, bringing the counsel and will of Jehovah to eventual triumph, in opposition to human thought and will" (BCOTP, 297).

6. *The Problem of Divine Election.* We need recall here certain facts about Divine knowledge and election. We must start from the fact that man is predestined only to be free, that is, to have the power of choice. (In the final analysis, it is neither heredity nor environment nor both, but the *I*—the self, the person—who makes the choice. Hence, a man's choices, and the acts proceeding therefrom constitute God's foreknowledge, or to be specific, His *knowledge*. Therefore, the acts of the parents and the twins, in the story before us, were not the consequences of an arbitrary foreordination on God's part, nor of the influence of some such non-entity as "fate," "fortune," "destiny," and the like, but of the motivations, choices, and acts of the persons involved. Though *known* by Him, as He knows in a single thought, the entire space-time continuum, they were not necessarily foreordained. He simply allowed them to occur by not interfering to prevent their occurrence. (See Part Thirty-seven *supra*, under v. 23, of ch. 25, caption, "The Prophetic Communication"). To hold that God necessitates everything that man does, including even his acceptance or rejection of the redemption provided for him by Divine grace, is to make God responsible for everything that occurs, both good and evil.

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This is not only unscriptural: it is an insult to the Almighty. (Cf. Ezek. 18:32, John 5:40, 1 Tim. 2:4, Jas. 1:13, 2 Pet. 3:9). Although it may appear at first glance that the choice of Jacob over Esau was an arbitrary one, our human hindsight certainly supports God's "foresight" in making it. True, Jacob's character was not anything to brag about, especially in his earlier years, but after his experience at Peniel he seems to have been a changed man with a changed name, Israel (32:22-32); certainly it was of nobler quality all along than that of Esau, as proved by their different attitudes toward Divine institutions—rights and responsibilities—such as those of the birthright and the blessing (Exo. 13:11-16, Deut. 21:17). Hence the Divine election in this case was not arbitrary, but justly based on the Divine knowledge of the basic righteousness of Jacob by way of contrast with the sheer *secularism* ("profanity") of Esau.

Hurrian Parallels. We are especially indebted to Dr. Speiser for his information regarding Hurrian parallels of the Hebrew stories of the parents, the twins, and the transference of the birthright and the blessing. These Hurrian sources from Nuzi, we are told, "mirror social conditions and customs in the patriarchal center at Haran." Birthright, for instance, "in Hurrian society was often a matter of the father's discretion rather than chronological priority. Moreover, of all the paternal dispositions, the one that took the form of a deathbed declaration carried the greatest weight. One such recorded statement actually safeguards the rights of the youngest son against possible claims by his older brothers. Another is introduced by the formula, 'I have now grown old,' which leads up to an oral allocation of the testator's property, or, in other words, a deathbed 'blessing.'" (For further details, Dr. Speiser refers the student to his discussion in the *Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 74 [1955,], 252f.).

Again: "Isaac's opening words in the present instance

reflect thus an old and authentic usage. The background is Hurrian, which accords with the fact that Haran, where the patriarchs had their roots, was old Hurrian territory. On the socio-legal level, therefore, the account is a correct measure of early relations between Hebrews and Hurrians. With Seir—a synonym of Esau—assigned in Deut. 2:12 to the Horites (even though not all of them can be equated with Hurrians), it would not be surprising if the same account should also echo remote historical rivalries between the same two groups. At any rate, tradition succeeded in preserving the accurate setting of this narrative precisely because the subject matter was deemed to be of great consequence. In essence, this matter was the continuity of the biblical process itself, a process traced through a line that did not always hold the upper hand. Legally, the older son was entitled to a double and preferential share of the inheritance, especially in Hurrian society. But since the status of the older son could be regulated by a father's pronouncement, irrespective of chronological precedent, and since the legacy in this instance had been established by divine covenant, the emphasis of tradition on the transfer of the birthright in a deathbed blessing—with Yahweh's approval (cf. vs. 7)—can readily be appreciated" (ABG, 212-213). Hurrian parallels of various details of the story of the relations between Jacob and Laban will be found in subsequent sections.

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

An Unpleasant Picture of Family Life

All four of the participants in the domestic drama paid, in one way or another, for their sins of parental bias, outright deception, indifference to sacred institutions, disregard of family unity and welfare, mediocre fatherhood and overzealous mother-love. A family of four, all of whom were in the wrong. Note the following outline:

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1. The father's scheming, vv. 1-4. Isaac evidently was not near death, for he lived on for more than forty years. It may be assumed that he knew God's will (25:23); otherwise, it must be assumed that Rebekah could never have reported to him regarding this Divine pronouncement. (Of course this latter view is not outside the realm of possibility by any means). If Isaac knew what was God's will in the matter, he deliberately set about to thwart it. Esau probably also knew, in which case he showed himself more than ready to fall in with his father's scheme. In any case Isaac could hardly lay claim to any great measure of family control. He was without doubt a genuinely henpecked man.

2. The mother's counter-plot (vv. 5-17). Rebekah's aim was commendable, we might agree, but her methods were wrong. Jacob saw the risk involved (v. 12) but was overborne by his domineering mother.

3. The younger son's deception (vv. 18-29). The lies were terrible, one might well say, unpardonable. It was in response to these lies, that the father's benediction, with some misgiving, followed.

4. The elder son's humiliation (vv. 30-40). Sympathy for Esau cannot hide the fact of his "profanity." He had sold his birthright for "a mess of pottage." If he had, in the meantime, come to realize the true nature of the blessing, it was too late: he could not change that which, once given, was irrevocable. This we believe to be the meaning of Heb. 12:17.

5. The denouement (vv. 41-46). Esau's anger was to be expected: it was natural. However, because Isaac did not die, he could only vent his rage on Jacob. Rebekah, of course, took action immediately to thwart his threatened revenge; but with all her resourcefulness she could not foresee either that she might never meet Jacob again or that her brother Laban would prove to be as great a plotter as she had been.

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All in all, it was a family "mess." But it is also another case of the Bible's *realism*. The Bible is pre-eminently the Book of Life! It pictures life exactly as men and women live it in this world, never exaggerating their virtues, never ignoring their faults.

"The Result of the Deception. The blessing of a dying father was believed by Oriental peoples to exert an important influence over the life of his descendants. Probably Rebekah and Jacob feared that Jacob might thereby lose the advantage he had already gained by his bargain with Esau. The steps they took to deceive the aged patriarch were wholly discreditable from the standpoint of a modern conscience. Jacob and his mother did not attempt to justify their act. The guilty pair did not remain unpunished. A train of bitter consequences ensued.

1. Jacob's punishment was exile from the family home.
2. He had deprived himself at a stroke of everything on which he set great value.
3. It was the sort of retribution he needed. His scheming mother suffered too. Despite her masterfulness and whole-souled devotion, she never saw the face of her favorite son again" (HH, 40).

For Meditation: "Some very solemn and searching lessons for us all. (1) The end does *not* justify the means. (2) The results of sin are inevitable (all four suffered irreparably). (3) The will of God will be done in spite of man's effort to thwart it (Psa. 33:10; Prov. 16:9, 19:21)" (TPCC, 54). In addition to all this, there was the terrible threat hanging over the household (v. 45). "This is not a rhetorical question. By the laws of blood revenge, if Esau killed Jacob, the clan would in turn kill him. We have a parallel in the tragedy of the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14:5-7)" (Cornfeld, AtD, 81). The prospect of a bloodbath that might ensue within the tribe was not an improbable one: hence Jacob's flight, at the command of his mother, to her distant kinsman in Haran.

Learn: "1. That those who attempt to deceive others are

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not infrequently themselves deceived. 2. That those who set out on a sinful course are liable to sink deeper into sin than they expected. 3. That deception practised by a son against a father, at a mother's instigation, is a monstrous and unnatural display of wickedness. 4. That God can accomplish His own designs by means of man's crimes, without either relieving them of guilt or Himself being the author of sin. 5. That the blessing of God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith. 6. That the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (PCG, 340); that is "without variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1:17) according to the demands of Absolute justice tempered with mercy. Finally, "The prediction of a nation's or a person's future does not interfere with the free operation of the human will" (*ibid.*, 343).

The Parents and the Twins: Characterizations

(1) "Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac in order to obtain the blessing. Esau, long before this, had sold the birthright. (25:27-34) to his brother. God would undoubtedly have worked out His will for Jacob to obtain the blessing in the end without resort to fraud. This incident is a sad illustration of what happens when believers seek to promote the will of God by dishonest means. Jacob had to pay the price in long years of exile" (HSB, 45).

(2) "The ethics of the case should be scrutinized a bit more closely. That Jacob was in part at fault has not been denied. That Esau was far more at fault has been pointed out. This contrast is usually overlooked. Jacob has been criticized quite roundly, and the greater sinner, Esau, is pitied and represented as quite within his rights. That the whole is a most regrettable domestic tangle cannot be denied, and, as is usually the case in such tangles, every member involved bore his share of guilt. But if it be overlooked that Jacob's aspirations were high and good and in every sense commendable, and besides based on a sure promise of God, a distorted view of the case must result. They that insist on distorting the incident claim that the account practically indicates that Jacob was rewarded with a blessing for his treachery. The following facts should be held over against such a claim to show just retribution is visited on Jacob for his treachery: 1. Rebekah and Jacob apparently never saw one another again after the separation that grew out of this deceit—an experience painful for both; 2. Jacob, deceiver of his father, was more cruelly deceived by his own sons in the case of the sale of Joseph and the torn coat of many colors; 3. from having been a

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man of means and influence Jacob is demoted to a position of hard rigorous service for twenty years" (EG, 758).

(3) "It is quite common, in reviewing the present narrative, to place Rebekah and Jacob too much under the shadows of sin, in comparison with Isaac. Isaac's sin does not consist alone in his arbitrary determination to present Esau with the blessing of the theocratic birthright, although Rebekah received the divine sentence respecting her children before their birth, and which, no doubt, she had mentioned to him; and although Esau had manifested already, by his marriage with the daughters of Heth, his want of the theocratic faith, and by his bartering with Jacob, his carnal disposition, and his contempt of the birthright—thus viewed, indeed, his son admits of palliation through several excuses. The clear right of the first-born seemed to oppose itself to the dark oracle of God, Jacob's prudence to Esau's frank and generous disposition, the quiet shepherd-life of Jacob to Esau's stateliness and power, and on the other hand, Esau's misalliances to Jacob's continued celibacy. And although Isaac may have been too weak to enjoy the venison obtained for him by Esau, yet the true-hearted care of the son for his father's infirmity and age, is also of some importance. But the manner in which Isaac intends to bless Esau, places his offense in a clearer light. He intends to bless him solemnly in unbecoming secrecy, without the knowledge of Rebekah and Jacob, or of his house. The preparation of the venison is scarcely to be regarded as if he was to be inspired for the blessing by the eating of this 'dainty dish,' or of this token of filial affection. This preparation, at least, in its main point of view, is an excuse to gain time and place for the secret act. In this point of view, the act of Rebekah appears in a different light. It is a woman's shrewdness that crosses the shrewdly calculated project of Isaac. He is caught in a net of his own sinful prudence. A want of divine confidence may be recognized through all his actions. It is no real presentation of death that urges him now to bless Esau. But he now *anticipates* his closing hours and Jehovah's decision, because he wishes to put an end to his inward uncertainty which annoyed him. Just as Abraham anticipated the divine decision in his connection with Hagar, so Isaac, in his eager and hearty performance of an act belonging to his last days, while he lived yet many years." With this, therefore, is also connected the improper combination of the act of blessing with the meal, as well as the uneasy apprehension lest he should be interrupted in his plan (see ver. 18), and a suspicious and strained expectation which was not at first caused by the voice of Jacob. Rebekah, however, has so far the advantage of him that she, in her deception, has the divine assurance that Jacob was the heir, while Isaac, in his preceding secrecy, has, on his side, only human descent and his human reason, without any inward spiritual certainty. But Rebekah's sin consists in thinking that she must save the divine election of Jacob by means of human deception and a so-called white-lie. Isaac, at that critical moment, would have been far less able to pronounce the blessing of Abraham upon Esau, than afterward Balaam, standing far below him, could have cursed the people of Israel at the critical moment

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of its history. For the words of the spirit and of the promise are never left to human caprice. Rebekah, therefore, sinned against Isaac through a want of candor, just as Isaac before had sinned against Rebekah through a like deceit. The divine decree would also have been fulfilled without her assistance, if she had had the necessary measure of faith. Of course, when compared with Isaac's fatal error, Rebekah was right. Though she deceived him greatly, misled her favorite son, and alienated Esau from her, there was yet something saving in her action according to her intentions, even for Isaac himself and for both her sons. For to Esau the most comprehensive blessing might have become a curse. He was not fitted for it. Just as Rebekah thinks to oppose cunning to cunning in order to save the divine blessing through Isaac, and thus secure a heavenly right, so also Jacob secures a human right in buying of Esau the right of the firstborn. But now the tragic consequences of the first officious anticipation, which Isaac incurred, as well as that of the second, of which Rebekah becomes guilty, were soon to appear. The tragic consequences of the hasty conduct and the mutual deceptions in the family of Isaac: Esau threatens to become a fratricide, and this threat repeats itself in the conduct of Joseph's brothers, who also believed that they saw in Joseph a brother unjustly preferred, and came very near killing him. Jacob must become a fugitive for many a long year, and perhaps yield up to Esau the external inheritance for the most part or entirely. The patriarchal dignity is obscured; Rebekah is obliged to send her favorite son abroad, and perhaps never see him again. The bold expression, 'Upon me be thy curse,' may be regarded as having a bright side; for she, as protectress of Jacob's blessing always enjoys a share in his blessing. But the sinful element in it was the wrong application of her assurance of faith to the act of deception, which she herself undertook, and to which she persuaded Jacob; and for which she must atone, perhaps, by many a long year of melancholy solitude and through the joylessness which immediately spread itself over the family affairs of the household. With all this, however, Isaac was kept from a grave offence, and the true relation of things secured by the pretended necessity for her prevarication. Through this catastrophe Isaac came to a full understanding of the divine decree, Esau attained the fullest development of his peculiar characteristics, and Jacob was directed to his journey of faith, and to his marriage, without which the promise could not even be fulfilled" (Lange, CDHCG, 516).

(4) "How could Isaac have been so grossly deceived by Jacob and his mother? He was not only blind, but old, so that he could not distinguish with accuracy, either by the touch of his shrivelled hand or by the ear, now dull of hearing. It must be further remembered that Esau was from his birth a hairy person. He was now a man, full grown, and no doubt as rough and shaggy as any he-goat. Jacob was of the same age, and his whole history shows that he was eminently shrewd and cunning. He got that from his mother, who on this occasion plied all her arts to make the deception perfect. She fitted out Jacob with Esau's well-known clothes, strongly

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scented with such odors as he was accustomed to use. The ladies and dandies in ancient times delighted to make their 'raiment smell like the smell of a field which the Lord had blessed'; and at this day they scent their gala garments with such rich and powerful spicery that the very street along which they walk is perfumed. It is highly probable that Jacob, a plain man, given to cattle and husbandry, utterly eschewed these odoriferous vanities, and this would greatly aid in the deception. Poor old Isaac felt the garments, and smelled the still more distinguishing perfumes of Esau, and though the voice was Jacob's, yet he could not doubt that the person before him was—what he solemnly protested that he was—his firstborn. The extreme improbability of deception would make him less suspicious, and, so far as the hair and the perfume are concerned, I have seen many Arabs who might now play such a game with entire success. All this is easy and plain in comparison with the great fact that this treachery and perjury, under most aggravating accompaniments, should be in a sense ratified and prospered by the all-seeing God of justice. It is well to remember, however, that though the blessing, once solemnly bestowed, according to established custom in such cases, could not be recalled, yet, in the overruling providence of God, the guilty parties were made to eat the bitter fruit of their sin during their whole lives. In this matter they sowed to the wind and reaped the whirlwind. We set out on this line of remark by saying that in several of the known incidents in Isaac's history, few though they be, he does not appear to advantage. Even in this transaction, where he, now old, blind and helpless, was so cruelly betrayed by his wife and deceived by his son, he is unfortunately at fault in the main question. He was wrong and Rebekah was right on the real point of issue; and, what is more, Isaac's judgment in regard to the person most proper to be invested with the great office of transmitting the true faith and the true line of descent for the promised Messiah was determined by a pitiful relish for 'savory meat.' Alas, for poor human nature! There is none of it without dross; and mountains of mud must be washed to get one diamond as large as a pea" (Thomson, LB, 561-562).

(5) In the case of Rebekah we have a case of "emotion" evilly used. One of Frederick W. Robertson's notable sermons was on the subject, "Isaac Blessing His Sons." In this, as he touched upon the words of Rebekah, *Upon me be thy curse, my son*, "he set forth unforgettably the truth that even the most passionate human devotion, if unprincipled, will not bless but destroy. In her ambition for Jacob, Rebekah stopped at nothing. If evil means seemed necessary, she would assume the consequences. Said Robertson: 'Here you see the idolatry of the woman: sacrificing her husband, her elder son, high principle, her own soul, for an idolized person. . . . Do not mistake. No one ever loved child, brother, sister, too much. It is not the intensity of affection, but its interference with truth and duty, that makes it idolatry. Rebekah loved her son more than truth, i.e., more than God. . . . The only true affection is that which is subordinate to a higher. . . . Compare, for instance, Rebekah's love for Jacob with that of Abraham for his son Isaac. Abraham was ready to

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sacrifice his son to duty. Rebekah sacrificed truth and duty to her son. Which loved a son most?—which was the nobler love?" Though Rebekah was willing to take the consequences of the wrong entirely upon herself, she could not do it. They involved Jacob—as the punishment of the evil which Lady Macbeth prompted involved Macbeth. The sin of deception was not originally Jacob's, but when he acquiesced in his mother's suggestion, it became his too. So he went on to increasingly gross and deliberate falsehood until he became capable of the blasphemous lie of telling his father, Isaac, when the old man asked how he could so quickly have secured the venison which he, Jacob, was offering under the pretense that he was Esau, 'The Lord thy God brought it to me' (vs. 20). So the lesson of Jacob's relationship to Rebekah is summed up in Robertson's vivid words, 'Beware of that affection which cares for your happiness more than for your honor' (IBG, 681-682).

"A character study of Rebekah is significant more in the questions it provokes than in the answers. The O.T. writers do not often draw a neat moral at the end of a description. They give the facts even though they may be inconsistent and confused, and leave us to interpret them as best we can. . . . The story of Rebekah had an idyllic beginning." [Note at this point the picture given us of Rebekah as a girl, ch. 24, as follows: "Her natural charm and winsomeness (vs. 16); her swift and kindly friendliness (vs. 18); the happy-heartedness which made her do not only what was asked of her but more (vs. 19); her quick and sure decisiveness (vs. 58); her ability to command a great devotion. Isaac loved her when he first saw her (vs. 67), and apparently he loved no other woman but Rebekah all his life. Here, in an age and in a society where polygamy was familiar, is *monogamous marriage*. So in the marriage service of the Book of Common Prayer through many generations there was the petition that 'as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform the vow and covenant betwixt them made.'"] "But what followed was not idyllic. It was the uncomfortable realization of this that made the revisers of the American Book of Common Prayer omit in the 1920's the reference to the mutual faithfulness of Isaac and Rebekah which had been in the inherited book for centuries. That reference was put there originally because Isaac and Rebekah were the one notable pair among the patriarchs who were monogamous. But the fact that a man or woman has only one mate does not of itself make a marriage successful. Divorce is not the only thing that destroys a marriage; there may be a gradual divergence so wide and deep that the essential marriage is destroyed even though the shell of it remains. It takes more than staying together to keep a man and woman 'faithful.' To be faithful they must create and cherish mutual sympathies, mutual convictions, mutual aims. . . . The only road of faithfulness is when both are humbly and truly trying to walk God's way. Any preparation for marriage is hollow unless it is filled with that conviction. The divergence between Isaac and Rebekah came out of their different regard for their two sons. . . . For that divided favoritism—perhaps both were to blame, but Rebekah more aggressively so than

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Isaac. Her love for Jacob was so fiercely jealous that it broke loose from any larger loyalty. As between her twin sons, she wanted Jacob to have the best of everything, no matter how he got it; and to that end she would not scruple at trickery and unfairness both toward her husband and her son Esau. There was something of the tigress in Rebekah, instinctively protecting the cub that by physical comparison was inferior. So she could come to the point of saying to Jacob, 'Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice' (27:13). Thus the Rebekah at the well has become an altogether different woman; scheming for Jacob to steal the birthright, pushing both Esau and Isaac for the moment out of her regard, unscrupulous because one purpose only obsessed her. It was not that she wanted to hurt anybody, she might have said. It was just that she was so determined to do what she thought would help Jacob that she was blind to anything or anybody that might get hurt. And all the while what she was doing was in the name of love. A study in character here, and of the way in which an emotion essentially beautiful may become perverted. It is instinctive and right that a woman should love passionately. But the greatest love must always be subject to a greater loyalty: loyalty to truth, to honor, to the relationship of life to God. Rebekah forgot that, and she corrupted Jacob as she tried to cherish him. As it is the passion of her love than can make a woman wonderful, so it is the failure to keep that love purified by the light of God that can make love ruinous. Jezebel is pictured as one of the evil women of the Bible, but it may be that originally she was not deliberately evil. She loved Ahab, proudly, fiercely, but with blind disregard for everything except what Ahab wanted; and see what she did to Ahab. Consider Lady Macbeth; read the story of Steerforth and his mother in *David Copperfield*. In every congregation there is a woman who is repeating the story of Rebekah—a mother who secretly encourages her son in self-indulgence and extravagance, or presses her unworthy scheme in order that her daughter may be 'a social success.' She is expressing what she thinks is her devotion, but that does not make it the less demoralizing. What ought to be great qualities of heart can end in deadly hurtfulness if love is not purified and disciplined by principles that have come from God. Yet even out of the unlovely chapter of Rebekah's life there emerges something fine. Why did Rebekah prefer Jacob? Was it because of a woman's insight which can be more sensitive to unseen values than a man is likely to be? Isaac preferred Esau, the bluff and virile son, the full-blooded and physically more attractive man. But Jacob, in spite of limitations and glaring faults, had something which Esau did not have. In the Hebrew family, the birthright was at least in part a spiritual privilege. It meant that the holder of it would be a shaper of ideas and ideals. Esau, who lived mostly by the lusty dictates of the body, was indifferent to these: not so Jacob. He had a belief in spiritual destiny, dim and distorted at first, but nevertheless so stubborn that ultimately it would prevail. Rebekah saw this, and she was determined to protect it. Thus the thought of Rebekah ends like an unsolved equation. She represents the

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woman's greatest contribution to the race, viz., the ability to recognize and to cherish those qualities in her child by which the future may be shaped. In that primitive family she advanced her purpose by the stratagems of a relentless shrewdness that laid all other loyalties aside. How can the relationship between husband and wife in this Christian Era be so developed that the insights of Rebekah may not have to stoop to dishonesty in order to be expressed?" (IBG, Exposition, 655, 667-669. The Exposition section, by Dr. Bowie, of this volume on Genesis is certainly outstanding and makes it worth having in every preacher's library—C.C.).

(6) "That the story before us poses a moral problem, among many others, was already clear in biblical times—although this point has been suppressed by many of the later moralizers. Both Hosea (12:4) and Jer. (9:3) allude to Jacob's treatment of Esau with manifest disapproval. What is more, the author himself, by dealing so sensitively with the hapless plight in which Isaac and Esau find themselves through no fault of their own (cf. especially vss. 33-38), demonstrates beyond any doubt that his personal sympathies are with the victims. It is, furthermore, a fact that Jacob himself did not think up the scheme; he acted, though not without remonstrance and uneasiness, under pressure from his strong-willed mother; and he had to pay for his misdeed with twenty years of exile. . . . The fate of individuals caught up in the mainstream of history will often seem incomprehensible; for history is but the unfolding of a divine master plan, many details of which must forever remain a mystery to mortals" (Speiser, ABG, 211). (Concerning Heb. 12:17, Milligan writes, correctly we think, as follows: "What is the meaning of this? Does the Apostle mean repentance on the part of Esau, or on the part of his father Isaac? . . . In either case the lesson taught is about the same. For whatever construction is put on the several words of this sentence, it must be obvious that the object of the Apostle is to remind his readers, that the mistake of Esau, once committed, was committed forever: that no possible change of his mind could in any way affect a change in the mind and purpose so obtained forgiveness, is I think possible; but not so with regard to his despised birthrights. These by one foolish and irreligious act had been irrecoverably lost" (*Commentary on Hebrews*, 356). of God. . . . That he may have afterward repented of his sins, and

(7) Finally, this excellent summation: "The moral aspect of the transaction is plain to those who are willing to see that the Bible represents the patriarchs as 'men compassed with infirmity,' favored by the grace of God, but not at all endowed with sinless perfection. It is just this, in fact, that makes their lives a moral lesson for us. Examples have occurred in the lives of Abraham and Isaac; but the whole career of Jacob is the history of a growing moral discipline. God is not honored by glossing over the patriarch's great faults of character, which are corrected by the discipline of severe suffering. We need not withhold indignant censure from Rebekah's cupidity on behalf of her favorite son—so like her family—and the mean deceit to which she tempts him. Nor is Isaac free from the blame of that foolish fondness, which, as is usual with moral

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weakness, gives occasion to crime in others. What, then, is the difference between them and Esau? Simply this—that they, in their hearts, honored the God whom he despised, though their piety was corrupted by their selfish passions. Jacob valued the blessing which he purchased wrongfully, and sought more wrongfully to secure. But Esau, whose conduct was equally unprincipled in desiring to receive the blessing which was no longer his, was rightly ‘rejected, when he would have inherited the blessing’ (Heb. 12:17). His selfish sorrow and resentment could not recall the choice he had made, or stand in the place of genuine repentance. ‘He found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears,’ and he is held forth as a great example of unavailing regret for spiritual blessings wantonly thrown away” (Smith-Fields, OTH, 95-96).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-NINE

1. Why should we accept these accounts of incidents in the lives of the patriarchs at face value? What do they prove concerning human character?
2. In patriarchal society how was the paternal *blessing* understood?
3. List the various kinds of acts of blessing mentioned in Scripture, and explain the meaning of each kind.
4. What elements were blended together in the final patriarchal blessing?
5. What special significance attached to the patriarchal blessings of Abraham and Isaac?
6. Do we find any evidence of magic in these blessings?
7. What caused Isaac to decide to bestow the blessing at once? How explain this, in view of the fact that he lived more than forty years longer?
8. How old was Isaac at this time? What are some of the rabbinical explanations of Isaac’s infirmities, especially his failing eyesight?
9. What did Isaac wish to do for his eldest son, and why? What does the text indicate about Isaac’s gourmet taste as a factor in his decision?
10. Is it likely that Isaac knew about the Divine oracle, 25:23, concerning the respective destinies of the twins? Give reasons for your answer.

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11. May we assume that Isaac knew about Esau's barter of the birthright "for a mess of pottage"? If so, on what grounds?
12. How did Rebekah learn of Isaac's conversation with Esau regarding the bestowal of the blessing on him?
13. Explain what the statement, "that my soul may bless thee before I die," means?
14. What opinion prevails generally regarding the efficacy of a dying utterance?
15. Explain Rebekah's stratagem in detail. To what extent, do you think, Jacob participated in it willingly?
16. What light does Rebekah's statement, "Upon me be thy curse, my son," throw upon her attitude and character. Are we not justified in calling this a form of blasphemy?
17. What shows that Jacob was more afraid of detection than of the duplicity? What light does this cast upon the distinction between morality and expediency?
18. What was the Divine oracle with respect to the separate destinies of the twins?
19. State the details of the scene between Isaac and Jacob. How is Isaac's lingering doubt finally dissipated? What caused him to be suspicious in the first place?
20. When Isaac expressed surprise at what he thought was *Esau's* unusually quick return with the cooked venison, what hypocritical explanation did Jacob make to reassure his father?
21. Give examples of situations in our time in which such hypocritical invocations of God's help are offered as explanation. Would not this be what the Freudians name *projection*?
22. Of how many outright lies did Jacob become guilty in his scene with his father?
23. What three kinds of kisses were permitted by the rabbis?

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24. How does the kiss (vv. 26, 27) remind us of the New Testament parallel (Matt. 26:49)?
25. How account for the perfumed raiment which Jacob donned on this occasion? How did this determine Isaac's decision?
26. What were the three parts of the paternal blessing? What significant spiritual development was implicit in this blessing??
27. How did Isaac become aware finally of the deception which had been perpetrated?
28. What were the emotional reactions of both Isaac and Esau when they learned the truth? What caused Isaac to tremble very exceedingly?
29. What was the long-term relation between this paternal blessing and our Christian faith?
30. What was the significance of Esau's cry, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"
31. Can we say that Esau's reaction was a "manly" one? Or would you say that he acted like "a spoiled brat"?
32. Have we any reason for supposing that Esau had gained a deeper appreciation of the import of the blessing than he had manifested with reference to the birthright?
33. Explain the sheer *drama* that was present in this scene between Esau and his father.
34. Analyze the personal blessing now bestowed on Esau. Show how the details of this blessing were actualized in subsequent history. Who were the Edomites? The Idumeans?
35. What revenge did Esau threaten to wreak upon Jacob? What prevented his execution of this vengeance at once?
36. Show how Rebekah again came to Jacob's rescue. What did she tell him to do?
37. Explain her statement, "Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

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38. What were the ultimate consequences of this event for Esau and for Jacob?
39. What punishment did each of the four principals suffer?
40. Were not the parents more responsible for what happened than the twins were? Explain.
41. Explain fully the problem of the Divine election of Jacob over Esau for inclusion in the Messianic genealogy.
42. On what grounds are we justified in concluding that Jacob was the more worthy of the two to be included in the Messianic Line?
43. What was Esau's besetting sin? Explain how this sin occurs today in the attitude of so many toward the ordinances of Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper.
44. Is not the professing church in our Era persistently guilty of disrespect for Divine institutions?
45. Explain the Hurrian parallels of the details of this Old Testament story. How account for these facts?
46. Explain how this story is truly "an unpleasant picture of family life."
47. Why is this designated another instance of Biblical realism?
48. What are some of the important lessons for us to derive from this story?
49. Explain how the schemes of the parents in no wise altered the actualization of God's Purposes.
50. Why do we say that Rebekah's part in this entire transaction was essentially a lack of faith? In what sense can the same be said of the other three principals?
51. Explain how that in Rebekah's case we have an account of a laudable emotion "evilly used."
52. What charges can we rightly bring against each of the four members of this *dramatis personae*?
53. What good can we say of each of them?
54. How is the fact to be explained that the marriage of

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Isaac and Rebekah, completely out of line with the common practice of the time, was a monogamous marriage? Does this mean that it was necessarily one of devoted love?

55. In what sense must deep personal love be devoted to higher values than personal satisfaction? What should these higher values be? In what sense can such deep personal love become ruinous?
56. Is there such a thing as "smother love"? Explain
57. Give Milligan's interpretation of Hebrews 12:17.
58. On what continuing values does monogamous marriage depend?
59. What elements stand out in the character of Jacob to give him the higher moral and spiritual status?
60. What elements stand out in Esau's character to justify God's rejection of him?

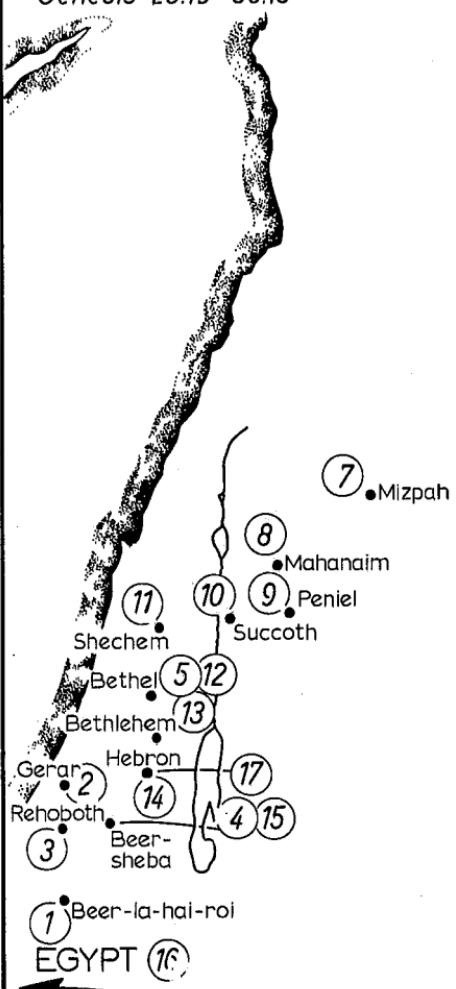
THE JOURNEYS OF JACOB

Genesis 25:19 - 50:13

Haran

(6)

EUPHRATES
R.



THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD
LIFE AND JOURNEYS OF JACOB

1. **Beer-la-hai-roi; Gen. 25:19-34**
 - a. Birth of Jacob and Esau.
 - b. Birthright sold.
2. **Gerar; 26:1-21**
 - a. Accompanies parents.
3. **Rehoboth; 26:22**
 - a. With father here.
4. **Beersheba; 26:23-28:9**
 - a. (Jehovah's appearance to Isaac; The covenant with Abimelech)
 - b. (Esau's two wives)
 - c. Jacob obtains the blessing. 27:1-45.
 - d. Jacob sent away; 28:1-9.
5. **Bethel; 28:10-22.**
 - a. Jacob's dream.
6. **Haran; 29:1-31:21**
 - a. Jacob's dealings with Laban.
 - b. Jacob's wives and children.
7. **Mizpah; 31:22-55**
 - a. Final meeting and covenant of Laban and Jacob.
8. **Mahanaim; 32:1-21**
 - a. Meeting with the angels.
 - b. Preparations to meet Esau.
9. **Peniel; 32:22-33:16**
 - a. Wrestling with angel; 32:22-32.
 - b. Meeting with Esau; 33:1-16.
10. **Succoth; 33:17**
 - a. House and booths built.
11. **Shechem; 33:18-35:5**
 - a. Purchase of ground; 33:18-20.
 - b. Sin of Shechem; 34:1-31.
 - c. Command to go to Bethel; 35:1-5.
12. **Bethel; 35:6-15**
 - a. Altar built.
 - b. Deborah dies.
 - c. The blessing of God.
13. **Bethlehem; 35:16-20**
 - a. Death of Rachel and birth of Benjamin.
14. **Hebron; 35:21-45:28**
 - a. Sin of Reuben; 35:21-22.
 - b. Death of Isaac;
 - c. Descendants of Esau; Ch. 36.
 - d. The story of Joseph; 37:1-45:28.
15. **Beersheba; 46:1-7**
 - a. God appears as Jacob goes to Egypt.
16. **Egypt; 46:8-50:6**
 - a. Jacob's family sojourns in Egypt.
17. **Hebron; 50:7-13**
 - a. Burial of Jacob.

PART FORTY

THE STORY OF JACOB: THE JOURNEY TO PADDAN-ARAM

(Genesis 27:46—28:22)

1. *The Biblical Account*

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? 1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. 3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a company of peoples; 4 and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham. 5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Paddan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; 7 and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan-aram: 8 and Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; 9 and Esau went unto Ishmael, and took, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife.

10 And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and

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he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13 And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. 16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. 17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. 20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, 22 then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

2. *Jacob's Blessing and Departure* (27:45—28:5). We are told by the critics that we have here two accounts of Jacob's departure differentiated by dissimilar motiva-

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM 27:46—28:5

tions: In one version, the motive is fear of Esau's revenge; in the other, it is Rebecca's aversion to Hittite women and her determination that Jacob shall choose a wife from among her own Aramaean relatives. "In their eagerness to find material for separate documents, or evidence of duplicate accounts, the critics seem to be ever ready to sacrifice the force and beauty of the narratives with which they deal. They dissect them to the quick, rending them into feeble or incoherent fragments, or they pare them down by the assumption of doublets to the baldest forms of intelligible statement, and thus strip them of those affecting details, which lend them such a charm, because so true to nature. This involves the absurdity of assuming that two jejune or fragmentary accounts, pieced mechanically together, have produced narratives which are not only consistent and complete, but full of animation and dramatic power. An attempt is made to establish a difference between J and E on one hand, and P on the other, as to the reason why Jacob went to Paddan-Aram. According to the former (27:1-45), it is to flee from his brother, whom he has enraged by defrauding him of his father's blessing. According to the latter (26:34, 35; 28:1-9), that he may not marry among the Canaanites, as Esau had done, to the great grief of his parents, but obtain a wife from among his own kindred. P, we are told, knows of no hostility between the brothers. But all this is spoiled by the statement in 28:7, that 'Jacob obeyed his father *and his mother*, and was gone to Paddan-Aram.' His father sent him to get a wife (28:1-9), but his mother to escape Esau's fury (27:42-45); and there is no incompatibility between these two objects. In order to gain Isaac over to her plan without acquainting him with Esau's murderous designs, Rebekah simply urges her dissatisfaction with the wives of Esau, and her apprehension that Jacob might contract a similar marriage with someone of the daughters of the land. Isaac had one object

in mind, Rebekah another. There is nothing for the critics to do, therefore, but to pronounce the unwelcome words, 'and his mother,' an interpolation. In order to prove their point they must first adjust the text to suit it. But tinkering the text in a single passage will not relieve them in the present instance. The hostility of Esau is embedded in the entire narrative, and cannot be surrendered from it. Why did Jacob go alone and unattended in quest of a wife, without the retinue or the costly presents for his bride, befitting his rank and wealth? When Abraham desired a wife for Isaac he sent a princely embassy to woo Rebekah, and conduct her to her future home. Why was Jacob's suit so differently managed, although Isaac imitated Abraham in everything else? And why did Jacob remain away from his parents and his home, and from the land sacred as the gift of God, for so many long years till his twelve sons were born (35:26 P)? This is wholly unaccounted for except by the deadly hostility of Esau" (UBG, 330, 331). (It should be recalled that J stands for the Jahvistic Code, E for Elohistic, and P for the Priestly. See my *Genesis*, I, pp. 47-70)

"In order to obtain Isaac's consent to the plan, without hurting his feelings by telling him of Esau's murderous intentions, she [Rebekah] spoke to him of her troubles on account of the Hittite wives of Esau, and the weariness of life that she should feel if Jacob also were to marry one of the daughters of the land, and so introduced the idea of sending Jacob to her relations in Mesopotamia, with a view to his marriage there" (BCOTP, 280). "The true state of Esau's spirit is shown by his resolve to kill his brother as soon as his father should die. To avert the danger, Rebekah sent away Jacob to her family at Haran. Isaac approved the plan, as securing a proper marriage for his son, to whom he repeated the blessing of Abraham, and sent him away to Paddan-aram (Gen. 32:10)" (OTH, 96). The first verse of ch. 28 so

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM 27:46—28:5

obviously follows the last verse of ch. 27 that we see no pertinent reason for assuming separate accounts of the motive for Jacob's departure.

Note also *the blessing* with which Isaac sent Jacob on his way, 28:1-4. "The Jehovah of the blessing is at the same time the God of universal nature, Elohim, who from his general beneficence will bestow 'the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.' In taking leave of Jacob, Isaac pronounces upon him the blessing of Abraham (28:4); he is thus led to borrow the language of that signal revelation to Abraham when Jehovah made himself known as God Almighty (17:1), and gave him promises with a special emphasis, which are here repeated. Hence the El Shaddai (v. 3) and Elohim (v. 4)" (UBG, 332). "The blessing to Abraham was that he should teach man the knowledge of the true God which would become a blessing to him. Isaac now blessed Jacob that his seed might be worthy to give such teaching, in the merit of which they would possess the Promised Land" (SC, 157). Note the phrase, "company of peoples," v. 3. This would seem to point forward to the tribes that were to spring from the loins of Jacob. By the words of v. 4, "Isaac conveys the most important part of the patriarchal blessing, the part relative to the Messiah, which he had not quite ventured to bestow previously when he still thought he was dealing with Esau. Sobered by the failure of his attempt and made wiser, he freely gives what he fully understands to have been divinely destined for Jacob. 'The blessing of Abraham' is fully as much as was promised to him but no more. Since previously (27:27-29) Isaac also had not ventured to bestow the land of promise on the one who presumably was Esau, now he unmistakably bestows it on Jacob, that which is now a 'land of sojourning' where the patriarchs have as yet no permanent possession except a burial place. . . . God 'gave' this land to Abraham, of

course, only by promise but none the less actually" (EG, 767, 768).

Note well the aftermath of treachery in this case: Rebekah and Jacob never saw each other again. Jacob had lost a mother's love, a father's love, and a brother's love—all sacrificed to selfish ambition. He was almost like Cain—all alone in the world." We may be certain that our sins, sooner or later, "find us out" (Num. 32:23).

3. *Esau Takes Another Wife* (vv. 6-9). "Isaac blessed Jacob that the blessing which he had given him previously, viz., *God gave thee of the dew of heaven, etc.* (27:28) might be fulfilled in the land which God had promised to Abraham; but his blessing to Esau, *of the fat places of the earth shall be thy dwelling* (27:39), would be fulfilled in a different country" (SC, 157). Esau saw that Isaac did not want Jacob to have a Canaanite wife. "He assumed that he had lost the blessing because he had married a Canaanitish woman, since Isaac, when blessing Jacob, had impressed upon him not to do so. He consequently thought that by not marrying another of these women, he would win back his father's favor and possibly secure the revocation of Jacob's blessing. . . . Although he did not marry any more women of Canaan, he was not willing to send away those he already had, in spite of their unsuitability and wickedness" (SC, 158). "Desirous to humor his parents, and if possible to get the last will revoked, he became wise when too late (Matt. 25:10), and hoped, by gratifying his parents in one thing, to atone for all his former delinquencies. But he only made bad worse; and though he did not marry 'a wife of the daughters of Canaan,' he married into a family [that of Ishmael] which God had rejected; it showed a partial reformation, but no repentance, for he gave no proofs of abating his vindictive purposes against his brother, nor cherishing that pious spirit that would have gratified his father—he was like Micah: see Judg. 17:13, also ch. 36:1-5" (CECG, 198).

Cf. especially 26:34, 28:9, 36:1-5. How account for these apparent differences in the lists of Esau's wives? Some critics think that Esau had six wives; others, five; and still others, three. It will be noted that *all* the wives in the second list have names different from those in the first. Keil, Lange, *et al.*, account for this by the fact that women at their marriage received new names. "On this hypothesis, Bashemath, daughter of Ishmael, is the same with Mahalath; Adah, daughter of Elon the Hittite is the same with Bashe-math; and Aholibamah, daughter of Anah and (grand-) daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, is identical with Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite. Anah is also called 'Beeri' ('man of the springs'), from the fact he had found certain 'warm springs' in the wilderness [cf. 36:24]" (Haley, ADB, 336). "The account given of the parentage of these wives has seemed to many equally obscure and perplexing as that of their names. But all these difficulties admit to an easy and satisfactory solution. Thus, with regard to the number of Esau's wives, although it is not expressly said that he had three wives, the several passages in which they are enumerated comprise only three; and these, as shall be presently shown, the same three throughout. As to the names of the wives, it has been remarked, that while these, in Eastern countries, as elsewhere, are sometimes changed on account of some memorable circumstances in the course of life, women assume new names more frequently than men—they do so particularly on their marriage; and as in this genealogical record *all* the wives of Esau are distinguished by different names from those which they formerly bore, the change is to be traced partly to their entrance into the matrimonial relation, and partly to their settlement in a foreign land, where Esau himself assumed the permanent designation of Edom (36:8). The import of their names was founded probably on some conspicuous attribute of character or feature of personal appearance or habit, as Judith or Jehudith (the

praised one) was changed into Aholibamah (tent-height, i.e., tall, stately); Basemath, Hebrew, Basemath (fragrance, the perfumed one) into Adah (ornament, beauty, the adorned one); Mahalath (hard, the musical one) into Basemath (fragrance, perfume, the perfumed one). If Esau had obtained the name of Edom from his red hair, or the red pottage, his wives might as well have derived their new appellatives from such trivial circumstances as peculiarity of appearance and dress, or a love of strong-scented unguents. With regard to the names of their respective fathers, Elon the Hittite, and Ishmael stand in both lists; while Anah is not the mother and Beeri the father, of Aholibamah, as has been supposed by Ranke and others; but as has been demonstrated with great ingenuity by Hengstenberg, is identical with Beeri. Anah, being the proper name of the individual, is given in this genealogical record (36:2, 14, 24); while Beeri (man of springs), a surname properly applied to him by his contemporaries (see v. 24), was naturally preferred in the general narrative (26:34). There is another difficulty connected with the name of Anah. He is called (26:34) a Hittite, here (36:2) a Hivite, and (36:20) a Horite. But there is nothing contradictory in these statements. For in the historical relation he is styled, in a wide sense, a Hittite, a term which is frequently used as synonymous with Canaanite (Josh. 1:4, 1 Ki. 10:29, 2 Ki. 7:6); while in his tribal connection he was a Hivite, just as a man may be described in general history as a native of Great Britain, while specifically he is a Scotchman. The word Horite does not imply either a geographical or national distinction, but simply a dweller in caves; Zibeon, on emigrating to Mount Seir, having become a Troglodyte. These difficulties, then, which encompass the domestic history of Esau having been removed, a clear view of the names and parentage of Esau's wives may be exhibited in the following table:

JACOB: TO PADDAN ARAM

28:5-9

<i>Ch. 26:34</i>	<i>Ch. 36:2, 3</i>	<i>Father</i>
Name at birth Judith, or Jehudith	Name after marriage = Aholibamah	Daughter of Anah (Beeri), Hittite, Hivite, and Horite, and Granddaughter of Zibeon, Hivite and Horite
Bashemath	= Adah	Daughter of Elon, Hittite
<i>ch. 28:9</i>		
Mahalath	= Bashemath	Daughter of Ishmael, and sister of Nebajoth

In this table, 'the daughter of Zibeon' is taken in connection, not with Anah (a man's name), but with Aholibamah; and consequently we must interpret 'daughter' in the wider sense it sometimes bears of granddaughter. It may be interesting to add, that Dr. Wilson (*Lands of the Bible*, Vol. I, p. 33) found that these names are still common in Idumea and among the Arabs. When conversing with the Fellahin, of Wady Musa, he says 'It is worthy of notice that the first name of a man which they mention to us as current among them was that of Esau; and that Matshabah, one of their female names, seems, by a bold anagram, not unusual in the formation of Arabic words from the Hebrew, to resemble Bashemath, wife of Esau. Aidah, too, one of the female names, is like that of Adah, another of Esau's wives'" (Jamieson, CECG, 226, on ch. 36). "Esau's marriage was another attempt to regain the blessing, by trying to please his parents in Jacob's absence. But his choice showed he had no sense of spiritual realities. *He does not do exactly what God requires but something like it. But at heart he was unchanged*" (TPCG, 55). Esau belongs to the great army of substituters, like Cain, *i.e.*, those who substitute their own way of doing things for God's way of doing things. For the opposite note the attitude of Jesus in regard to his own baptism (Matt. 3:13): to "fulfil all righteousness" is to do God's will *to the full*.

4. *Jacob's Dream-Vision at Bethel* (vv. 28:10-17).

The Dream "Ladder" and the Angels. Jacob "went out" from Beersheba (26:25) and set out toward Haran. Note the following differences of view: "His departure from his father's house was an ignominious flight; and for fear of being pursued or waylaid by his vindictive brother, he did not take the common road, but went by lonely and unfrequented paths, which increased the length and dangers of the journey, until, deeming himself at a secure distance, he seems to have gone on the great road northward along the central mountain-ridge of Canaan" (CECG, 199). "Was Jacob a fugitive? In a mild sense, Yes. But they let their imagination play too freely, who make him run forth in haste from home in continual fear of being overtaken and let him cover the entire distance from Beersheba to Bethel—about 70 miles as the crow flies over mountain roads—in one day. Esau had threatened to kill his brother only after the death of Isaac [27:41]. It may have been about the third day when Jacob arrived at this spot after traveling leisurely, for he had a long journey before him" (EG, 770). "The mention of the fact that he *went out* teaches that a righteous man's departure from a city leaves its mark. While he is in it, he is its splendor, lustre, and beauty. When he leaves, it all departs with him" (Rashi, SC, 164).

The Place, v. 11, literally, "he lighted upon the place," etc. "That is, the place mentioned elsewhere (cf. 22:4), mount Moriah (Rashi). The definite article denotes the place well known to travelers, viz., an inn (Sforno)" (SC, 164). "The definite article prefixed to 'place' shows that he had *purposely* chosen as his first night's resting-place the spot which had been distinguished by the encampment of Abraham shortly after his entrance into Canaan (12:8); or that, the gates of Luz being shut, he was undesignedly, on his part, compelled to rest for the night, which proved to be '*the place*' his grandfather had conse-

crated. By a forced march he had reached that place, about forty-eight miles from Beersheba, and had to spend the night in the open field. This, after all, is no great hardship; for a native, winding himself in the ample folds of his cloak, and selecting a smooth stone for a pillow, sleeps comfortably under the canopy of heaven. A warm climate, and an indifference to dirt and dew, easily reconcile an Oriental to such necessities" (CECG, 199). "The words, '*be hit (lighted) upon the place*,' indicate the apparently accidental, yet really divinely appointed choice of this place for his nightquarters; and the definite article points it out as having become well known through the revelation of God that ensued" (BCOTP, 281). *Was this a cult-place?* "We doubt it very much. Such a 'cult-place' would hardly have been a seemly place for Yahweh to reveal Himself; for perhaps without exception these places were set apart for the idols of the land. Yahweh has nothing in common with idols. Such a spot would be an abomination of Yahweh. . . . The article simply marks it as the place which was afterward to become famous. Jacob spends the night just there because that was all that was left for him, for 'the sun had gone down' and the night had fallen swiftly, as Oriental nights do. The hardy shepherd is not disturbed by the experience, for shepherds often spend the night thus and are observed to this day sleeping with a stone for a pillow" (EG, 771).

The Stone Pillow. "*One of the stones of the place*," etc. The nature of the soil in this area, we are told, was "stony." Was the prophetic power embodied in one of these stones? Would not this be sheer magic? We see no reason for these rather fanciful notions. It seems that Jacob simply took of the stones present and made for himself a "head place." This is literally the meaning of the word used here. "*Here mera'ashtaw* does not actually mean 'pillow' but 'head place'—a proper distinction, for pillows are soft, 'head places' not necessarily so. They

who must find rational explanations for everything here conjecture about some stony ascent which Jacob saw in the rapidly descending dusk and which then afterward in the dream took the form of a ladder (even Edersheim). Dreams, especially those sent by the Almighty, require no such substructure. Not quite so harmless is the contention of those who import liberally of their own thoughts into the text and then secure a sequence about as follows: The stone used by Jacob is one of the pillars or sacred stones of the 'cult-place' (a pure invention). Jacob unwittingly takes it in the semi-darkness and prepares it for a head-rest. The charmed stone then superinduces a dream. On awakening, Jacob is afraid, because he realizes he has rashly used a sacred stone and quickly makes a vow to fend off possible evil consequences and to appease the angered Deity. Such interpretations transport the occurrence into the realm of superstition, magic, fetish, and animistic conceptions, debasing everything and especially the patriarch's conception of things" (EG, 771-772). Cf. Skinner: "*'He lighted upon the place,' i.e., the 'holy place' of Bethel (12:6), whose sanctity was revealed by what followed.—he took (at haphazard) one of the stones of the place which proved itself to be the abode of a deity by inspiring the dream which came to Joseph that night*" (ICCG, 376). We see no reason for "importing"—as Leupold puts it—pagan superstitions into the narratives of these ancient heroes of the faith. It is quite possible, of course, that some of these stones had once been a part of the altar set up by Abraham in the same vicinity (12:8, 13:2-4) although it is difficult to assume that Jacob had some way of identifying them as such. The commonsense view would seem to be that, as stated above, Jacob simply took some of the stones he found here and made of them for himself a "head place."

The Dream. "It was natural that in the unwonted circumstances he should dream. Bodily exhaustion, mental

excitement, the consciousness of his exposure to the banditti of the adjoining regions, and his need of the protection of Heaven, would direct the course of his dream into a certain channel. But his dream was an extraordinary—a supernatural one" (CECG, 199). "The connection between heaven and earth, and now especially between heaven and the place where the poor fugitive sleeps, is represented in three different forms, increasing in fulness and strength: the *ladder*, not too short, but resting firmly on the earth below and extending up to heaven; the *angels of God*, appearing in great numbers, passing up and down the ladder as the messengers of God; ascending as the invisible companions of the wanderer, to report about him, and as mediators of his prayers; descending as heavenly guardians and mediators of the blessing; finally *Jehovah himself* standing above the ladder, henceforth the covenant God of Jacob, just as he had hitherto been the covenant God of Abraham and Isaac" (CDHCG, 521). This for Jacob was the first of seven theophanies: cf. 31:3, 11-13; 32:1-2; 12:24-30; 35:1; 35:9-13; 46:1-4.

The Ladder. Many commentators seem to prefer the rendering, "stairway," or "staircase," rather than the image of a mountain-pile whose sides, indented in the rock, gave it the appearance of a ladder: "the rough stones of the mountain appearing to form themselves into a vast staircase: Bush, Stanley" (PCG, 349). (Some will argue that the pile of rock which served as Jacob's pillow was a miniature copy of this image). Not so, writes Leupold: "Dreams are a legitimate mode of divine revelation. On this instance the ladder is the most notable external feature of the dream. The word *sullam*, used only here, is well established in its meaning, 'ladder.' If it reaches from earth to heaven, that does not necessitate anything grotesque; dreams seem to make the strangest things perfectly natural. Nor could a ladder sufficiently broad to allow angels to ascend and descend constitute an incongruity

in a dream. The surprise occasioned by the character of the dream is reflected by the threefold *binneh*—"behold": a ladder, angels, and Yahweh" (EG, 772). Speiser differs: "The traditional 'ladder' is such an old favorite that it is a pity to have to dislodge it. Yet it goes without saying that a picture of angels going up and down in a steady stream is hard to reconcile with an ordinary ladder. Etymologically, the term (stem, 'to heap up,' 'raise') suggests a ramp or a solid stairway. And archaeologically, the Mesopotamian ziggurats were equipped with flights of stairs leading up to the summit; a good illustration is the ziggurat of Ur (Third Dynasty). Only such a stairway can account for Jacob's later description of it as a 'gateway to heaven'" (ABG, 218). At any rate, "from Jacob's ladder we receive the first definite information that beyond Sheol, heaven is the home of man" (Lange, 523). "The ladder was a visible symbol of the real and uninterrupted fellowship (Cf. Heb. 1:14; Psa. 23; Psa. 139:7-10)

The Angels. "The ladder was a visible symbol of the real and uninterrupted fellowship between God in heaven and His people upon earth. The angels upon it carry up the wants of men to God, and bring down the assistance and protection of God to men. The ladder stood there upon the earth, just where Jacob was lying in solitude, poor, helpless, and forsaken by men. Above in heaven stood Jehovah, and explained in words the symbols which he saw" (BCOTP, 281). "In Jacob's dream Jehovah, the God of the chosen race (28:13, 16), in order to assure him that though temporarily exiled from his father's house he would not on that account be severed from the God of his father, as Ishmael had been when sent away from Abraham's household, and Lot when his connection with Abraham was finally cut off by his passing beyond the limit of the promised land. God was thenceforward Elohim to them all as to all who were aliens to

the chosen race. But Jacob was still under the guardianship of Jehovah, who would continue with him wherever he might go. The angels (v. 12), however, are not called 'angels of Jehovah,' which never occurs in the Pentateuch, but 'angels of Elohim,' as in 32:2 (E.V. ver. 1), who are thus distinguished from messengers of men—the Hebrew word for 'angel' properly meaning 'messenger.' This does not mark a distinction between the documents, as though J knew of but one angel, while E speaks of 'angels'; for J has 'angels' in the plural (19:1, 15). The place where Jehovah had thus revealed himself Jacob calls 'the house of God' and 'the gate of heaven,' God in contrast with man, as heaven with earth. It was a spot marked by a divine manifestation" (UBG, 340).

"This vision represented the peculiar care of God concerning Jacob and other saints, and the ministration of angels to them (2 Chron. 16:9, Eccl. 5:8, Psa. 135:6, Isa. 41:10, Acts 18:10, 2 Tim. 4:16-17; Psa. 34:7, 91:11; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14; Gen. 32:1-2). But chiefly this ladder typified Christ, as Mediator between God and man. He, in his manhood, is of the earth, a descendant of Jacob; and in his divine person is the Lord from heaven (Isa. 7:14, 9:6; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3, 4, 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16): he is the only means of fellowship between God and men (John 14:6; Eph. 2:18, 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:5-6); and he directs and enjoys the ministration of angels (John 1:51; 1 Pet. 1:12, 1 Tim. 3:16)—in his conception (Luke 1:31, Matt. 1:20)—his birth (Luke 2:14, Heb. 1:6)—in his temptation (Matt. 4:11)—his agony (Luke 22:43)—his resurrection (Matt. 28:2, 5)—his ascension (Acts 1:10, 11; Psa. 47:5 68:17, 18; Dan. 7:10, 13)—and second coming (1 Thess. 4:16, 2 Thess. 1:7, Matt. 25:31)" (SIBG, 260).

The Divine Promise, vv. 13-15. V. 13—Yahweh stood by (marginal, 'beside') him "and announced Himself as one with the God of his fathers." V. 16—*the land whereon*

thou liest: "a description peculiarly appropriate to the solitary and homeless fugitive who had not where to lay his head." "Thus forlorn, amid the memorials of the covenant, he was visited by God in a dream, which showed him a flight of stairs leading up from earth to the gates of heaven, and trodden by angels, some descending on their errands as 'ministering spirits' upon earth, and others ascending to carry their reports to Him, whose 'face they ever watch' in dutiful service. This symbol of God's providence was crowned by a vision of Jehovah, and his voice added to the renewal of the covenant a special promise of protection" (OTH, 100). Yahweh reveals Himself first of all as *the Lord* (Gen. 2:4), *the Covenant God of Abraham and of Isaac*. "It is remarkable that Abraham is styled his father, that is, his actual grandfather, and covenant father" (MG, 387). Yahweh now "renews the promise of *the land*, of *the seed*, and of *the blessing* in that seed for the whole race of man. Westward, eastward, northward, and southward are they to break forth. This expression points to the world-wide universality of the kingdom of the seed of Abraham, when it shall become the fifth monarchy, that shall subdue all that went before, and endure forever. This transcends the destiny of the natural seed of Abraham. He then promises to Jacob personally to be with him, protect him, and bring him back in safety. This is the third announcement of the seed that blesses to the third in the line of descent: 12:2, 3; 22:18; 26:4" (MG, 387).

The *land*, given to Abraham (13:15) and to Isaac (26:3), and now to Jacob. The *seed* to be as the *dust* of the earth, promised to Abraham (13:16), and to Isaac, but under a different emblem ("as the stars of heaven," 26:4), and now, under the original emblem, to Jacob. The *seed*, moreover, to *break forth* toward all four "corners" of the earth, as promised to Abraham (13:14; cf. Deut. 3:27, 34:1-4), and now to Jacob (v. 14). Note

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that a third emblem, designed likewise to point up the world-wide universality of the Kingdom of Christ (*i.e.*, the *Reign* of Messiah, Christ) is used in the divine promise to Abraham, viz., "the *sand* which is upon the seashore" (22:17; cf. 32:12). Note that the citizens of the Messiah's kingdom are citizens, not by virtue of having been born of the flesh of Abraham, but by virtue of having been *born again*, that is, of belonging to Abraham by virtue of manifesting the fullness of the obedience of faith (Gal. 3:26-29), the depth of faith which Abraham manifested when God *proved* him to himself, to his own people, and to all mankind throughout the stretch of time (Gen., ch. 22). (Cf. John 3:1-8, Tit. 3:5, Gal. 5:16-25, Rom. 5:1-2, etc.)

"Is the Lord blessing a cheat and prospering one who secured a blessing by craft? By no means. . . . Jacob is being strengthened in the faith and supported by liberal promises, because he was penitent over his sin and stood greatly in need of the assurance of divine grace. Besides, Jacob was deeply grieved at being called upon to sever the ties that bound him to house and home, and he was apprehensive of the future as well. The Lord meets him and grants him the support of His grace" (EG, 773).

Note again the elements of Yahweh's Promise: 1. The possession of the land on which he now was lying, practically an exile. 2. A progeny (seed) as numerous as "the dust of the earth." 3. Protection during the time of his absence from home, the protection in fact of God's personal presence: "I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land," that is, this very spot, this piece of ground, on which Jacob was lying, and experiencing the reiteration of the Abrahamic Promise. The language surely intimates here that Jacob's wanderings would be extensive; the ray of hope was in the promise that he would be divinely led back to this *Land* of Promise. The far-reaching element of the Promise

was that in his seed "all the families of the earth should be blessed" (v. 14). The Seed, as we know from New Testament fulfilment, was Messiah, Christ (Gal. 3:16). (Note that this was in substance a renewal of the Abrahamic Promise: cf. Gen. 12:37; 13:14-17, 15:18, 22:17-18, 24:7, 28:13-15).

5. *The Awakening*, vv. 16-17.

Jacob awoke from his dream with a sense of *dread*, of the *awesomeness* of God. He was afraid, and exclaimed, "*How dreadful is this place!*" "Surely Yahweh is in this place!" "The underlying feeling is not joy, but fear, because in ignorance he had treated the holy place as common ground . . . the place is no ordinary *haram*, but one superlatively holy, the most sacred spot on earth" (ICCG, 377). To this we reply that it was Jacob's vision that for him endowed the place with dreadfulness (holiness), not with unknown magical qualities which the *particular* spot engendered. "Jacob had felt himself severed from the gracious presence and the manifestation of Yahweh which he knew centered in his father's house. Jacob understood full well the omnipresence of God, but he knew, too, that it had not pleased God to manifest and reveal Himself everywhere as Yahweh. Now the patriarch receives specific assurance that God in His character as Yahweh was content to be with Jacob and keep and bless him for the covenant's sake. That Yahweh was going to do this much for him, that is what Jacob had not known. To understand the word rightly note that Jacob could not have said —for it would have involved an untruth—"Surely, God is in this place and I knew it not." Of course he knew that. Any true believer's knowledge of God involves such elementary things as knowledge of His not being confined to one place. Such crude conceptions the patriarchs never had. To suppose that the account is trying to picture Jacob as on a lower level than Abraham in spiritual discernment is misunderstanding" (EG, 775). "Jacob does

not here learn the doctrine of the Divine omnipresence for the first time, but now discovers that the covenant God of Abraham revealed himself at other than consecrated places; or perhaps simply gives expression to his astonishment at finding that whereas he fancied himself alone, he was in reality in the company of God" (PCG, 350). "Not that the omnipresence of God was unknown to him, but that Jehovah in His condescending mercy should be near to him even here, far away from his father's house and from the places consecrated to His worship—it was this which he did not know or imagine. The revelation was intended not only to stamp the blessing, with which Isaac had dismissed him from his home, with the seal of divine approval, but also to impress upon Jacob's mind the fact, that although Jehovah would be near to protect and guide him even in a foreign land, the land of promise was the holy ground on which the God of his fathers would set up the covenant of His grace. On his departure from this land, he was to carry with him a sacred awe of the gracious presence of Jehovah there. To that end the Lord proved to him that He was near, in such a way that the place appeared 'dreadful,' inasmuch as the nearness of the holy God makes an alarming impression upon unholv man, and the consciousness of sin grows into the fear of death. But in spite of this alarm, the place was none other than 'the house of God and the gate of heaven,' *i.e.*, a place where God dwells, and a way that opened to Him in heaven" (BCOTP, 282). "Jacob does not think that Jehovah's revelation to him was confined to this place of Bethel. He does not interpret the sacredness of the place in a heathen way, as an external thing, but theocratically and symbolically. Through Jehovah's revelation, this place, which is viewed as a heathen waste, becomes to him a house of God, and therefore he consecrates it to a permanent sanctuary" (Lange, CDHCG, 525).

5. *The Memorial, v. 18.*

The Stone Head-Place Made a Pillar. "Jacob knew God's omnipresence, but he did not expect a special manifestation of the Lord in this place, far from the sanctuaries of his father. He is filled with solemn awe, when he finds himself in the house of God and at the gate of heaven. The pillar is a monument of the event. The pouring of oil upon it is an act of consecration to God who has there appeared to him, cf. Num. 7:1" (Murphy, MG, 387). Whether Jacob fell asleep again at the conclusion of the dream-vision, we do not know. In any case, he arose early in the morning, took the stone which he had used as a "head place" and set it up, it would seem, in a manner designed to make it stand out and hence to mark the precise spot where the dream had occurred: "hence a statue or monument, not as an object of worship, a sort of fetish, but as a memorial of the vision" (PCG, 350). (Cf. 31:45, 35:14; Josh. 4:9, 20; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 7:12).

The Oil of Consecration was an integral part of this ritual. "The worship of sacred stones (Baetylia), afterward prevalent among the Greeks, Romans, Hindoos, Arabs, and Germans, though by some regarded as one of the primeval forms of worship among the Hebrews, was expressly interdicted by the law of Moses (cf. Exo. 23:24, 34:13; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 12:3, 16:22). It was probably a heathen imitation of the rite here recorded, though by some authorities the Baetylian worship is said to have been connected chiefly with meteoric stones which were supposed to have descended from some divinity, as, e.g., the stone in Delphi sacred to Apollo; that in Emesa, on the Orontes, consecrated to the sun; the angular rock at Pessinus in Phrygia worshipped as hallowed by Cybele; the black stone in the Kaaba at Mecca believed to have been brought from heaven by the angel Gabriel. That the present narrative was a late invention 'called into existence by a desire' on

the part of the priests and prophets of Yahweh 'to proclaim the high antiquity of the sanctuary at Bethel, and to make the sacred stone harmless,' is *pure assumption*. The circumstance that the usage here mentioned is nowhere else in Scripture countenanced (except in ch. 35:14, with reference to the same pillar) forms a sufficient pledge of the high antiquity of the narrative" (PCG, 351). "Although this act of Jacob is the first instance of stone consecration on record, it was evidently a familiar and established practice in the time of the patriarchs. But the unction of stones was ere long abused and perverted even by the Hebrews themselves to idolatry. . . . This superstition of consecrated stones was both very ancient and very extensive, from the Graeco-Phoenician *Bantulia*, or Boetylia, the monolithic temples of Egypt and Hindostan, the *lithoi liparoi* of the Greeks, the 'lapides informes' of the Romans, the pyramids and obelisks of others, the cairns and cromlechs of Northern Europe, and the caaba of Arabia. That black stone of Mecca is described as 'an irregular oval, about seven inches in diameter, with an undulated surface, composed of about a dozen smaller stones of different sizes and shapes, well joined together with a small quantity of cement, and perfectly smooth'" (CECG, 200). Let it be emphasized here that there is no indication that Jacob regarded this stone pillar as a fetish: "the idea of a fetish stone simply does not enter into this case. . . . Koenig has successfully refuted such claims by pointing out that Jacob says, 'How awe-inspiring is this *place*—not 'this *stone*'" (EG, 778). What happened here was simply the natural thing, as an expression of the profound reverence that filled Jacob's soul after such an experience: anyone in our day might react in precisely the same manner under the same or similar circumstances. The mere setting up of the stone might well have been just a future memorial to mark the spot: this practice, we are told, is still common in the East, in memory of a religious experience and vow.

Having set the stone up, Jacob *poured oil on the top of it*. "Oil is so much used in the east for food and for bodily refreshment that a supply of it invariably forms an important part of a traveler's viaticum. From its excellent material properties, it came to be used as a symbol for spiritual influences, and, still later, as a means for setting apart or consecrating anything to God" (CECG, 200). "The stone marks the place of God's presence. It becomes a *beth El*, a 'house of God,' and is anointed with oil as a formal act of worship. Practices of this kind were common in the Canaanite cult and in the Semitic world in general but were subsequently condemned by Law and Prophets, see Exo. 23:24. Even in this passage a more spiritual conception goes with the idea of a divine dwelling on earth: Bethel is the 'gate of heaven,' God's true home, cf. 1 Ki. 8:27" (JB, 49). "We must distinguish here between the stone for a pillar, as a memorial of divine help, as Joshua and Samuel erected pillars (31:45, 35:14; Josh. 4:9, 20; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 7:12), and the anointing of the stone with oil, which consecrated it to Jehovah's sanctuary, Exo. 20:30" (Lange, CDHCG, 522).

The oil mentioned in Scripture was from the olive-tree. The olive-berry is the most frequently mentioned source of oil in the Bible. The many olive-plantations in Palestine made olive-oil one of the most important and most lucrative products of the country. It was an article of extensive and profitable trade with the Tyrians (Ezek. 27:17, cf. 1 Ki. 5:11); and presents of the best grades of olive-oil were deemed suitable for kings. In fact, no other kind of oil is distinctly mentioned in Scripture, except in one instance (Esth. 2:12, here it was oil of myrrh); and the different grades of oil referred to appear to have been only different kinds of olive-oil. Oil was used for many different purposes among the ancient Israelites and their neighbors. Special mention is made of it in the inventories of royal property and revenue (1 Sam. 10:1, 16:1, 13;

1 Ki. 1:39, 17:16; 2 Ki. 4:2, 6; 9:1, 3; 1 Chron. 27:29; 2 Chron. 11:11, 32:28; Prov. 21:20). A supply of oil was always kept in the temple (Josephus, , v. 13, 6), and an oil "treasure" was included in the stores of the Jewish kings (2 Ki. 20:13; cf. 2 Chron. 32:28). Oil of Tekoa was considered the very best. Trade in oil was carried on also between Egypt and Palestine (Ezra 3:7; Isa. 30:6, 57:9; Ezek. 27:17, Hos. 12:1).

Oil was used for *food* (Jer. 31:12, 41:8; Ezek. 16:13, 27:17; Luke 16:6ff.), and its abundance was a mark of prosperity (Joel 2:19). It was used for *cosmetic* purposes (Deut. 28:40; 2 Sam. 12:20, 14:2; Ruth 3:3). The bodies of the dead were anointed with oil by the Greeks and Romans, and apparently by the Jews (Mark 14:8, Luke 23:56). Oil was in common use for *medicinal* purposes (Isa. 1:6, Mark 6:13, Luke 10:34, Jas. 5:14). It was used to produce *light* in homes (Matt. 25:1-8, Luke 12:35). It was used for *ritualistic* purposes (Lev. 2:1-2, 5:11; Num. 5:15): the use of oil in sacrifices was indicative of joy or gladness; the absence of it denoted sorrow or humiliation (Isa. 61:3, Joel 2:19, Psa. 45:7, Rev. 6:6). *Tithes of oil* were prescribed (Deut. 12:17, 2 Chron. 31:5; Neh. 10:37, 39; 13:12; Ezek. 45:14).

The first instance in Scripture of the use of oil for strictly religious purposes is in the account under study here, that of Jacob's anointing of the stone which he had used as a "head place" on his way to Paddan-Aram (28:18, 35:14). This evidently was designed to be a formal consecration of the stone, and indeed of the whole place in which the Divine visitation occurred. Under the Mosaic Law persons and things set apart for sacred purposes were anointed with what was designated "the holy anointing oil" (Exo. 30:22-33). This anointing with oil was the symbol of the conferring of the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit by which certain persons were especially qualified for the respective ministries ("offices") to which they

were divinely commissioned. This was true especially in the ritual of formal induction of prophets, priests and kings into their respective services. (With respect to *priests*, see Exo. 28:36-41, 30:30-33, 40:13-16; Lev. 8:10-12, 30; 16:32; with respect to *kings*, 1 Sam. 9:16-17, 10:1, 15:1, 17-23; 1 Sam. 16:3, 11-13; 2 Sam. 2:4, 7; 5:13, 17; 12:7, 23:1-2; Psa. 89: 20; 1 Ki. 1:39; 2 Chron. 6:42; 1 Ki. 19:15, 16; 2 Ki. 9:1-13; with respect to *prophets*, 1 Ki. 19:16, 19, etc.). The allusions to each of the three great kings of Israel—Saul, David, and Solomon, respectively—as Yahweh's Anointed are too numerous to be listed here (e.g., 1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 2 Sam. 23:1, Psa. 89:20, etc.). Jesus of Nazareth, the Only Begotten, was God's Anointed in a special and universal sense: hence He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). The title Messiah (in Hebrew), Christos (in Greek), or Christ (in English) means "The Anointed One." To accept Jesus as the Christ is to accept Him as one's *prophet*, to whom one goes for divine truth, as one's *priest* who intercedes for His people at the throne of heaven, and as one's King—the Absolute Monarch of His Kingdom which includes all the redeemed of earth (John 14:6, 8:31-32, 6:68, 6:63; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:11-28, 9:23-28, 4:14-16; Acts 2:36; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16; Heb. 1:6-8; Psa. 2, etc.). To accept Jesus as Christ, then, is to accept Him as God's Anointed. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, we are told, was "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). When did this Divine anointing—marking His formal induction into His threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King occur? Obviously, it occurred after His baptism in the Jordan River, when the Holy Spirit "descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him" (Luke 3:21-22; Matt. 3:16-17) and the voice of the Father, at the same moment, avouched His Sonship (cf. John 1:29-34). In a special sense this conferring of the gifts and

graces of the Spirit upon the Son was the great Antitype of the symbolism of the holy anointing oil as used in Old Testament times for the formal induction of prophets, priests and kings into their respective ministries (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28; John 6:63, 3:34; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

7. *The Naming of the Place*, v. 19.

"Jacob called the name of that place, Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at first." "It is not easy to discover whether Beth-el is identical with Luz, or they were two distinct places. Some passages seem to countenance the former view (35:6, Judg. 1:23), others the latter (12:8, 13:3; Josh. 16:2, 18:13). The probability is that they were in close contiguity, and were in time merged into one" (CECG, 200). "Originally the Canaanitish town was called Luz, or 'almond tree,' a name it continued to bear until the conquest (Judges 1:23). From the circumstances recorded here in the narrative, Jacob called the spot where he slept (in the vicinity of Luz) Bethel—the designation afterward extending to the town (35:6). Until the conquest both titles appear to have been used—Luz by the Canaanites, Bethel by the Israelites. When the conquest was completed the Hebrew name was substituted for the Hittite, the sole survivor of the captured city building another Luz in another part of the country (*vide* Judg. 1:26)" (PCG, 351). "Luz, probably meaning 'almond tree,' was renamed by Jacob *Bethel*, meaning 'house of God,' and became a holy place to the children of Israel. It was located on land which later was granted to the tribe of Benjamin and was about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. The sacred place was defiled when Jeroboam erected a golden calf (1 Ki. 12:28-33), therefore God decreed the destruction of the altar (1 Ki. 13:1-5, 2 Ki. 23:15-17, Amos 3:14, 15)" (HSB, 47). "Jacob then gave the place the name of *Bethel*, i.e., House of God, whereas the town had been called Luz before. The antithesis shows that Jacob gave the name, not to the place

where the pillar was set up, but to the town, in the neighborhood of which he had received the divine revelation. He renewed it on his return from Mesopotamia (35:15). This is confirmed by ch. 48:3, where Jacob, like the historian in ch. 35:6, speaks of Luz as the place of this revelation. There is nothing at variance with this in Josh. 16:2, 18:13; for it is not Bethel as a city, but the mountains of Bethel, that are here distinguished from Luz" (BCOTP, 282). "Beth-el, *house of God*. A town about twelve miles North of Jerusalem, originally Luz (Gen. 28:19). It was here that Abraham encamped (Gen. 12:8, 13:3), and the district is still pronounced as suitable for pasturage. It received the name of Beth-el, 'house of God' because of its nearness to or being the very place where Jacob dreamed (28:10-22). Beth-el was assigned to the Benjamites, but they appear to have been either unable to take it or careless about doing so, as we find it taken by the children of Joseph" (UBD, 139). (Cf. Judg. 1:22-26, 20:26-28; 1 Sam. 7:16; 1 Ki. 12:28-33; 2 Ki. 23:15-20; Ezra 2:28; Neh. 11:31. Excavations at Bethel, conducted by Albright and Kelso reveal house walls from the time of the Judges; its occupation is thought to have begun about 2250 B.C.). "Fleeing the vengeance of Esau, Jacob passed the night at Bethel about twelve miles north of Jerusalem on the road to Shechem. There he received the divine promise of a safe return to the land of his birth. The vision of the heavenly ladder reminded Jacob that the God of his fathers would not forsake him in his journeys. Bethel later became an important shrine. Golden calves were placed there by Jeroboam I to dissuade his people from going to the Temple at Jerusalem" (BBA, 60). The problem of a twofold naming, as, for example, the naming of Bethel by Jacob at one time (28:19) and again at a later time (35:15) poses no serious problem. "At the first time Jacob made a vow that, if God would bless and keep him till his return, the pillar which he had set up

should be 'God's house.' Upon his return, in view of the abundant blessings which he had received, he performed his vow, changing the ideal to an actual Bethel, and thus encompassing and confirming the original name" (Haley, ADB, 410). "To the rationalistic objection that 'identical names of places are not imposed twice,' we may reply, in general, that it is in 'full accordance with the genius of the Oriental languages and the literary tastes of the people' to suppose that a name may be *renewed*; in other words, that a *new meaning and significance may be attached to an old name*. This fact sweeps away a host of objections urged against this and similar cases" (*ibid.*, 410). The place-name *Bethel* must have been known as far back as Abraham's time: as Murphy put it, "Abraham also worshipped God here, and met with the name already existing (see 12:8, 13:3, 25:30)." Or indeed the place may have been known as *Luz* in earlier times, this having been the Canaanite name, and somehow the two names became associated in the later historical accounts. (For examples, *i.e.*, of twofold naming, cf. Gen. 14:14, Deut. 34:1, Josh. 19:47, Judg. 18:29, with reference to *Laish* (or *Leshem*) and *Dan*; also Num. 32:41, Deut. 3:4, 14, Judg. 10:3-4, with reference to *Havoth-jair*. Note also the name *Beer-sheba*: in Gen. 21:31, we read that Abraham gave this name to the place where he entered into a covenant with *Abimelech*; in 26:33, however, we read that Isaac called the place *Shiba*; but from 26:15, 18, we find that all the wells dug by Abraham in this region had been filled with earth by the Philistines, but that Isaac re-opened them and *called them by the old familiar names*. This certainly is a satisfactory explanation of the problem.)

Speiser seems to conclude properly in these statements: "The link with Bethel carries its own symbolism as well. The theophany made Jacob realize that this was an abode of the Deity, hence the new name replaced the older *Luz*, as this aetiology sees it. Actually, Bethel was an old center

(cf. 12:8, 13:3), which managed to retain its religious influence until late in the seventh century, when the site was destroyed by Josiah (2 Ki. 23:15). The etymology seeks to fix the locale of Jacob's spiritual experience, but does not otherwise circumscribe its significance" (ABG, 220). Skinner, following the critical line, writes: "From John. 16:2 and 18:13 it appears that Luz was really distinct from Bethel, but was overshadowed by the more famous sanctuary in the neighborhood" (ICCG, 378). Note well Green's appraisal of the "sanctuary" notion: The sacred writer, he says, "makes no reference whatever to the idolatrous sanctuary subsequently established at Bethel; least of all is he giving an account of its origin. There is no discrepancy in different patriarchs successively visiting the same place and building altars there. These descriptions of patriarchal worship are not legends to gain credit for the sanctuary; but the superstition of later ages founded sanctuaries in venerated spots, where the patriarchs had worshipped, and where God had revealed himself to them" (UBG, 343). Bethel was assigned to the Benjamites, but they appear to have been either unable to take it or careless about doing so, as we find it taken by the children of Joseph, Judg. 1:22-26). Later Old Testament history makes it clear that Jeroboam I did establish idolatrous sanctuaries both at Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:28-33), and that King Josiah later destroyed the "high places" that Jeroboam had instituted; specific mention is made of the destruction of the idolatrous altar at Bethel, (cf. 2 Ki. 23:15-20). As stated above, however, Lange suggests that "through Jehovah's revelation, this place, which is viewed as a heathen waste, becomes to Jacob a house of God, and therefore he consecrates it as a permanent sanctuary" (Lange, CDHCG, 523).

8. *The Vow*, vv. 20-22.

V. 20—"A vow is a solemn promise made to God, by which we bind ourselves more strictly to necessary duty,

or what indifferent things are calculated to promote it (Psa. 76:11, 119, 106; Isa. 19:21, 44:4-5, 45:23; 2 Cor. 8:5; Deut. 5:2-3; 29:1, 12, 13; Josh. 24:25; 2 Ki. 11:17; 2 Chron. 29:10, 34:31-34; Ezra 10:3; Neh. 9:10; Acts 18:18, 21:23-24), and that either in thankfulness for some mercy received (Jonah 1:16), or for obtaining some special benefit (Num. 21:1, 2; Judges 11:30; 2 Sam. 1:11; Prov. 31:2)" (SIBG, 260). "This vow has often been presented in a light injurious to the character of Jacob, as indicating that his mind was so wholly engrossed with his present state and necessities that he felt no interest in the temporal blessings guaranteed to his posterity, or in the spiritual good which, through their medium, would be conveyed in remote ages to the world at large; and that, so far from having exalted views of the providential government of God, he confined his thoughts exclusively to his personal affairs and his immediate protection, as well as suspended his devotedness to the Divine service on condition of God's pledges being redeemed. But it should be borne in mind that it was *in consequence* of the vision, and of the promises made to him during the night, in the most unexpected manner, by the Divine Being, that he vowed his vow the next morning—a view indicative of his profound feelings of gratitude, as well as of reverence, and intended to be simply responsive to the terms in which the grace of his heavenly Benefactor and Guardian was tendered. Nay, so far is he from betraying a selfish and worldly spirit, the moderation of his desires is remarkable; and the vow, when placed in a just light, will be seen to evince the simplicity and piety of Jacob's mind. Our translators have given rise to the mistaken impressions that so generally prevail in regard to Jacob's vow, by the insertion of the word 'then' in v. 21. But the apodosis properly begins in the verse following—'then shall this stone,' etc. (It should be noted that the versification is clarified in the ARV). The words of Jacob are not to be considered

as implying a doubt, far less as stating the condition or terms on which he would dedicate himself to God. Let 'if' be changed into 'since,' and the language will appear a proper expression of Jacob's faith—an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise. And the vow as recorded should stand thus: 'If (since) God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; and if (since) the Lord shall be my God, *then* this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house,' where I shall erect an altar and worship Him" (Jamieson, CECG, 201). Note that the conditions correspond with the Divine promise; that is, they are not really "conditions" at all, but a reiteration of the elements of the promise: (1) the presence of God, (2) Divine protection, (3) a safe return to his father's house, which naturally includes the provision of food and raiment. "*If God will be with me.*" This is not the condition on which Jacob will accept God in a mercenary spirit. It is merely the echo and the thankful acknowledgement of the divine assurance, 'I am with thee,' which was given immediately before. It is the response of the son to the assurance of the father: 'Wilt thou indeed be with me? Thou shalt be my God'" (Murphy, MG, 388). V. 21a—"owned and worshipped by me and my family, as the author of our whole happiness, and as our valuable and everlasting portion" (SIBG, 260; cf. Exo. 15:2, Psa. 118:27-29). It should be noted again that Jacob said, "How awe-inspiring is this *place*"—not this *stone* v. 17. Indeed, this stone, said Jacob in reply, "shall be God's house," that is, "a monument of the presence of God among His people, and a symbol of the indwelling of his Spirit in their hearts" (MG, 388). "In enumerating protection, food, clothing and safe return Jacob is not displaying a mind ignorant of higher values but merely unfolding the potentialities of God's promise (v. 15), 'I will

keep thee and bring thee again,' etc. When he said, 'If Yahweh will be God to me,' he is paraphrasing the promise (v. 15): 'I am with thee.' Consequently, in all this Jacob is not betraying a cheap, mercenary spirit, bargaining with God for food and drink and saying, 'If I get these, then Yahweh shall be my God.' That would be about the cheapest case of arrogant bargaining with God recorded anywhere. . . . The Lord was his God. Jacob was not an unconverted man still debating whether or not to be on the Lord's side and here making an advantageous bargain out of the case. They who postpone his conversion to a time twenty years later at the river Jabbock completely misunderstand Jacob. Not only does the construction of the Hebrew allow for our interpretation, it even suggests it. The 'if' clauses of the protasis all run along after the same pattern as converted perfects—future: 'if he will,' etc., 'if Yahweh will be, or prove Himself, God to me.' Then to make the beginning of the apodosis prominent comes a new construction: noun first, then adjective clause, then verb" (Leupold, EG, 780). (Vv. 20, 21 form the protasis and v. 22 the apodosis). By the phrase, "house of God," evidently Jacob does not indicate a temple but a sacred spot, a sanctuary, which he proposes to establish and perpetuate. Just how Jacob carried out his vow is reported in 35:1-7: here, we are told, he built an altar to Yahweh on this spot, this *place* (v. 17). Nothing is reported in ch. 35 about the tithe, "perhaps because that is presupposed as the condition upon which the maintenance of the sanctuary depended. The silence of the Scriptures on this latter point by no means indicates that it was neglected" (EG, 781).

The second part of Jacob's vow was that of the *tithe*: "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (v. 22). Some authorities tell us that "the case of Jacob affords another proof that the practice of voluntary tithing was known and observed antecedent to the

time of Moses." Still and all, it is interesting to note that in Jacob's vow we have only the second Scripture reference to the voluntary tithe. The first reference occurs in Gen. 14:20, where we are told that Abraham paid the King-priest Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils (goods) he brought back from his victory over the invading kings from the East. (Incidentally, the fact that this is one of the only two references to the tithe in the book of Genesis, enhances the mystery of the identity of this King-Priest, does it not?) "The number 'ten' being the one that concludes the prime numbers, expresses the idea of completion, of some whole thing. Almost all nations, in paying tithes of all their income, and frequently, indeed, as a sacred revenue, thus wished to testify that their whole property belonged to God, and thus to have a sanctified use and enjoyment of what was left. The idea of Jacob's ladder, of the protecting hosts of angels, of the house of God and its sublime terrors, of the gate of heaven, of the symbolical significance of the oil, of the vow, and of the tithes—all these constitute a blessing of this consecrated night of Jacob's life" (Lange, CDHCG, 523). "The appropriation of this proportion of income or produce for pious or charitable purposes seems to have been a primitive practice, and hence Jacob vowed to give a tenth of whatever gains he might acquire through the blessing of Providence (ch. 14:20). It was continued under the Mosaic economy, with this difference, that what had been in patriarchal times a free-will offering, was made a kind of tax, a regular impost for supporting the consecrated tribe of Levi" (Jamieson, CECG, 201). "*I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.* In the form of sacrifices" (SC, 167). "With regard to the fulfilment of this vow, we learn from chap. 35:7 that Jacob built an altar, and probably also dedicated the tenth to God, *i.e.*, offered it to Jehovah; or, as some have supposed, applied it partly to the erection and preservation of the altar, and partly to

burnt and thank-offerings combined with sacrificial meals, according to the analogy of Deut. 14:28, 29 (cf. chap. 31:54, 46:1)" (BCOTP, 283). "A tenth I will surely give unto thee. The honored guest is treated as one of the family. Ten is the whole; a tenth is a share of the whole. The Lord of all receives one share as an acknowledgment of his sovereign right to all. Here it is represented as the full share given to the king who condescends to dwell with his subjects. Thus Jacob opens his heart, his home, and his treasure to God. These are the simple elements of a theocracy, a national establishment of the true religion. The spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, has begun to reign to Jacob. As the Father is prominently manifested in regenerate Abraham, and the Son in Isaac, so also is the Spirit in Jacob" (Murphy, MG, 388). (For the involuntary—legal—tithes required under the Mosaic economy, see the following: Lev. 27:30ff.; Num. 18:21-28; Deut. 12:5-18, 14:22-27, 28-29; 26:12-14; 2 Chron. 31:5, 12, 19; Neh. 12:44; Amos 4:4; Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42, 18:12; Heb. 7:5-8, etc. (See also especially *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, UBD, under "tithe," p. 1103).

9. Summarizations

1. With respect to *Jacob's pillar*: "The custom of the sacred pillar ('matzeba') is one of the central foundations of the patriarchal beliefs, and many of them have been discovered. They are usually small rectangles, flat and thin, more like small and humble grave-stones of today. They appear to have been erected chiefly to commemorate a theophany, a vow or sacred covenant rite, or even an ancestor or important official. The recent excavations at Hazor and other ancient sites have produced sacred slabs of this sort" (Cornfeld, AtD, 82). It should be noted, of course, that these sacred pillars are not to be interpreted as fetishes (i.e., as having magical powers), but as memorials. It is important that we keep this fact in mind. (Cf. the tendency to corrupt the significance of the Lord's

Supper in this way by the—shall I say, magical?—dogma of transubstantiation).

2. With respect to *Jacob's vow*, note the following clarifying comment in vv. 20-22: "Jacob here was not expressing doubt as to whether God would keep His promise of verses 13-15; he used the particle *if* in the sense of 'on the basis of the fact that' (cf. Rom. 8:31: *If God is for us*). Nor was he necessarily making a bargain with God, as if he would bribe Him to keep His word. He was simply specifying in the form of a vow the particular expression he would give to his gratitude for God's surprising and wholly undeserved favor. This became a customary type of thanksgiving in Israelite practice and was often solemnized by a votive offering" (HSB, 47).

3. With respect to the *dream-vision*: "The dream-vision is a comprehensive summary of the history of the Old Covenant. As Jacob is now at the starting-point of his independent development, Jehovah now stands above the ladder, appears in the beginning of his descent, and since the end of the ladder is by Jacob, it is clear that Jehovah descends to him, the ancestor and representative of the chosen people. But the whole history of the Old Covenant is nothing else than, on the one side, the history of the successive descending of God, to the incarnation in the seed of Jacob, and on the other, the successive steps of progress in Jacob and his seed towards the preparation to receive the personal fulness of the divine nature into itself. The vision reaches its fulfilment and goal in the sinking of the personal fulness of God into the helpless and weak human nature in the incarnation of Christ" (Gosman, CDHCG, 522).

4. *On Jacob's response to the Divine Promise*. "If God is to me Jehovah, then Jehovah shall be to me God. If the Lord of the angels and the world proves himself to me a covenant God, then will I glorify in my covenant God, the Lord of the whole world. There is clear evidence

that Jacob was now a child of God. He takes God to be his God in covenant, with whom he will live. He goes out in reliance upon the divine promise, and yields himself to the divine control, rendering to God the homage of a loving and grateful heart. But what a progress there is between Bethel and Peniel. Grace reigns within him, but not without a conflict. The powers and tendencies of evil are still at work. He yields too readily to their urgent solicitation. Still, grace and the principles of a renewed man, gain a stronger hold, and become more and more controlling. Under the loving but faithful discipline of God, he is gaining in his faith, until, in the great crisis of his life, Mahanaim and Peniel, and the new revelation then given to him, it receives a large and sudden increase. He is thenceforth trusting, serene, and established, strengthened and settled, and passes into the quiet life of the triumphant believer" (Gosman, *ibid.*, 523).

5. With respect to *Jacob's character*, most commentators hold that the experience at Bethel was the turning-point in his religious life. "Hear the surprise in Jacob's cry as he awakened from his sleep. . . . What less likely place and time—so it had seemed to him—could there be for God to manifest himself? He had come to one of the bleakest and most forbidding spots a man could have chanced upon. It was no pleasant meadow, no green oasis, no sheltered valley. It was a hilltop of barren rock; and its barrenness seemed to represent at that moment Jacob's claim on life. He was a fugitive, and he was afraid. His mother had told him to go off for "a few days," and then she would send and bring him home. But Jacob may have had a better idea of the truth: that it would be no 'few days' but a long time of punishing exile before he could ever dare to return. There was good reason to feel that he was alone with emptiness. When he had lain down to sleep, he was a long way off from the place of his clever and successful schemes. There was

nothing to measure his own little soul against except the silent and dreadful immensities he saw from the height of Bethel: the empty earth, the sky, the stars. Yet the strange fact was that there existed in Jacob's soul something to which God could speak. Unprepossessing though he was, he was capable of response to more than the things of flesh and sense. He had not despised or ignored his inheritance. He knew that it was faith in God that had given dignity to Abraham and Isaac, and he had a hunger—even if mixed with baseness—to get his own life into touch with God. When such a man is confronted in his solitariness with the sublimity of the hills and the awful mystery of the marching stars, he may be capable of great conceptions which begin to take shape in his subconscious. In his dreams he sees not only nature, but the gates of heaven. Yet how many there are who fall short of Jacob in this—men in whom solitariness produces nothing, who will fall asleep but will not dream, who when they are forced to be alone are either bored or frightened. Out of the aloneness they dread they get nothing, because they have not kept the seed of religion that in their hour of need and crisis might have quickened their souls" (IB, 690).

"He made a solemn vow upon this occasion, v. 20-22. When God ratifies his promises to us, it is proper for us to repeat our promises to him. Now in this vow, observe, 1. Jacob's faith. God had said (v. 15), *I am with thee, and will keep thee.* Jacob takes hold of this, and infers, 'I depend upon it.' 2. Jacob's modesty and great moderation in his desires. He will cheerfully content himself with bread to eat, and raiment to put on. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less. 3. Jacob's piety, and his regard to God, which appear here (1) in what he desired, that God would be with him, and keep him (2) In what he designed. His resolution is: (1) In general, to cleave to the Lord, as his God in covenant,

Then shall the Lord be my God. (2) In particular, that he would perform some special acts of devotion, in token of his gratitude. *First*, 'This pillar shall keep possession here till I come back in peace, and then an altar shall be erected here to the honor of God.' *Secondly*, 'The house of God shall not be unfurnished, nor his altar without a sacrifice: Of all that thou shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee, to be spent either upon God's altars or upon his poor,' both which are his receivers in the world" (M. Henry, CWB, 49).

With reference to Jacob's spiritual condition at Bethel, "the other side of the coin," so to speak, is presented by the well-known commentator on the Pentateuch, C. H. Mackintosh, as follows: "Now this vision of Jacob's is a very blessed disclosure of divine grace to Israel. We have been led to see something of Jacob's real character, something, too, of his real condition; both were evidently such as to show that it should either be divine grace for him, or nothing. By birth he had no claim; nor yet by character. Esau might have put forward some claim on both these grounds (*i.e.*, provided God's prerogatives were set aside), but Jacob had no claim whatsoever; and hence, while Esau could only stand upon the exclusion of God's prerogative, Jacob could only stand upon the introduction and establishment thereof. Jacob was such a sinner, and so utterly divested of all claim, both by birth and by practice, that he had nothing whatever to rest upon save God's purpose of pure, free, and sovereign grace. Hence, in the revelation which the Lord makes to His chosen servant in the passage just quoted, it is a simple record or prediction of what He Himself would yet do. *I am . . . I will give . . . I will keep . . . I will bring . . . I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* It was all Himself. There is no condition whatever—no *if* or *but*; for when grace acts, there can be no such thing. Where there is an *if*, it cannot possibly

be grace. Not that God cannot put man into a position of responsibility, in which He must needs address him with an 'if.' We know He can; but Jacob asleep on a pillow of stone was not in a position of responsibility, but of the deepest helplessness and need; and therefore he was in a position to receive a revelation of the fullest, richest, and most unconditional grace. Now, we cannot but own the blessedness of being in such a condition that we have nothing to rest upon save God Himself; and, moreover, that it is in the most perfect establishment of God's own character and prerogative that we obtain all our true joy and blessing. According to this principle, it would be an irreparable loss to us to have any ground of our own to stand upon; for in that case, God should address us on the ground of responsibility, and failure then would be inevitable. Jacob was so bad, that none but God Himself could do for him" (C.H.M., NG, 284-285). Again: "We . . . shall now close our meditations upon this chapter with a brief notice of *Jacob's bargain with God*, so truly characteristic of him, and so demonstrative of the truth of the statement with respect to the shallowness of his knowledge of the divine character. *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.* Observe, *If God will be with me.* Now the Lord had just said, emphatically, *I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land*, etc. And yet poor Jacob's heart cannot get beyond an "if," nor in its thoughts of God's goodness, can it rise higher than *bread to eat and raiment to put on*. Such were the thoughts of one who had just seen the magnificent vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with

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the Lord standing above, and promising an innumerable seed and an everlasting possession. Jacob was evidently unable to enter into the reality and fullness of God's thoughts. He measured God by himself, and thus utterly failed to apprehend Him. In short, Jacob had not yet really got to the end of himself; and hence he had not really begun with God" (C.H.M., *ibid.*, 287-288). (May I explain again here that God's election of Jacob was not arbitrary, but the consequence of His foreknowledge of the basic superiority of Jacob's character over that of Esau: a fact certainly borne out by what they did in the later years of their lives and by the acts of their respective progenies. (For a study of the Scriptures, Rom. 9:12-13, Mal. 1:2-3, 2 Sam. 8:14, Gen. 32:3, Gen., ch. 36, Num. 20:14-21, Isa. 34:5, see my *Genesis*, Vol. II pp. 241-243). God's grace is indeed extended to man fully and freely, but the application of its benefits is *conditional* on man's acceptance. One may try to give his friend a thousand dollars, but the gift is of no value unless and until it is accepted (cf. John 3:16-17, 5:40, 14:15; Matt. 7:24-27, etc.).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

The Holiness of God

Text: Gen. 28:16-17. Note that Jacob on awakening from his dream-vision "was afraid," that is, *shaken*, literally *terrified* (ABG, 218), and exclaimed "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Someone has said: "Where God's word is found, there is a house of God; there heaven stands open."

In Scripture there is one Person—and only one Person—who is ever addressed as *Holy Father*: that Person is God Himself, and God is so addressed by the Son of God in the latter's highpriestly prayer (John 17:11). More-

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over, Jesus Himself forbids our addressing any other being as "father," that is, in a spiritual sense (Matt. 23:1-12, esp. v. 9). Likewise, God alone is spoken of in Scripture as *reverend* (Psa. 111:9, cf. Heb. 12:28-29). In view of these positive Scripture statements, how can men have the presumption to arrogate these sacred titles to themselves; not only just *reverend*, but also *very reverend*, *most reverend*, etc., *ad nauseam*. Note that Jesus, the Only Begotten, is also addressed as the Holy One of God (by evil spirits, *i.e.*, fallen angels, Mark 1:24; by Simon Peter, John 6:69; cf. Acts 3:14, 4:27, 7:52). It should be noted, too, that God's dwelling-place is the *Holy City* (Rev. 3:12, 11:2, 21:2, 22:19), *per facio* the *New Jerusalem* (Gal. 4:2, Rev. 21:10, Heb. 11:10, 12:22). It is the presence of God that makes heaven to be heaven; it is the absence of God that makes hell to be hell (Rev. 21:1-7, 21:8, 20:11-15, 22:1-5, 6:16-17, etc.).

The word "holiness" comes from the Greek *holos*, meaning "all," "the whole," "entire," etc. Holiness is *wholeness*, *completeness*, hence *perfection* (*per facio*, to make or to do completely, thoroughly). The perfections of God, commonly known as His attributes, constitute His holiness (Matt. 5:48). (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:16, Lev. 11:44, 19:2, 20:7).

The *attributes* of God—Perfections of the Divine Nature—may be classified as *ontological*, that is, inherent in His Being, and *moral*, *i.e.*, inherent in His relationships with moral creatures. In the former category, we say that God is eternal, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. In the latter category, we say that God is infinitely holy, just and good; infinitely true and faithful; infinitely merciful and long-suffering. (For a discussion of these attributes see my *Survey Course in Christian Doctrine*, Vol. I, College Press, Joplin, Missouri.)

It is the *holiness* of God, we are told, that is the subject-matter of the heavenly hymnody before the Throne

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of the Almighty (Isa. 6:3). This is the burden of the heavenly anthem which is sung unceasingly around the Throne, in which the redeemed of earth will be privileged to join, in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13, 1 Thess. 5:23, Rev. 4:8). When we stand before God in that great Day the one outstanding characteristic of His nature that will be apparent to all His intelligent creatures will surely be His *holiness*. Is not His end in creating us in His image the building of a holy redeemed race fit to commune with Him in loving intimacy throughout the ceaseless aeons of eternity? Hence His admonition to us, "Be ye yourselves also holy," etc. (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). It is because men cannot grasp the import of the holiness of God that they get such ridiculously distorted concepts of His dealings with His creation. *Holiness is the foundation of all the Divine Perfections.* We shall examine here some of the more significant aspects of this Divine Holiness.

1. The Holiness of God includes His *truthfulness*. He always speaks the truth. He would never deceive us. When He speaks, He speaks the truth; what He tells us that He will do, that He will do: we can depend on it. (Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33, 16:31; Rom. 10:6-10, 2 Tim. 2:18-19, etc.). The foundation of God standeth sure, *i.e.*, for ever. His word is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword," etc. (Heb. 4:12). (May I offer this personal testimony: the more I delve into the cults and philosophies of men, the more I am convinced that God's Word is to be found in the Bible, and the more confirmed I become in my conviction that what is found in the Bible is true, even if we as human beings cannot understand fully the meaning of it. After all, as Sam Jones used to say, "You cannot pour the ocean into a teacup." In the Scripture God speaks to men, and what He speaks is true—we can depend on it. And the reason why multitudes are staggering in blindness and carelessness today is the fact that they do not *know*—or will not accept

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—what God is telling them in His Book. Their humanism, materialism, naturalism, agnosticism, etc., leave them utterly blind to the truth. They do not know God's Word—they do not try to know it—they do not even want to know it. They are the blind leading the blind—and their end can be only "the pit" (Matt. 15:14—C.C.).

2. The Holiness of God includes His *righteousness*. What He tells us to do is *right*; what He tells us not to do is *wrong* (Gal. 5:16-25). Why do we have so many varying notions of right and wrong? The answer is simple: Because men follow what *they* think instead of what God has *said*. God loves righteousness, but He hates iniquity (Psa. 45:7, Heb. 1:9). It has been rightly said that "human character is worthless in proportion as the abhorrence of sin is lacking in it." *The most evident sign of the moral flabbiness of our age is the manner in which we condone—wink at—sin.* It was Herbert Spencer who said over a century ago that good nature with Americans has become a crime. Dr. Arnold, Head Master of Rugby once said, "I am never sure of a boy who only loves the good. I never feel that he is safe until I see that he abhors evil." Lecky says, in his great book, *Democracy and Liberty*, "There is one thing worse than corruption, and that is acquiescence in corruption." Dr. Will Durant has said: "The nation that will not resist anarchy is doomed to destruction." To be incapable of moral indignation against wrong is to have no real love for the right. The only revenge that is permissible to Christians is the revenge that pursues and exterminates sin. Likewise, this is the only vengeance known to God. (We must remember that *vindication* is not vengeance).

3. The Holiness of God includes His *faithfulness*. That is, He faithfully executes His judgments and fulfills His promises. (2 Tim. 2:13, 1 Cor. 10:13, Deut. 32:4, Isa. 40:8, 1 John 1:9, Matt. 24:35, 2 Pet. 1:4, Heb. 2:1-4, 2 Pet. 3:1-13).

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4. The Holiness of God includes His *love* (and in turn His *mercy* and His *longsuffering*). By His *mercy*, we mean that He is ever willing and anxious to pardon all who are truly penitent. (Ezek. 33:11, Psa. 145:9, Luke 1:78, 2 Cor. 1:3, Eph. 2:4, Tit. 3:5, John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-21). In the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), Jesus tells us that the father "ran" to meet his penitent boy returning home "and fell on his neck and kissed him": is not this really the story of the Forgiving Father? Note, too, that the father was "moved with compassion" (v. 20). Robert Browning writes: "God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that." Lowell: "Tis heaven alone that is given away; 'tis only God may be had for the asking." Annie Johnston Flint: "Out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth—and giveth again." By God's *longsuffering* we mean that He gives the sinner a long time for repentance, even to the limit at which love must give way to justice. I Pet. 3:20—the longsuffering of God gave the antediluvian world one hundred and twenty years of grace (Gen. 6:3); cf. 2 Pet. 3:9. It is said that an atheist conversing on occasion with Joseph Parker, the distinguished British minister, exclaimed, "If there is a God, I give Him three minutes to prove it by striking me dead." To which Joseph Parker replied with great sorrow in his voice, "Do you suppose that you can exhaust the mercy of God in three minutes?" Consider God's longsuffering patience toward the Children of Israel, despite their numerous and repeated backslidings. Think of the awful wickedness spread abroad over our earth today—yet God waits, for those who may come to repentance. God's mercy will follow you to the grave, my sinner friend, but it cannot consistently follow you farther. This life is *probationary*; in the next world, God's love must give way to His justice. No such thing as *post-mortem* repentance or salvation is taught in Scripture: as a matter

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of fact, the idea is completely rejected in the narrative of the Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31).

Note what God says to us through His prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 33:11). Note the Divine exhortation, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Is not this a wonderful revealing of the great Heart of our God? God wants us to repent, to turn to Him; he yearns for our turning to Him; and when we give Him our hearts, He delights in being merciful to us. Did you ever have the experience of your child turning away from you and probably getting into trouble? then to have him come back in penitence and tears, with an open confession, "I have done wrong"? Do you not gladly help him in every way you can? You do for him what he cannot do for himself. That is what God does for us—He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves: He who owns the world and all that is therein, comes down to buy us back, to redeem us. He rushes out the road to meet us and to throw His arms around us, if we will only come in penitence and confession. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases" through the blood of Him who died on the Cross to redeem us. He provided this covering of grace for our sins. He leads us back into His house and bestows on us the gifts of His divine Fatherhood. We can never merit salvation and eternal life; we can only accept these as Gifts (John 3:16). Dante tells us in his *Divine Comedy* (one of the greatest of all the epic poems) that the motto over the doorway to Hell is this: *Abandon hope, all ye who enter here*. The Bible tells us that above the gate to Heaven is the inscription: *The Gift of God*.

Yes, it is God's Love that causes Him to be a *jealous* God. "I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God," etc. (Exo. 20:1-6). We must not overlook the fact that jealousy is naturally an emotion that attaches to true love. The person who can remain complacent when he sees the object of his affection being led away by another who is un-

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worthy, by one who seeks only his own selfish ends, certainly cannot have any measure of true love to begin with. To be jealous is to be pained, to be hurt, to be heart-broken, on seeing the one loved being led astray into what can only turn out to be a life of misery. I would not "give a plugged nickel" (pardon the slang!) for any kind of affection that does not have in it this element of jealousy. What does this famous passage in Exodus mean? It means this: "I Jehovah thy God have a heart filled with affection for you, my people. But I am hurt, I am heartbroken, when I see you bestowing your affections upon the false gods before whom you bow down in idolatry. And when you do spurn my affection, when you turn a deaf ear to my wooings, I will see to it that your sins will find you out, that the consequences of your unfaithfulness will pursue you and yours from generation to generation, if perchance, knowing this, you may be brought to your senses and to return to me and to my love for you." This Exodus passage is the first statement in literature of the *law of heredity, the law of the consequences of sin.* (The law of guilt is to be found in Ezek. 18:19-24).

Yes, the holiness of God includes His jealousy. (Cf. the Apostle's jealousy with respect to the Bride of Christ, 2 Cor. 11:2). This was the terrible lesson that Hosea learned from his own experience: namely, that he he was heartbroken by the unfaithfulness of his wife Gomer, so God was indescribably heartbroken (in such a measure as man could never be) by the unfaithfulness of His people Israel; that as he, Hosea, would go down into the marketplace and buy back his prostitute wife (redeem her) for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley, so God in the person of His Only Begotten would come down into the marketplace of the world, and by the shedding of His own precious blood, buy back all those who would accept the gift of redemption (John 3:16,

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Lev. 17:11, John 1:29, Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 1:18-21, Rev. 12:10-12, 22:14). It was through his own personal experience that the prophet Hosea reached a concept of God's immeasurable love that is not surpassed anywhere in Scripture, not even in the New Testament.

5. The Holiness of God includes His *absolute justice*. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne" (Psa. 97:2). God could not be holy and not be just. God could not be holy and fail to punish sin. God could not be holy and accept a sinner in his sins, for this would be putting a premium on sin, this would be rewarding sin. And because sin is transgression of divine law (lawlessness, 1 John 3:4), God could not be holy without demanding an adequate atonement (the word means "covering"). Hence "for the joy that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2), the Eternal Logos as the Only Begotten Son of God provided this atonement, this Covering of Grace, so that God would be vindicated from the false charges brought against Him by Satan and his rebel host, and hence could be just and at the same time a justifier of all who come to Him by the obedience of faith in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:19-26). Because the One who died on the Cross was *not just a man* (in which case this would have been only a martyrdom), but the incarnate *God-Man* (John 1:1-14; Matt. 22:42, 1:23; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; John 17:5; Matt. 16:16-19; 1 Pet. 2:21-24 etc.), whose vicarious sacrifice was, therefore, *The Atonement* (Heb. 9:23-28). God did for man what man could never do for himself. As W. Robertson Smith writes, (LRS, 62): "To reconcile the forgiving goodness of God with His absolute justice, is one of the highest problems of spiritual religion, which in Christianity is solved by the doctrine of the atonement. It is important to realize that in heathenism this problem never arose in the form in which the New Testament deals with it, not because the gods of the heathen were not conceived as good and

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gracious, but *because they were not absolutely just*" (—italics mine, C.C.). The God of the Bible is just, absolutely just: under His sovereignty "every transgression and obedience will receive a just recompence of reward" (Heb. 2:1-3); in the finality of things the Great Judge—Christ Himself—"will render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27). Multitudes seem to cherish the fantasy that final Judgment will be a kind of military inspection in which the Judge will pass down the line as we number off individually as in the army, and consign each of us to his proper destiny. No so. The Acting Sovereign of the universe knows the moral standing of every person at any and every moment of this life. Hence the final Judgment will not be the *ascertainment* of the moral character of each human being; it will be, rather, the *revelation* of the absolute justice of God "who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. 2:4-11). "A man who afterward became a Methodist preacher was converted in Whitefield's time by a vision of the judgment, in which he saw all men gathered before the throne and each one coming up to the book of God's law, tearing open his heart before it 'as one would tear open the bosom of his shirt,' comparing his heart with the things written in the book, and, according as they agreed or disagreed with that standard, either passing triumphant to the company of the blest, or going with howling to the company of the damned. No word was spoken; the Judge sat silent; the judgment was one of self-revelation and self-condemnation" (Strong, ST, p. 1026). Cf. Luke 16:25, Heb. 10:27; Matt. 25:31-46, John 5:26-29, Acts 17:30-31, Luke 11:29-32; Rev. 20:11-15, 2 Pet. 2:1-10; etc.) The saints will appear in the Judgment clad in the fine linen of righteousness (Rev. 19:8, 14), their sins having been covered by the blood of Christ, forgiven and forgotten, put away from them forever; and clothed also in glory and honor and immortality, the habiliments of eternal

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redemption (Heb. 9:11-12). In their manifestation, the greatness of God's love, mercy, and salvation will be fully disclosed to all intelligent creatures. The wicked will be presented in the judgment as they really are; even their secret sins will be made manifest to the whole intelligent creation. For the first time, it seems, they will realize the enormity of their rebelliousness (as will also the evil angels) and their complete loss of God and heaven will impel them spontaneously to resort to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, *i.e.*, that of utter *remorse* and *despair*, not of *hate*. Thus will be consummated the complete vindication of God against all His enemies, angelic and human, which is, in itself, the primary design of the Last Judgment. This final demonstration will be sufficient to prove to all intelligences that Satan's charges against God have been from the beginning false and malicious (John 8:44, Luke 10:18, 2 Cor. 4:4, Eph. 3:8-12, 1 Pet. 5:8, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6-7, 1 Cor. 6:2-3, Rev. 20:9-15, Rev. 22:10-15). The greatness of this Consummation of God's Cosmic Plan will be determined, not by the *number* fully redeemed in spirit and soul and body, but by the ineffable glory of the salvation there to be revealed in its fulness (Rom. 8:18-23, 1 Thess. 5:23, 2 Cor. 5:1-10, 1 Cor. 15:35-58, etc.). In a word, it can be rightly said that *God's absolute justice is His holiness*, for the simple reason that ever attribute of God must be under the primacy of His justice.

6. Last, but not least by any means, the Holiness of God must include His *awesomeness*. But what is awesomeness? It is defined in the dictionary—and properly—as meaning "causing, or expressive of, awe or terror." There are multiplied thousands of persons on our earth today who look upon God as a kind of glorified bellhop, waiting and ready at any time to pander to their slightest requests and idiosyncracies. And when and if He does not do this, they resort to orgies of self-pity. *This is not the God of the*

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Bible—let this fact be understood at once! Manifold numbers of human beings carry the notion of God's love to such an extent as to believe that all men will be saved ultimately, that is, let us say, if there is a God in their thinking). This is contrary to human experience itself. Only that person who has cultivated understanding of poetry can appreciate poetry; only that person who has cultivated understanding of music can truly appreciate music. And it is equally true that *only those persons who understand and cultivate the Spiritual life can expect—and hope—to enjoy ultimate union with God.* "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people," we often are told. And this is not just a cliche—it is sober fact. In the very nature of the case—psychologically as well as theologically speaking—a wicked man would be utterly out of place in heaven. Only those who bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25) can, in the very nature of the case, be prepared to share the Beatific Vision (Rev. 21:1-5, 1 John 3:1-3). I can't think of anyone who would be more miserable than the Devil would be if he could get past the pearly gate for a split second. Evil is always uncomfortable, even miserable, in the presence of good.

The awesomeness of God. This was one of the lessons, if not actually *the* most important lesson, that Jacob learned from his experience at Bethel. When he awakened from his dream-vision, "he was afraid," we are told: literally, according to Dr. Speiser, he was *terrified*. Was not this to be expected. "No man hath seen God at any time," that is, in the fulness of His being: no man could look upon God with the eye of flesh and live, because our God is "a devouring fire, a jealous God" (1 John 1:18, Deut. 4:24). (Cf. the appearance of Yahweh in the time of Moses, on the occasion of the giving of the Law, Exo. 19:7-25, 20:18-26). For the impenitent, the negligent, the profane, "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin,

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but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). The Apostle tells us that "unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indigation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil" (Rom. 2:8-9). The wheat and the tares must be allowed to grow up together, because only Omniscience, who looketh upon the thoughts and intents of the heart, can justly separate them; hence it will not be until the great Judgment that the wheat will be gathered into the granary, and the chaff will be burned up with unquenchable fire (Heb. 4:12-13; Matt. 13:24-30; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). Note the numerous references to hell as the abode of the lost in "the lake of fire and brimstone," etc. (Isa. 33:14, Psa. 11:5-7, Matt. 3:12, 5:29-30, 7:19, 25:41-46; Luke 3:17, John 15:6, 2 Pet. 3:7, Jude 7; Rev. 14:9-11, 19:20, 20:11-15, 21:8, etc.). There are many who will say that this language is all "figurative." Perhaps so—it could be, of course. But to say that all these references to hell are in figurative language is to accentuate the problem; for a figure must be a figure of *something*, and if the Bible descriptions of hell are merely figurative, I shudder to contemplate what the reality might be. For, whatever else we take with us into the next order of being, it is evident—from both Scripture and science—that we take memory (cf. Luke 16:25; studies in psychic research now verify the fact that the subconscious in man is the seat of perfect memory). It may turn out, then, that *memory* is the worm that never dies and *conscience* (if not at peace with God) the fire that is never quenched (Mark 9:43-48, Heb. 10:27). (We must remember, in this connection, that when God forgives, He forgets; undoubtedly we may expect this to be one of the ineffable aspects of eternal redemption; cf. Psa. 103:12). On the other hand,

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one cannot even begin to comprehend—or even to imagine—the mental anguish which the unredeemed will suffer on fully realizing the enormity of their loss in being separated from God and all good forever (Rev. 6:16-17, 9:6; Matt. 8:12, 13:42, 50; 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28; cf. Reb. 18:15-20). (In this connection, it should be noted especially that the word which Jesus used to designate hell was not *Hades* [the underworld, or probably the grave], but *Gehenna*, the name derived from the Valley of Hinnom outside the city of Jerusalem, the place where Molech, Chemosh, and Tammuz (Ammonite, Moabite, and Syrian deities, respectively) were worshipped (cf. 1 Ki. 11:7, 2 Chron. 28:3, 33:6; Ezek. 8:14, Jer. 7:30-34, Num. 21:29). Its sinister history caused its defilement by Josiah (2 Ki. 23:6, 10). It became the place where the refuse of the city, dead animals, and the bodies of criminals were burned; and hence was regarded as a fit symbol of the destruction of wicked souls. It is especially significant that Jesus used this name several times in his Sermon on the Mount.)

Undoubtedly the *dreadfulness* of God is a fact of His being, and an aspect of His holiness. Recognition of it would seem to be an aspect of the attitude of worship. Indeed the Preacher tells us that to "fear God and keep his commandments" is "the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). Our God is to be *feared* in the sense that His awesomeness is to be felt at all times. All power is of God, and surely the forces that are unleashed as man discovers more and more about the physical power that is inherent in the submicroscopic world, should cause all of us to stand in awe of His righteous indignation that occasions His use of moral power (authority) to punish sin. Let it never be forgotten that *God hates sin*, and that this hatred is the source of the divine wrath which, in all justice and holiness, must inevitably be visited upon the wicked and impenitent.

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Rudolph Otto, in his remarkable book, *The Idea of the Holy*, develops the thesis that "religious dread" is essential to recognition of God's holiness and hence to genuine Christian worship. "Of modern language," he writes, "English has the words 'awe,' 'awful,' which in their deeper and most special sense approximate closely to our meaning. The phrase, 'he stood aghast,' is also suggestive in this connexion." The unique character of religious awe, he holds, is qualitatively distinct from all 'natural' feelings. Quoting again: "Not only is the saying of Luther, that the natural man cannot fear God perfectly, correct from the standpoint of psychology, but we ought to go further and add that the natural man is quite unable even to shudder (*grauen*) or feel horror in the real sense of the word. For 'shuddering' is something more than 'natural,' ordinary fear. It implies that the mysterious is already beginning to loom before the mind, to touch the feelings. It implies the first application of a category of valuation which has no place in the everyday natural world of ordinary experience, and is possible only to a being in whom has been awakened a mental predisposition, unique in kind and different in a definite way from any 'natural' faculty. And this newly-revealed capacity, even in the crude and violent manifestations which are all it at first evinces, bears witness to a completely new function of experience and standard of valuation, belonging only to the spirit of man." This "numinous awe," Otto goes on to say, appears first as characteristic of primitives in the form of 'daemonic' dread. "Even when the worship of 'daemons' has long since reached the higher level of worship of 'gods,' these gods still retain as 'numina' something of the 'ghost' in the impress they make on the feelings of the worshipper, viz., the peculiar quality of the 'uncanny' and 'awful,' which survives with the quality of exaltedness and sublimity or is symbolized by means of it. And this element, softened though it is, does not dis-

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appear even on the highest level of all, where the worship of God is at its purest. Its disappearance would be indeed an essential loss. The 'shudder' reappears in a form ennobled beyond measure where the soul, held speechless, trembles inwardly to the furthest fibre of its being. It invades the mind mightily in Christian worship with the words: 'Holy holy, holy'; it breaks forth from the hymn of Tersteegen:

God Himself is present:
Heart, be stilled before Him:
Prostrate inwardly adore Him.

The 'shudder' has here lost its crazy and bewildering note, but not the ineffable something that holds the mind. It has become a mystical awe, and sets free as its accompaniment, reflected in self-consciousness, that 'creature-feeling' that has already been described as the feeling of personal nothingness and abasement before the awe-inspiring object directly experienced."

Otto cites as an example of the case in point the references in Scripture to the Wrath of Yahweh. The notion that this 'Wrath' is mere caprice and wilful passion, he points out, would have been emphatically rejected by the spiritually-minded men of the Old Covenant, "for to them the Wrath of God, so far from being a diminution of His Godhead, appears as a natural expression of it, an element of 'holiness' itself, and quite an indispensable one. And in this they are entirely right." Closely related to the Wrath of Yahweh, according to this author, is the Jealousy of Yahweh. "The state of mind denoted by the phrase 'being jealous for Yahweh' is also a numinous state of mind, in which features of the 'tremendum' pass over into the man who has experience of it." For characteristic aspects of what Otto calls the Mysterium Tremendum, the following are listed: the sense of Majesty (Overpower-

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ingness), the sense of *urgency* (energy), the sense of the "Wholly Other," the sense of Fascination, *i.e.*, of the numinous object. The numinous consciousness, Otto tells us, is innate; it cannot be taught; it can only be awakened. Is not all this inherent in the oft-repeated descriptive phrase, in Scripture, "The *Living God*"? (See IH, pp. 12:24: cf. also the book by Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*.)

In strict harmony with this experience of *dreadfulness* in the presence of Yahweh was Jacob's experience at Bethel (as Otto points out). Gen. 28:17, Jacob says here, on awaking from his dream-vision, "How dreadful is this place: this is none other than the house of Elohim!" "This verse is very instructive for the psychology of religion. . . . The first sentence gives plainly the mental impression itself in all its immediacy, before reflection has permeated it, and before the meaning-content of the feeling itself has become clear or explicit. It connotes solely the *primal numinous awe*, which has been undoubtedly sufficient in itself in many cases to mark out 'holy' or 'sacred' places, and make of them spots of awful veneration, centres of a cult admitting a certain development. There is no need, that is, for the experient to pass on to resolve his mere impression of the eerie and awful into the idea of a 'numen', a divine power, dwelling in the 'awful' place, still less need the *numen* become a *nomen*, a named power, or the '*nomen*' become something more than a mere pronoun. Worship is possible without this further explicative process. But Jacob's second statement gives this process of explication and interpretation; it is no longer simply an expression of the actual experience." The words used by Jacob undoubtedly connote a sense of "eeriness" or "uncanniness." Cf. Moses at the Burning Bush (Exo. 3:5-7), Isaiah's Vision of Jehovah of Hosts (Isa. 6:1-5), Daniel's Vision of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9ff.), John's Vision of the Living One

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(Rev. 1:12-18), etc. Surely the awesomeness of our God is a realistic aspect of the very Mystery of all mysteries—the Mystery of Being! Surely the *dreadfulness* of God is a phase of His holiness, and the awareness of it a vital aspect of Christian worship! For our Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, in His eternal being (John 17:5), dwells with the Heavenly Father, “in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15-16).

Lessons from Jacob's ladder

Gen. 28:10-15; cf. John 1:51

The writer of Hebrews tells us that God spoke “by divers portions and in divers manners” to holy men of old (1:1). He came down and talked personally with Adam in the primeval Garden. He conversed in some manner with Noah and the ark was built. He talked with Abraham on different occasions, and also with Isaac and Jacob. He revealed His will to Moses at the Burning Bush, and to the entire assembly of Israel from the summit of Sinai. Indeed prophecy (revelation) never came by man, but only as holy men of old spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

We are quite familiar with the story of God’s speaking to Jacob in the dream-vision which the latter experienced at Bethel: the vision of a ladder stretched from heaven to earth and angels ascending and descending upon it. This vision had wondrous significance to Jacob, of course, but in its antitypical aspect it has even more far-reaching significance for Christians. Our Lord Himself reveals fully the spiritual meaning of Jacob’s vision in terms we can all understand (John 1:51).

We are familiar with the circumstances which led up to this scene at Bethel. Jacob was in flight, we might truly say, to Paddan-aram, the home of his uncle Laban, to

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avoid the vengeance threatened by his brother Esau. On the way to Mesopotamia the event occurred as recorded in the lesson context. Physically exhausted, Jacob lay down to sleep, and then to dream. The earth was his bed, the canopy of heaven his coverlet, and a stone his only pillow. Then came the vision of the celestial ladder and its angelic host, and the voice of Yahweh repeating the Promise He had made previously to Abraham and then to Isaac. Said Jacob on awaking from his dream, "This is none other than the house of God" (Bethel)! Explaining this vision in the sense suggested by our Lord Himself, what lessons do we derive from the story? What truths did Jacob's Ladder typify or suggest with reference to Christ?

1. *It typified the Person of the Savior.* (1) the top of the ladder "reached to heaven." So Christ is the spiritual Ladder who connects heaven and earth. He came from heaven and entered into human flesh, in order to purchase redemption for us. Those 'scholars' who would discredit the Virgin Birth would do well first to explain away the doctrine of His pre-existence. (Cf. John 17:4-5, 1:1-14, 8:58; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:10, 2:9-18; Phil. 2:5-11, and many other Scriptures which either assert positively, or clearly intimate, that the Son has existed with the Father from eternity and was indeed the executive Agent in the Creation, cf. Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, etc.). (2) In the beginning man transgressed the law of God, the sovereign law of the creation because it is the expression of the Sovereign Will. Absolute Justice demanded satisfaction, vindication of the Sovereign Will, else the law would have been rendered void and the Divine government discredited in the sight of all intelligent beings. There was nothing that earth had to offer, nothing within man himself, that could provide atonement (covering) for the transgression of the divine law. Hence, it became necessary for Heaven to offer its costliest Gift, in order that the majesty of the law be sustained and God's law adequately demonstrated to re-

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bellious angels and men. This offering was made: God gave His Only Begotten as the Sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29, 3:16), and "for the joy that was set before Him" the Son gave His life (Heb. 12:1-2), and the Holy Spirit has revealed the Word (cf. Col. 1:13-23, Rom. 3:25, Eph. 3:8-12, 1 Cor. 2:9-13, Heb. 10:19-22, etc. Hence it was, that the bottom of the ladder which Jacob saw rested on the ground. Our Lord took upon Himself, not the nature of angels, but the nature of the seed of Abraham. He became Immanuel, *God with us.* (Heb. 2:14-16, Isa. 9:6, 1 Tim. 3:16, Rom. 8:3, Matt. 1:23). He was not just *a* son, but *the* Son, of the living God (Matt. 16:16). He was God in human flesh (John 14:9), yet while in the flesh He was subject to the frailties and temptations to which all men are subject (Matt. 4:2, 8:24; Luke 2:52; John 4:6-7, 11:35). In the strength of perfect manhood He conquered sin in the flesh, and being made perfect through suffering, He was qualified to lead many sons into glory (Heb. 2:9-10). It is on the basis of His human nature that he is given the title, "Son of man." It is on the basis of His human nature that He has qualified Himself to be our great High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18, 5:8-10, 9:24-28). John 3:13; this should read, freely translated: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man whose abode is heaven" (cf. John 1:18, 17:5). His eternal abode is heaven; while on earth, He was temporarily out of that abode, to which He has returned as our Prophet, Priest, and King (Acts 2:36, Eph. 1:20-23), the Lord's Anointed, (Matt. 3:16, 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 2:29-36, 10:38-43, etc.) The matchless humanity of Christ is one of the irrefutable evidences of His deity.

2. *It typified the mediatorial work of Christ.* The ladder reached from heaven to earth, thus forming a bond of union. An integral phase of Christ's incarnate life was that of reconciliation; His ministry was the ministry

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of reconciliation (Eph. 2:11-22, 2 Cor. 5:17-21). The essence of true religion is *reconciliation*, as signified by the etymology of the word, *religo*, *religare*, which means "to bind back." Christianity is the true religion in the sense that it is the authoritarian Faith, revealing to us the only One who can bind us anew to God. God gave the world to man, and man mortgaged it—and himself—to the devil (Gen. 1:27-31, 3:6-8; Rom. 7:14). Rebellion entered man's heart and separated him from his Creator. The Only Begotten (John 3:16) came to earth to offer Himself as a propitiation for sin (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2, 4:10). He came, both to satisfy the demands of Absolute Justice and so to vindicate God, and to demonstrate God's love for man in such a way as to overcome the rebellion in man's heart and woo him back to the Heavenly Father (John 3:16; 1 John 4:11, 10; Rom. 2:4). He came to heal the schism which sin had caused, to repair the ruin which Satan had incurred, and to remove the misery which iniquity had entailed (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Heb. 2:14-15).

He is our Mediator to-day, our High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20). There is no other name (authority) by which it is possible for us to be saved (Acts 4:12). There is no way of approach to God but through Him (John 14:6). We are no longer to pray directly to God, as did the Jew; we must address our prayers to the Father *in the name of Christ* (John 14:13-15). How, then, sinner friend, do you expect to come to the Father unless you have accepted Christ? How can you consistently ask God to answer your prayers until you have been inducted into Christ (Gal. 3:27)? I warn you solemnly that, as long as you are out of Christ, you are without a Mediator at God's right hand (1 Tim. 2:5). The Mediatorship of Christ is one of the blessings of adoption, and with it comes the privilege of prayer and personal communion with God (Rom. 8:12-17). It is indeed doubtful that anyone has the right to call God "Father"

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who has not been adopted into the family of God (Eph. 2:19-22). I realize that this statement is contrary to public opinion—but we must speak where the Bible speaks and as the Bible speaks.

A priest is one who acts as mediator between God and man; in Scripture, all Christians are said to be priests unto God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Isa. 61:6, Rev. 1:6), thus qualified to offer up the incense of devoted hearts (1 Thess. 5:16-17, Rom. 12:1-2), through the Mediatorship of their great High Priest. In the old Tabernacle and Temple service, the high priest went once each year, on the Day of Atonement, into the Holy of Holies, with an offering of blood for himself and his people. Jesus, our High Priest, does not have to enter heaven once each year, but has entered into the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies)—heaven itself—into the tabernacle not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, *once for all*, and there, *again once for all time*, He offered His most precious blood and His perfect body as the supreme sacrifice for the sin of the world (John 1:29, 19:36; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 2:21-25; Heb., ch. 9). There He is to-day at God's right hand (the seat of authority) acting as our Mediator (Heb. 1:1-4, 8:1-13), the Mediator of a better Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). Satan may appear before the gates of heaven to accuse the people of God (Rev. 12:10; cf. Job 1:11, 2:5; Zech. 3:1; Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8), but our High Priest is there, at the Father's right hand, to defend them (Eph. 1:20-22). All Christians are priests unto God (1 Pet. 2:5, Rev. 5:10); Jesus is their High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (*i.e.*, a Priest-King, Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 6:20, 8:11-25; cf. Psa. 110:4), and the antitype of Jacob's dream-ladder in which heaven and earth were seen to be united *i.e.*, reconciled.

3. *It suggests that Christ is the only Way back to the Father.* There was but one Ladder in the dream; so there is but one way back to reconciliation with God. In

Christ, God is well-pleased, and only those who are *in Christ* can be well-pleasing unto God (Col. 1:19-20, Gal. 3:27, Heb. 11:6). All offerings of obedience, prayer, and sacrifice must be in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17). We are baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38); we meet for the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day *in memoriam* of His death on the Cross (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-30; Acts 2:42, 20:2). There is no propitiation available in you yourself, my sinner friend, in your home, in your lodge, in your school, or in humanity in general. (*Propitiation* is that which vindicates Divine Justice and effects reconciliation between God and man). You must come to God by the obedience of faith in Christ Jesus, humbly imploring the Heavenly Father for forgiveness and pardon, crying as did the publican of old, (Luke 18:13, 15:16-24), "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

4. *It portrays the accessibility of Christ to the sinner.* John 3:17—God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world (*i.e.*, all accountable beings)? Why not? Because the world is under divine condemnation, and has been since sin entered in, and separated man from God. The unredeemed world is under the curse of sin (Gal. 3:10, Rev. 22:3). When a person arrives at an accountable age, he is in the "kingdom of this world" (John 18:36, Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 1:20, 2 Cor. 4:4, Rev. 11:15, 12:10); he stands without hope either in this world or in the world to come, until he accepts and obeys the Son of God as both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, Rom. 10:9-10). He must be "regenerated," "born again," "adopted," "transplanted" out of "the power of darkness" into "the kingdom of the Son," etc. (Col. 1:13, John 3:1-8, Tit. 3:5, Rom. 8:12-17). These are eternal truths which "the wisdom of this world," in our day as always, chooses to ignore or completely reject, in its attempt to deify man (in the name of "humanism," "naturalism," etc, and other such terms as only very learned (?) men could conjure

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up, cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). Man today has no awareness, comparatively speaking of his own insignificance and guilt. The grace of God has little or no place in the twentieth-century "edition" of the "wisdom of this world."

Jacob, on his way to Paddan-aram, was weary and footsore when he arrived at "Bethel," heavily laden with the consciousness of his own wrongdoing, and burdened with the knowledge of his brother's estrangement and threatened vengeance. He was a pilgrim in a strange land. But the foot of this wonderful dream-ladder rested on the ground, *right at his side*. No matter if a stone were his pillow, the Ladder to heaven rested near him "on the earth," the angels of God were walking up and down on it, and Yahweh Himself was talking to him. Herein we see the *nearness* of Christ to us. We are all sinners, saved by grace, if saved at all (Eph. 2:8). We could hardly have any hope of heaven without this divine Mediator who knows our frailties and can sympathetically plead our case at the Bar of Absolute Justice. This writer is frank to say that the hope of eternal life which I cherish in my "heart of hearts," rests solely upon the offices of the divine-human Redeemer, the Anointed of God, who "emptied himself" (Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 2:9-18), who stooped down to assume my insignificant state in the totality of being, who brought, and is continually bringing, the mercy and longsuffering of God within reach of every perishing sinner, including the forgiveness of His saints even after they have become redeemed (1 John 1:8-10: these words, it must be noted, were written to Christians).

5. *Jacob's Ladder points up the office and work of angels both in Creation and in Redemption.* Jacob saw the heavenly host ascending and descending on the Ladder. Note what Jesus said, in this connection, John 1:51. We have largely lost sight of the Biblical doctrine of angels. Angels constituted the citizenship of heaven before the worlds were created (Luke 10:18). It was the premun-

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dane rebellion of certain angels, led by the archangel Lucifer, which brought about the mass of evil with which earth has been afflicted since the seduction of man (Ezek. 28:12-17, Isa. 14:12-15, John 8:44, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6). Angels have existed from eternity in great numbers and with a celestial organization (1 Ki. 22:19, Psa. 68:17, Dan. 7:10, Matt. 26:53, Luke 2:13-14; Rev. 5:11, 12:7-8, etc.). In fact we are told that the worlds were arranged, and peopled by human creatures capable of redemption and immortalization, in order that the Absolute Justice of God and the fiendishness of Satan may ultimately be demonstrated to both angels and men (Eph. 3:10, 6:12). If, in the Day of Vindication, just one soul of the human family stands fully redeemed in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23), God will be gloriously vindicated of all the false charges Satan brought against Him and the creation itself will be proved to be an indescribable triumph (Isa. 45:5-7, 46:8-11; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 19:1-10, 11-16; Rev. 20:11-15, etc.). It would seem that the justice and love of God could be demonstrated only in a world of lost sinners: that is a great mystery, of course. The simple fact is, however, that the price which man must pay for his freedom—for his being man, one might truly say—is the possibility of evil.

Angels are supernatural ethereal beings. They constitute a special creation, without sex distinctions, prior to man and superior to him in powers, endowed with superhuman knowledge, but lacking omniscience, thus filling the gap between Deity and humanity in the scale of intelligences. (Psa. 8:4-5, Mark 12:18-25, Acts 23:9, Heb. 12:22-24). In Hebrews 12:22-23, we note the distinction between "innumerable hosts of angels" and "the spirits of just men made perfect": this and other Scripture passages show us that angels are not "disembodied spirits" in fact—there is no such teaching in Scripture; even the redeemed of earth will be endowed with "spiritual" bodies in the

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next life (1 Cor. 15:42-54, 2 Cor. 5:1-4). Angelic superhuman power, however, is limited in some respects (Mark 13:32).

Angels have always played a prominent role in the execution of God's eternal purpose for His creation. We meet them executing judgment on the Cities of the Plain (Gen. 19). We meet them frequently in the stories of the journeyings of the patriarchs (Gen. 16:7, ch. 18, 22:11, 24:7). We meet them on Sinai's mount communicating the law to Moses (Gal. 3:19). We meet them directing the battles of the Children of Israel on different occasions (Judg. 6:12, 2 Sam. 24:16, 2 Ki. 19:35, etc.). We hear them singing above the storied hills of old Judea on the night Christ was born (Luke 2:13-15). We meet them on the mount of temptation (Matt. 4:11), at the open sepulchre (Matt. 28:2), and on the Mount of Olives when our Lord ascended to heaven (Acts 9:1-11). We meet them comforting the saints, leading sinners to the light, delivering the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19, 8:26, 10:3, 12:7, etc.). And we are told that every little child has its guardian angel always before the throne of God (Matt. 18:10).

Angels were walking up and down the Ladder which Jacob saw. That ladder typified Christ. In all ages, redemption has been offered man through Christ, the Lord's anointed: before the Cross prospectively, since the Cross retrospectively; and in all ages, angels have been walking up and down this ladder of redemption which connects heaven and earth. Note that Jesus *said* they are ascending and descending upon the Son of man, John 1:51. The work of angels has always been that of ministering to those who inherit salvation (Heb. 1:13-14). And even in our day, as always, angels are said to rejoice every time one sinner repents and names the name of Christ (Luke 15:7). No wonder, then, that the angels, as ministering spirits, have always been vitally interested in the unfolding

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of the cosmic drama of redemption (1 Pet. 1:10-12, 1:4; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12, etc.).

6. *Jacob's Ladder signifies the truth that Jesus exalts His faithful people to their final heavenly state, clothed in glory and honor and immortality, and hence conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29-30), their minds united with the Mind of God in knowledge and their wills united with the will of God in love (1 Cor. 13:12-13, 1 John 3:2).*

The top of Joseph's Ladder reached to heaven—a striking metaphor of what Christ will do for His saints. Man, in the beginning, was *natural*; when sin entered his heart and separated him from God, he became *unnatural*; by grace, through faith, he can become *prenatural* (a better term for redeemed man than *supernatural*). Progression in the Spiritual Life is from the Kingdom of Nature through the kingdom of Grace into the Kingdom of Glory (John 3:1-8, 2 Pet. 3:18, 1 Cor. 15:42-54, 2 Pet. 1:10-11). Heaven is truly a prepared place for a prepared people. Jesus is now engaged in the great work of bringing "many sons into glory" (Heb. 2:10). Immortality is one of the promises (rewards) of the Spiritual Life (Rom. 2:7, 8:11; Phil. 3:20-21; 2 Cor. 5:1-5, etc.). (*Immortality*—"incorruption"—is, of course, a term that has reference to the redemption of the *body*, cf. Rom. 8:23). The Christian life is constant growth (2 Pet. 1:5-11). In the end, we may stand before the Throne, redeemed in spirit and soul and body, if we continue steadfastly in the love and service of Him who bought us with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:51-58, 1 Thess. 4:14-18, 1 John 3:2). Our ultimate destiny, as God's saints, is the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 3:5, 12, 21; 5:9-10).

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"Heaven is not reached at a single bound:
We build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And mount to the summit round by round."

That Ladder is Christ; and the rounds are these: faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love" (2 Pet. 1:5-8). In the bliss of ultimate union with God, faith will become reality, hope will be lost in fruition, and love will be all-fulfilling (1 Cor. 13:13).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY

1. How reconcile the motive which is said to have prompted Rebekah with that which is said to have prompted Isaac to send Jacob away from home?
2. To what place did they send him and why did they send him there?
3. State the details of the blessing which Isaac pronounced on Jacob. Why is this designated "the blessing of Abraham"?
4. What prompted Esau to take another wife? Who was she, and from what parentage? Why was she chosen?
5. How many wives did Esau have? What is suggested by their names? What further demonstration of Esau's "profanity" was demonstrated by his marriages?
6. One commentator writes that Esau "did not do exactly what God required but only something like it." What reasons are given for this criticism?
7. Can Jacob be regarded as a fugitive? Explain your answer.
8. What does the term, "the place," that is, where Jacob rested, probably signify?
9. What reasons can we give for not regarding this as a "cult-place"?

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10. What function did the stone pillow serve on which Jacob rested his head?
11. Is there any reason that we should look upon this as a "charmed" stone?
12. Would not such an interpretation be "importing" superstition into this story?
13. What is the commonsense interpretation of this use of a stone for a "head place"?
14. What did Jacob see in his dream-vision?
15. What physical conditions probably directed the course of Jacob's dream?
16. What dream-image does the word "ladder" suggest?
17. What spiritual truths are indicated by the ladder and by the angels ascending and descending on it?
18. In what way was the ladder a type of Messiah?
19. Where in the New Testament do we find this truth stated?
20. Whom did Jacob find standing by him?
21. What three general promises were renewed by Yahweh at this time?
22. What was the renewed promise with respect to Jacob's seed?
23. What did Yahweh promise with regard to Jacob personally?
24. Recapitulate all the elements of the Divine Promise. Explain how it was a renewal of the Abrahamic Promise.
25. What was Jacob's emotion on awakening from his dream?
26. What is indicated by his exclamation, "How dreadful is this place!"
27. What is indicated by his outcry, "Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I knew it not"?
28. What is indicated by his two statements, "This is none other than the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of heaven"?

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29. Does the alleged "dreadfulness" of the place necessarily suggest any magical significance?
30. What does the word suggest as to the being of the Deity?
31. What did Jacob do with the stone head-place when he awakened?
32. Did Jacob design that this pillar be an object of worship or simply a memorial of his experience there? Give reasons for your answer.
33. What do we know about the worship of "sacred stones" among the ancient pagans?
34. What significance is there in the fact that Jacob exclaimed, "How dreadful is this *place!*" rather than this *stone*?
35. What was Jacob's purpose in pouring oil on the stone-pillar?
36. What, according to Lange, is the distinction between using the stone for a pillar and anointing the stone-pillar with oil?
37. For what various purposes was oil used among ancient peoples? From what tree did the oil come?
38. What did the anointing with oil signify generally as a religious act?
39. What did the use of the "holy anointing oil" in Old Testament times signify?
40. When and where was it used for the first time for this purpose?
41. What three classes of leaders were formally inducted into their respective offices by the ritual of the "holy anointing oil"?
42. What did this ritual point forward to with respect to the title, *Christ*. What does this title signify?
43. Why do we say that *Christ* is an authoritarian title, and not a mystical one?
44. What name did Jacob give to this place? What does the name signify?

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45. How is the use of the related names, Luz and Bethel, to be explained?
46. Give instances for a twofold meaning of a place-name. How is this to be accounted for?
47. How does Dr. Speiser explain the problem of Luz and Bethel?
48. What is Dr. Skinner's view of the problem?
49. What is Green's appraisal of the "sanctuary" notion?
50. How is Bethel associated with the name of Abraham, with the children of Joseph, and with the acts, respectively, of Jeroboam and Josiah?
51. How does Lange account for the meaning of the name *Bethel*?
52. What is a *vow* as the term is used in Scripture. Give examples.
53. What were the two parts of Jacob's vow in this case?
54. How does Murphy explain the "if" in each of Jacob's statements?
55. How does Jamieson explain it?
56. How does Leupold interpret it?
57. What are the only two instances of the voluntary tithe prior to the time of Moses?
58. What numerological import was attached to the number *ten* in ancient times?
59. What legal (involuntary) tithes were required under the Mosaic economy?
60. What does Cornfeld tell us about the sacred pillar in patriarchal belief and practice?
61. What is the commonsense view of the purpose of Jacob's pillar?
62. Explain how Jacob's dream-vision is "a comprehensive summary of the history of the Old Covenant."
63. What reasons are offered for the view that Jacob's experience at Bethel was the turning-point in his life spiritually?
64. What reason does "C.H.M." give for his view that

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Jacob, by his vow, was trying to "bargain" with God? What is your conclusion in regard to the motive back of this vow?

65. What reason have we for saying that Jacob's election to the Messianic Line was not arbitrary on God's part?
66. What is the derivation of the word "holiness"?
67. What do we mean by the attributes of God?
68. Where is the only Scripture in which the title "Holy Father" occurs, and to whom does it refer?
69. What does Jesus have to say about calling any man "father" in a spiritual sense? Where is His statement found in Scripture?
70. What are some of the titles which churchmen have arrogated to themselves for the purpose of clothing themselves with priestly and doctoral dignity?
71. What attributes does the Holiness of God include?
72. Why do we say that Absolute Justice is the over-all attribute of God to which even His love is subordinated? How does the doctrine of the Atonement prove this to be true?
73. Explain Otto's teaching with respect to the *dreadfulness* of God. What Scripture passages support this view?
74. Why do we say that in God absolute justice and holiness are practically identical?
75. What are the religious lessons to be learned from the story of Jacob's ladder?
76. What truths does this story reveal to us regarding the life and ministry of Christ?

PART FORTY-ONE

THE STORY OF JACOB: HIS EXPERIENCES IN PADDAN-ARAM

(Genesis 29:1—31:16)

The Biblical Account

1. Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the children of the east. 2 And he looked, and, behold, a well in the field, and, lo, three flocks of sheep lying there by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and the stone upon the well's mouth was great. 3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in its place. 4 And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence are ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. 5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. 6 And he said unto them, Is it well with him? And they said, It is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. 7 And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. 8 And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep. 9 While he was yet speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. 10 And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. 12 And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

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13 And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. 14 And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month. 15 And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? 16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 And Leah's eyes were tender; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored. 18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. 19 And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. 20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. 23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. 24 And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid unto his daughter Leah for a handmaid. 25 And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? 26 And Laban said, It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the first-born. 27 Fulfil the week of this one, and we will give thee the other also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. 28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to

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wife. 29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her handmaid. 30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

31 And Jehovah saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. 32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Because Jehovah hath looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me. 33 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and said, Because Jehovah hath heard that I am hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. 34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have borne him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. 35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, This time will I praise Jehovah: therefore she called his name Judah; and she left off bearing.

1. And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and she said unto Jacob, Give me children or else I die. 2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? 3 And she said, Behold, my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; that she may bear upon my knees, and I also may obtain children by her. 4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. 5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. 6 And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. 7 And Bilhah Rachel's handmaid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. 8 And Rachel said, With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

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9 When Leah saw that she had left off bearing, she took Zilpah her handmaid, and gave her to Jacob to wife. 10 And Zilpah Leah's handmaid bare Jacob a son. 11 And Leah said, Fortunate! and she called his name Gad. 12 And Zilpah Leah's handmaid bare Jacob a second son. 13 And Leah said, Happy am I! for the daughters will call me happy: and she called his name Asher.

14 And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. 15 And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken away my husband? and wouldest thou take away my sons' mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to-night for thy son's mandrakes. 16 And Jacob came from the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for I have surely hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. 17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived and bare Jacob a fifth son. 18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I gave my handmaid to my husband: and she called his name Issachar. 19 And Leah conceived again, and bare a sixth son to Jacob. 20 And Leah said, God hath endowed me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. 21 and afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah. 22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. 23 And she conceived, and bare a son: and said, God hath taken away my reproach: 24 and she called his name Joseph, saying, Jehovah add to me another son.

25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have

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served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service wherewith I have served thee. 27 And Laban said unto him, If now I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry: for I have divined that Jehovah hath blessed me for thy sake. 28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. 29 And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle have fared with me. 30 For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it hath increased unto a multitude; and Jehovah hath blessed thee whithersoever I turned: and now when shall I prove for mine own house also? 31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me aught: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed thy flock and keep it. 32 I will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence, every speckled and spotted one, and every black one among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire. 33 So shall my righteousness answer for me hereafter, when thou shalt come concerning my hire that is before thee: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, that, if found with me, shall be counted stolen. 34 And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word. 35 And he removed that day the he-goats that were ringstreaked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons: 36 and he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

37 And Jacob took him rods of fresh poplar, and of the almond and of the plane-tree; and peeled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. 38 And he set the rods which he had peeled over against the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs where the flocks came to drink; and they conceived when they came to drink. 39 And the flocks conceived before the

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rods, and the flocks brought forth ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted. 40 And Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstreaked and all the black in the flock of Laban: and he put his own droves apart, and put them not unto Laban's flock. 41 And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger of the flock did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the flock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods; 42 but when the flock were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. 43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, and maid-servants and men-servants, and camels and asses.

1. And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. 2 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold it was not toward him as beforetime. 3 And Jehovah said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. 4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, 5 and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as beforetime; but the God of my father hath been with me. 6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. 7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. 8 If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the flock bare speckled; and if he said thus, The ringstreaked shall be thy wages; then bare all the flock ringstreaked. 9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. 10 And it came to pass at the time that the flock conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the he-goats which leaped upon the flock were ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled. 11 And the angel of God said unto me in the dream, Jacob: and I said, Here am I. 12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and

see: all the he-goats which leap upon the flock are ring-streaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. 13 I am the God of Beth-el; where thou anointedst a pillar, where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy nativity. 14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15 Are we not accounted by him as foreigners? for he hath sold us, and hath also quite devoured our money. 16 For all the riches which God hath taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

1. *Jacob's Meeting with Rachel* (29:1-12). (1) Note that *Jacob went on his journey*: literally, he *lifted up his feet*: "a graphic description of traveling." "Inspired by new hopes and conscious of loftier aims than when he fled from Beersheba, the lonely fugitive departed from Bethel" (PCG, 356). After the night of the dream-vision, Jacob "resumed his way with a light heart and elastic step; for tokens of the Divine favor tend to quicken the discharge of duty (Neh. 8:10)" (Jamieson, CECG, 201). (2) "*The land of the children of the east*." His destination was *Paddan-Aram* (in the A.S.V. and the R.S.V., *Padan-Aram* in the A.V.), the homeland of Rebekah (Gen. 25:20), and the abode of Laban (Gen. 28:2-7), called the "field of Aram" by Hosea (12:12; A.V., "country of Syria"). Arabia, Mesopotamia, and the entire region beyond the Euphrates, are by the Bible writers included under the general designation, "the East" (cf. Job 1:3, Judg. 6:3, 1 Ki. 4:30). In the present instance, Mesopotamia is the country especially referred to. Paddan-Aram was a district of Mesopotamia; it is described as the large plain surrounded by mountains, in which the town of Haran was situated. This region was closely associated

with the history of the ancient Hebrew people. Abraham's family had settled there, and thither the patriarch sent his steward, Eliezer, to secure a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24:10ff.; 25:20), and now we find Jacob going there to find a wife (and secondarily to escape the revenge threatened by Esau his brother). (3) *The well of Haran.* On arriving in the area, Jacob came upon a well "in the field," that is, in the open field for the use of flocks, and covered at the time of his arrival with a huge stone: "*and, lo, three flocks of sheep were lying there by it.*" This, we are told, was a rather common Oriental scene (cf. Gen. 24:11, Exo. 2:16). This well in the open country evidently was distinct from the well at which Eliezer's caravan halted. The latter was a well used by the village maidens, situated in front of the town, and approached by steps (cf. 24:16), but this was in the open field for use primarily by the flocks, and at the time of Jacob's arrival was covered with a huge stone.

"There is a rude etiquette (in the Eastern country) which requires the chiefs to be foremost in all hardships which they and their followers encounter. So also the fact that Laban's daughters were keeping the flocks, and Jacob's mother carrying water from the well, and other similar examples, do not contradict the customs of wealthy Eastern shepherds. And who that has traveled much in this country has not often arrived at a well in the heat of the day which was surrounded by numerous flocks of sheep waiting to be watered. I once saw such a scene in the burning plains of northern Syria. Half-naked, fierce-looking men were drawing up water in leather buckets; flock after flock was brought up, watered, and went away; and after all the men had ended their work, then several women and girls brought up their flocks and drew water for them. Thus it was with Jethro's daughters when Moses stood up and aided them; and thus, no doubt, it would have been with Rachel, if Jacob had not rolled away the

stone and watered her sheep. I have frequently seen wells closed up with large stones, though in this part of the country it is not commonly done, because water is not so scarce and precious. It is otherwise, however, in the dreary deserts. Cisterns are very generally covered over with a large slab, having a round hole in it large enough to let down the leather bucker or earthen jar. Into this hole a heavy stone is thrust, often such as to require the united strength of two or three shepherds to remove. The same is seen occasionally over wells of 'living water'; but where they are large and the supply abundant no such precaution is needed. It was either at one of these cisterns, or less abundant and more precious wells, that Jacob met Rachel; and being a stout man, nearly seventy years of age, he was able to remove the stone and water the flock" (Thomson, LB, 589). There is nothing in this story to indicate that the city of Haran was within proximity of this well: as a matter of fact, when Jacob accosted the shepherds, he learned that they had come *from Haran*. (It should be noted here that the distance which Jacob had traveled, from Bethel to this spot, was some 400 miles: this might rightly be called the spatial gap between the first two verses of this chapter.) Evidently Laban was not a city-dweller, but a nomad sheik; the life that is depicted here is everywhere that of the desert.

Jacob then inquired of the shepherds whether they knew Laban "the son of Nahor," i.e., the grandson, Laban's father having been Bethuel, who, however, here, as in ch. 24, remains in the background, at least is passed over as a person of no importance in the family (cf. 24:53, 55). By inquiry of the shepherds, Jacob learned that his relatives in the vicinity of Haran were "well." This prompted him to inquire of these shepherds why they were idling there during the best part of the day, instead of watering their flocks and sending them back to pasture. "Jacob's object evidently was to get these shepherds out of the way, in

order that his introduction to his fair cousin might take place in private, and the conversation relative to their respective families might not be heard by strangers" (Jamieson, CECG, 202; also Lange, Murphy, Keil). Or was his attitude here due to "the prudent and industrious habit of mind which "shone forth so conspicuously in himself and which instinctively caused him to frown upon laziness and inactivity" (Starke, Bush, Kalisch)? "From the middle of v. 2 the words are parenthetical, the watering of the flocks not having taken place till Rachel had arrived (v. 9) and Jacob had uncovered the well (v. 10)" (Whitelaw, PCG, 356). The shepherds replied: "We cannot, until," etc., v. 8: "in order to prevent the consequences of too frequent exposure in places where water is scarce, it is not only covered and secured, but it is customary to have all the flocks collected around the well before the covering is removed in the presence of the owner, or one of his representatives; and it was for this reason that those who were reposing at the well of Haran with the three flocks were waiting the arrival of Rachel" (CECG, 202). "Jacob is puzzled by the leisurely ways of these Eastern herdsmen, whom he ironically supposes to have ceased work for the day. He is soon to show them how things should be done, careless of the conventions which they plead as an excuse" (ICCG, 382). *The content of chapters 29, 30, 31, put Jacob in the important years of his life, learning in the school of experience.*

V. 9—Note well Rachel *the shepherdess* (cf. Exo. 2:16). It is customary among the Arabs of Sinai, that the virgin daughters drive the herds to the pasture. "Thus Jacob had reached his objective at or near Haran, and another famous and much-loved Biblical romance that the reader must read for himself gets under way" (Kraeling, BA, 83). When Jacob saw Rachel for the first time, *he rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock* which she was shepherding. As this was a stone of

no slight dimensions, how account for Jacob's strength? Surely the speculation advanced by Dillman, Gunkel, *et al.*, that this was "a feat of strength" which "belonged to a more primitive legend, in which Jacob figured as a giant" (cf. 32:26) is utterly absurd. "As Rachel came up in the meantime, he [Jacob] was so carried away by the feelings of relationship, possibly by a certain love at first sight, that he rolled the stone away from the well, watered her flock, and after kissing her, introduced himself as her cousin ("brother," *i.e.*, relation of her father) and Rebekah's son. What the other shepherds thought of all this, is passed over as indifferent to the purpose of the narrative, and the friendly reception of Jacob by Laban is related immediately afterwards" (BCOTP, 285). "The strong impression that the beautiful Rachel made upon her cousin Jacob is manifested in two ways. He thinks himself powerful enough to roll the stone from the mouth of the cistern out of love to her, and disregards the possibility that the trial might fail. At the same time, too, he boldly disregards the common rule of the shepherds present. Rachel's appearance made him eager, as formerly Rebekah's appearance even the old Eliezer, when he took out the bracelets before he knew her. The power of beauty is also recognized here upon sacred ground. Tuch thinks that the united exertion of the shepherds would have been necessary, and the narrative, therefore, boasts of a Samson-like strength in Jacob. But there is a difference between Samson-like strength and the heroic power inspired by love" (Lange, CDHCG, 528). To this Gosman adds (*ibid.*) "Perhaps, however, there was mingling with this feeling the joy which naturally springs from finding himself among his kindred, after the long, lonely and dangerous journey through the desert." "A great stone was over the well where the sheep were watered, and the men who were there were waiting for other shepherds to come and help them roll it aside: but Jacob went and rolled it aside

himself. Why? Because he had met Rachel; and in contact with Rachel, Jacob from the first moment was a different man" (Bowie, IBG, 697). "What of the fact that Jacob rolls away singlehanded a stone which required the united efforts of the rest? That is to be explained partly by the fact that he was naturally very strong, then partly by a mixture of two facts: his joy at finding his kinfolks and his joy at finding such a pretty cousin stirs him greatly and makes him strong. It may be that we have here a Biblical instance of love at first sight, although even that had more fitly find mention in connection with the next verse. But to talk only of that love and to make Jacob act like a young fellow who tries to impress his lady-love by feats of strength is just a bit shallow by way of interpretation. Life, here, as usual, was rather a complex of various motives that surged strongly in Jacob's heart. The text by its threefold repetition of the phrase, 'of his mother's brother Laban,' shows on what his thoughts dwell at the moment. It has remained for Gunkel and men of his type to ascribe to the narrative the attempt to make out Jacob to be a man of Herculean strength, a gigantic fellow —fabulous elements in the story. Such conclusions in reference to Jacob are, to say the least, most fantastic and far-fetched" (Leupold, EG, 788). (Note here, v. 10, the threefold use of the phrase, "his mother's brother." Was this repetition for the purpose of putting the greatest possible stress on the fact that Jacob had met with his own relatives, with "his bone and his flesh" (v. 14)? "The threefold repetition of this phrase does not prove that Jacob acted in all this purely as a cousin. The phrase is the historian's, and Jacob had not yet informed Rachel of his name" (PCG, 357). According to the practice in Eastern lands, the term "brother" is extended to include such degrees of relationship as those of uncle, cousin, or nephew. In v. 12, for instance, "brother" is equal to nephew: cf. Gen. 14:16, 24:48).

Rachel's appearance on the scene stirs Jacob emotionally to the depths of his soul, and so impels him to roll away the stone, water the sheep, and then *kiss the young woman and burst into tears*, v. 11. Was this just a "cousinly" demonstration of affection? We can hardly think so. "Allowing for the fact that in those days, among a different people, a kiss of cousins was a proper greeting, there is little doubt that Rachel was taken quite unawares; and may well have been astonished, for as yet she knew nothing of this strong shepherd's identity. The more natural procedure would have been to explain first who he was, then to give the kiss of greeting. The reverse of the procedure indicates how his glad emotions ran away with him. No man will determine how much of this emotion was plain joy at seeing a cousin and how much incipient love for pretty Rachel, and Jacob himself, perhaps, at the moment would have been least able to make an accurate analysis of what his heart actually felt at the occasion. We can hardly go wrong in claiming to detect a trace of love at first sight" (EG, 788). The threefold expression, *mother's brother*, v. 10, "shows that he acted thus as cousin (rolling the stone from the well's mouth, etc.). As such he was allowed to kiss Rachel openly, as a brother his sister (Song of Sol. 8:1 [Knobell]). Yet his excitement betrays him even here, since he did not make known his relationship with her until afterwards" (Lange, CDHCG, 528). Moreover, the strength of his emotion caused him *to lift up his voice and weep*, that is, to weep openly, to burst into tears, "not a dishonorable or unmanly thing for the Oriental then or now, for he is a man inclined to make a greater display of his emotions" (EG, 789). Jacob wept, "partly for joy at finding his relatives (cf. 43:30; 45:2, 14, 15); partly in grateful acknowledgement of God's kindness in conducting him to his mother's brother's house" (PCG, 357). Note the Jewish "traditions" concerning this experience of Jacob: "*and wept*. That he

had not been fortunate enough to marry her in his youth (Sforno). Because he foresaw through the Holy Spirit that she would not be buried with him. Another reason is, because he came to her destitute, unlike Eliezer who had come for his mother laden with riches. The reason for his state of destitution was, Eliphaz, Esau's son pursued him to slay him on his father's orders; but overcome with pity he refrained, yet being unable to disobey his father, he compromised on Jacob's suggestion, by taking all that he had, since 'a poor man is regarded as dead' (Rashi)" (SC, 169). (These assumptions strike the present writer as "hitting a new high in absurdity"). We must agree with Skinner that Jacob wept aloud "'after the demonstrative fashion of the Orient,' tears of joy at the happy termination of his journey" (ICCG, 382). The following description of the scene seems to be complete and accurate: "The encounter between Jacob and the local shepherds is a model of effective characterization. The traveler is excited and talkative after his long journey, whereas the herdsmen are composed, almost taciturn: they act as if each word were just too much trouble. True to an ageless pattern, the prospective suitor is inspired to a display of superhuman prowess at the very first sight of Rachel. He also appears to be more affectionate than one would think proper under the circumstances. Yet Jacob's impulsive kiss—a detail that Calvin attributed to a redactional slip on the part of Moses (cf. von Rad)—need not to have been out of tune with the mores of the times. We know from the Nuzi records, which so often mirror conditions in the Har(r)an area—and hence also in the patriarchal circle—that women were subject to fewer formal restraints than was to be the norm later on in the Near East as a whole" (ABG, 223). At this point in the story Jacob revealed his identity to Rachel and "she ran and told her father." "When the identity of Jacob is revealed to Rachel, she makes haste to impart the welcome news to

her father, not like Rebekah to her mother. In fact, Rebekah's mother is not even mentioned in these narratives and may already have been dead" (EG, 789).

2. Jacob's Double Marriage (29:13-30).

The Meeting with Laban. When Laban heard of Jacob's presence, "*he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house.*" "That Jacob made the whole journey on foot might have caused suspicion in the mind of Laban. But he is susceptible of nobler feelings, as is seen from the subsequent narration (31:24), although he is generally governed by selfish motives" (Lange, CDHCG, 528). Skinner is not so lenient: "The effusive display of affection, perhaps not wholly disinterested, is characteristic of Laban, cf. 24:29ff." (ICCG, 382). And Jacob "told Laban all these things," that is, all the matters related in chapters 27 and 28: "if Jacob came as a godly man and one repentant of his recent deceit, as we have every reason to believe that he was, then he could not do otherwise than relate the direct and the more remote reasons for his coming" (EG, 790). At any rate, the recital conveyed to Laban full proof of the newcomer's identity, eliciting his response, "*Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.*" The relation as acknowledged by Laban here could hardly have been anything more than blood relationship (consanguinity). And so Jacob abode with Laban "the space of a month." By this time, in all likelihood, Laban "had discerned that in Jacob he would have a very competent shepherd. No doubt Jacob began to serve in this capacity at once. His faithfulness and industry were immediately apparent. A measure of selfishness enters into Laban's proposal without a doubt. But most likely it is a compound of honest and selfish motives. The good features in it are that he wishes to bind a relative to himself, especially as this relative is unusually competent. Besides, he wants to arrive at a definite understanding as soon as possible in order to

obviate future misunderstandings. Furthermore, it behooves him as the elder to steer toward a definite agreement. Each of these good motives had an admixture of selfishness, for Laban was basically a selfish and a tricky man. No doubt, he was planning to gain this competent young man as a son-in-law. Laban must have anticipated the proposal that was actually made. Perhaps Laban had noticed that Jacob had fallen violently in love, and now Laban hoped that if he let Jacob set the terms, Jacob's newborn love would incline to make a generous proposal" (EG, 791-792). It must be noted too that Jacob in explaining the cause of his journey (v. 13) must have explained how it was that his poor appearance had come about, in view of the fact that he was the son of the rich Isaac.

We now discover that Laban had *two* daughters, the elder named Leah, and the younger Rachel. We are told that Leah's eyes were "weak," that is, lacking the lustre (fire) regarded as the height of beauty in Oriental women. "Eyes which are not clear and lustrous: to the Oriental, but especially to the Arabian, black eyes, full of life and fire, clear and expressive, dark eyes, are considered the principal part of female beauty. Such eyes he loves to compare with those of the gazelle" (Lange, *ibid.*, p. 528). Leah's eyes were tender, but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored, beautiful as to her form, and beautiful as to her countenance: "thus the passage indirectly says that Leah's *form* was beautiful." We are told now unequivocally that Jacob *loved* Rachel; hence, not being in a position to pay the purchase price (the customary dowry, or presents), he offered to serve Laban seven years for her. (We must remember also that his situation with respect to Esau compelled him to remain for some time with Laban). "The assent on the part of Laban cannot be accounted for from the custom of selling daughters to husbands, for it cannot be shown that the purchase of wives was a general custom

at that time; but is to be explained solely on the ground of Laban's selfishness and avarice, which came out still more plainly afterwards" (BCOTP, 285-286). It must be recalled, however, that the bestowing of costly presents on the prospective bride and her parents was a custom of the time (cf. Eliezer and Rebekah and her parents, 24:53). So it was that Jacob served seven years for Rachel "*and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.*" The inspired writer tells us that Laban agreed to Jacob's proposal on the ground that he would rather give Rachel to him (even though this would be giving the younger first?) than to a stranger; a custom, we are told, that still prevails among the Bedouins, the Druses, and other Eastern tribes. "A perfectly worthless excuse for if this had really been the custom in Haran as in ancient India and elsewhere, he ought to have told Jacob before" (BCOTP, 286). "As to the particular term of seven years, it seems to have been regarded in early times as a full and complete period of service (cf. Exo. 21:2). Even after betrothal, the intercourse of the parties is restricted. The Arabs will not allow them to see each other, but the Hebrews were not so stringent, nor, perhaps, the people in Mesopotamia. At all events, with Jacob the time went rapidly away; for even severe and difficult duties become light when love is the spring of action" (CECG, 203).

Laban's Deceit. When the time of service was fulfilled, Jacob asked for his reward, that is, the woman he loved. Now "Laban's character begins to unfold itself as that of a man ostensibly actuated by the most honorable motives, but at heart a selfish schemer, always ready with some plausible pretext for his nefarious conduct (cf. vv. 19, 26). His apparently generous offer proves a well-laid trap for Jacob, whose love for Rachel has not escaped the notice of his shrewd kinsman. . . . Laban proceeds to the execution of his long meditated *coup*. He himself arranges the marriage feast (cf. Judg. 14:10), inviting *all the men*

of the place, with a view doubtless to his self-exculpation (v. 26). The substitution of Leah for Rachel was rendered possible by the custom of bringing the bride to the bridegroom veiled (24:65). To have thus gotten rid of the unprepossessing Leah for a handsome price, and to retain his nephew's services for another seven years (v. 27) was a master-stroke of policy in the eyes of a man like Laban" (Skinner, ICCG, 383). (Note again Gen. 24:65. Does this mean that Rebekah set this fashion for brides in the patriarchal households? The law of proper clothing under the Mosaic Law is found in Deut. 22:5). When Jacob protested indignantly this deception which his uncle had perpetrated, the latter hid behind the specious rationalization, "To give the younger before the first-born is not done in our place," that is, in our society: a clear case in which that which was *legally right* was at the same time *morally wrong*: the wrong was not in the fact but in the *deception*. (In SC, p. 171, v. 26 here is explained thus: "The people here would not let me keep my word," Rashi). It should be noted, in this connection, that Jacob had been very explicit in this matter v. 18, but to no avail. "Jacob was so very explicit because he knew Laban's cunning. Therefore he did not say simply, 'Rachel,' but 'Rachel thy daughter.' Nor could Laban deceive him by changing Leah's name to Rachel: it must be 'thy *younger* daughter.' But it was of no avail; Laban deceived him after all" (SC, 170). But Laban had no scruples about driving even a harder bargain, vv. 27, 28: Fulfil the seven days of the wedding festival for Leah, said he, and *we will give thee* ("then the townspeople will agree") *the other also*, that is, Rachel, with the understanding that you will serve me yet another seven years. "For the bridegroom to break up the festivities would, of course, be a gross breach of decorum, and Jacob has no alternative but to fall in with Laban's new proposal and accept Rachel on his terms" (ICCG, 384). "To satisfy Jacob he promised

to give him Rachel in a week if he would serve him seven years longer. To this Jacob consented, and eight days later Jacob was wedded to the woman he loved" (UBG, 638). Laban may have proposed this to "satisfy" Jacob, but he certainly did not lose anything by the deal. "Laban's success is for the moment complete; but in the alienation of both his daughters, and their fidelity to Jacob at a critical time (31:14ff.), he suffered a just retribution for the unscrupulous assertion of his paternal rights" (ICCG, 384).

"Vv. 21-30: Jacob is betrayed into marrying Leah, and on consenting to serve another seven years obtains Rachel also. He claims his expected reward when due. 22-24: *Made a feast.* The feast in the house of the bride's father seems to have lasted seven days, at the close of which the marriage was completed. But the custom seems to have varied according to the circumstances of the bridegroom. Jacob had no house of his own to which to conduct the bride. *In the evening:* when it was dark. The bride was also closely veiled, so that it was easy for Laban to practise this piece of deceit. A *handmaid.* It was customary to give the bride a handmaid, who became her confidential servant (24:59, 61). 25-27: In the morning Jacob discovers that Laban has overreached him. This is the first retribution Jacob experiences for the deceitful practices of his former days. He expostulates with Laban, who pleads the custom of the country. It is still the custom not to give the younger in marriage before the older, unless the latter be deformed or in some way defective. It is also not unusual to practise the very same trick that Laban now employed, if the suitor is so simple as to be off his guard. Jacob, however, did not expect this at his relative's hands, though he had himself taken part in proceedings equally questionable. *Fulfil the week of this.* If this was the second day of the feast celebrating the nuptials of Leah, Laban requests him to complete the week,

and then he will give him Rachel also. If, however, Leah was fraudulently put upon him at the close of the week of feasting, then Laban in these words proposes to give Rachel to Jacob on fulfilling another week of nuptial rejoicing. The latter is in the present instance more likely. In either case the marriage of Rachel is only a week after that of Leah. 28-30: Rather than lose Rachel altogether, Jacob consents to comply with Laban's terms. Rachel was the wife of Jacob's affections and intentions. The taking of a second wife in the lifetime of the first was contrary to the law of nature, which designed one man for one woman (2:21-25). But the marrying of a sister-in-law was not yet incestuous, because no law had yet been made on the subject. Laban gives a handmaid to each of his daughters. To Rebekah his sister had been given more than one (24:61). Bondslaves had been in existence long before Laban's time (16:1). *And loved also Rachel more than Leah.* This proves that even Leah was not unloved. At the time of his marriage Jacob was eighty-four years of age; which corresponds to half that age according to the present average of human life" (Murphy, MG, 393).

Was this a case of what is known as *beena* marriage, that is, one in which the husband becomes a member of the wife's kin? Generally speaking, the narrative as a whole does not support the view that it was. Jacob did, of course, attach himself in a way to Laban's household; however, it does not follow that the former did not set up a house of his own. His remaining with Laban was due to his inability to pay the *bridal gift* otherwise than by *personal service*. As soon as the contract expired (by fulfilment) Jacob pleaded his right to "provide for his own house" (30:30). On the other hand, Laban certainly claimed the right to detain his daughters and to continue treating them as members of his own family (31:26, 43). It is doubtful, however, that "the claim was more than an extreme assertion of the right of a powerful family to

protect its female relatives even after marriage." Concerning the dowry (Heb. *mohar*, *price* paid for a wife: Gen. 34:12, Exod. 22:17, 1 Sam. 18:25; *zebed*, a *gift*, Gen. 30:20): "In arranging for marriage, as soon as the parental consent was obtained, the suitor gave the bride a betrothal or bridal gift, as well as presents to her parents and brothers. In more ancient times the bride received a portion only in exceptional cases (Josh. 15:18 sq., 1 Kik 9:16). The opinion that the Israelites were required to buy their wives from the parents or relatives seems to be unfounded. The *mohar* in the Old Testament was not 'purchase money,' but the *bridal gift* which the bridegroom, after receiving the bride's assent, gave to *her*, not to the parents or kins-folk" (UBD, 274). "In early O.T. times wives were selected for sons by the heads of tribes or families, as Abraham for Isaac (Gen. 25:20), Isaac for Jacob (28:6). Betrothal was effected by the payment of the *mohar* (usually 50 shekels) to the father of the prospective bride, not as a purchase price, but as a compensation for the loss of the daughter (Gen. 34:12, 1 Sam. 18:25); by the presentation of substantial gifts to the girl (Gen. 34:12, Exo. 21:7, 22:15-17; Deut. 22:28ff.; Ruth 4:5, 10); or by the groom's agreeing to serve the bride's father for a period of time, as Jacob served Laban for Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:18, 20, 25, 30). The bride often brought considerable means to the new home, e.g., Abigail (1 Sam. 25:42). The recently discovered Eshnunna Law Code current in Babylon probably 3800 years ago (the oldest law code yet known) required the payment of 'bride money' by the prospective groom, and a refund of the same plus 20% interest in case the bride died" (HBD, 421). It should be noted that the marriage of both sisters to Jacob took place about the same time; evidently such a connection was then permissible, although later prohibited (Lev. 18:18). We find in this narrative, not only bigamy, but polygamy, and polygamy on a larger scale than has hitherto appeared

in Genesis. These marriages, however, are not to be judged by the rules of the Christian, or even if the Mosaic, code of morality. "For although the will of the Creator was sufficiently indicated by the union of a single pair at first, a clear definite marriage law, specifying the prohibited degrees of consanguinity had not been enacted, and the idea of incest, therefore, must be excluded" (CECG, 203).

The Problem of Polygamy. According to Scripture, marriage is a divinely ordained institution, designed to form a permanent union between the male and female, i.e., the conjugal union, which is the basis of all social order. (Gen. 1:27-28; Matt. 5:32, 19:9). The *physiological* sex union in marriage has a twofold function: *procreative*, to reproduce the species, and *unitive*, to enhance the intimacy of the conjugal union. Because the human infant is the most helpless, and the most helpless for the longest time, by comparison with animal offspring, it stands in greater need of parental protection, affection and training; hence the permanent monogamous relation that provides for the satisfaction of all these essential human needs, both of children and parents, is obviously the divinely ordained relationship, as the Bible clearly teaches. However, at an early period the original law as made known to our first parents was violated, and the familial institution corrupted, by the degeneracy of their descendants, and concubinage and polygamy became rather common (cf. Gen. 4:19-24). The patriarchs themselves took more than one wife. Abraham, at Sarah's prompting took her maid as his subordinate wife, and later a second wife, Keturah. Jacob was inveigled, through Laban's duplicity, to take Leah first, and then Rachel, to whom he had been betrothed, as wives; and later, through the rivalry of the two sisters, he took both of their handmaids and begat sons by them. "From these facts it has been inferred that polygamy was not wrong in ancient times, nor at all opposed to the divine law as revealed to the Jews. But this is an unwarranted

conclusion. It is true, indeed, respect being had to the state of religious knowledge, and the rude condition of society, and the views prevalent in the world, that the practice could not infer, in the case of individuals, the same amount of criminality as would necessarily adhere to it now, amid the clear light of Gospel times. But still all along it was a departure from the divine law. . . . Christ taught the divine origin and sacredness of this institution. It is more than filial duty; it is unifying; the husband and wife become one through the purity and intensity of mutual love; common interests are necessitated by common affection (Matt. 19:5-6, Eph. 5:31); only one single ground for divorce is lawful (Matt. 19:9)" (UBD, 697-701). That ground is, of course, unfaithfulness to the marriage vow (Matt. 5:32, 19:9). Departures from the original standard, even under the Old Testament, were tolerated, but never with God's complete approval (cf. Acts 17:30, Matt. 19:8). "The Mosaic law aimed at mitigating, rather than removing evils which were inseparable from the state of society in that day. Its enactments were directed: (1) to the discouragement of polygamy; (2) to obviate the injustice frequently consequent upon the exercise of the rights of a father or a master; (3) to bring divorce under some restriction; and (4) to enforce purity of life during the maintenance of the matrimonial bond" (UBG, 697). (For all aspects of the problems of the dowry, marriage, concubinage, divorce, etc., the reader is referred to Unger's *Bible Dictionary*, in the opinion of the present writer, one of the most comprehensive and reliable in its field.

V. 30—Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. There can be little doubt that this affection for Rachel was truly love at first sight, and love of the most ardent kind. However, it is not a matter of surprise to learn that Rachel should occupy a place in his affection far above that of her sister, who, after all, must have been a willing accomplice

in the treacherous plot to trap him into a marriage with her. Subsequent developments seem to establish the fact that Leah was more than willing to become Jacob's bride. As a matter of fact, her affection for him seems to have engendered a rivalry between the two sisters to be instrumental in providing for Jacob a numerous progeny. Jacob's love for Rachel, on the other hand, is rightly described as "more like what is read in the pages of romance than what is paralleled in real life."

Jacob Suffers Retributive Justice. "We have here an illustration of how a man must reap as he has sown. The deceit which Jacob practiced on Esau was returned to him by Laban, who practiced the same kind of deceit. For all of that, however, Jacob was under the covenant care of God and did not come out a loser in the end. Yet in later years Jacob's own sons practiced on him a similar form of deceit in connection with Joseph's abduction (37:32-36)" (HSB, 48). "V. 23—Leah being veiled, as ch. 24:65, and it being dark, Jacob could not discern the fraud. Thus he who beguiled his brother, and imposed on his dim-sighted father, was now, in like manner, beguiled himself. V. 25—By bitter experience Jacob was now taught how painful, how harrowing, to the feelings of others, was the cunning and duplicity which he himself had practised on his father and brother. From this moment to the day of his death he continued to be the victim of deception and falsehood. Retributive justice seems to have followed him until, in God's providence, it completely purified him" (SIBG, 262). Laban's deception in first palming off Leah on Jacob instead of giving him Rachel, whom he wanted to marry, was the first retribution Jacob experienced for the deceitful practises of his former days. He had, through fraud and cunning, secured the place and blessing of Esau—he, the younger, in the place of the elder; now, by the same deceit, the elder is put upon him in the place of the younger. What a man sows that shall he also reap.

Sin is often punished with sin" (Gosman, BCOTP, 529). (Retributive justice, in Greek thought, was personified by the name of Nemesis. That Nemesis finally overtakes and punishes inordinate human pride and ambition was the thesis of the histories of Herodotus, who is known as "the father of history." The same idea is explicit in Scripture: cf. Num. 32:23, Ezek. 21:27, Rom. 2:5-11, Prov. 12:14, Gal. 6:7, 1 Tim. 5:24, Rev. 20:11-15).

V. 30—Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban yet another seven years for her. "A great stone was over the well where the sheep were watered, and the men who were there were waiting for other shepherds to come and help them roll it aside; but Jacob went and rolled it aside himself. Why? Because he had met Rachel; and in contact with Rachel, Jacob from the first moment was a different man. He kissed her first as his kinsman, but quickly he fell in love with her. He said to Laban, her father, that he would serve seven years for her; *and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* In the light of words like these, Jacob's remoteness in time and place passes like a shadow, and he is at one with all lovers of every age in the timeless wonder of the meeting of man and maid. Moreover, Jacob showed himself to be an individual to a degree that was notable in that period when family pressure was generally so controlling. His father, Isaac, had his bride picked out for him. Laban tried to foist upon Jacob the daughter he wanted Jacob to take; but in spite of that deception, Jacob would not be turned from the girl to whom his heart went out. He served for her not only the first seven years of his agreement, but seven years more; and Rachel was henceforth the center of his life's devotion. In the whole story of his career, which sometimes was far from beautiful, this relationship with Rachel shines like a shaft of sunlight, sifting with a lovely radiance through a broken, cloudy sky" (IBG, 697).

The nuptial feast generally lasted a week (Judg. 14:12, Job 11:19); after this week had passed, Jacob received Rachel also: that is, two wives in eight days. To each of his daughters Laban gave one maid-servant to wait upon her; fewer, it may be noted, than Bethuel gave to his daughter Rebekah (24:61). "The difference between the house at Haran and Isaac's house at Beersheba, appears from this, that Laban entangled Jacob in polygamy. And even in this case the evil consequences of polygamy appear: envy, jealousy, contention, and an increased sensuality. Nevertheless, Jacob's case is not to be judged according to the later Mosaic law, which prohibited the marrying of two sisters at the same time (Lev. 18:18). Calvin, in his decision, makes no distinction between the times and the economies, a fact which Keil justly appeals to, and insists upon, as bearing against his harsh judgment (that it was a case of incest)" (BCOTP, 533). "Isaac's prejudice, that Esau was the chosen one, seems to renew itself somewhat in Jacob's prejudice that he must gain by Rachel the lawful heir. The more reverent he appears therefore, in being led by the Spirit of God, who taught him, notwithstanding all his preference for Joseph, to recognize in Judah the real line of the promise" (*ibid.*, 533; cf. Gen. 49:10). "Jacob's service for Rachel presents us a picture of bridal love equaled only in the same development and its poetic beauty in the Song of Solomon. It is particularly to be noted that Jacob, however, was not indifferent to Rachel's infirmities (30:2), and even treated Leah with patience and indulgence, though having suffered from her the most mortifying deception" (*ibid.*, p. 532). "This bigamy of Jacob must not be judged directly by the Mosaic law, which prohibits marriage with two sisters at the same time (Lev. 18:18), or set down as incest, since there was no positive law on the point in existence then. At the same time, it is not to be justified on the ground, that the blessing of God made it the means of the fulfilment

of His promise, viz., the multiplication of the seed of Abraham into a great nation. Just as it had arisen from Laban's deception and Jacob's love, which regarded outward beauty alone, and therefore from sinful infirmities, so did it become in its results a true school of affliction to Jacob, in which God showed to him, by many a humiliation, that such conduct as his was quite unfitted to accomplish the divine counsels, and thus condemned the ungodliness of such a marriage, and prepared the way for the subsequent prohibition in the law" (BCOTP, 287).

Certainly it should be noted here, that it was a son born to Jacob by Leah who became the ancestor of Messiah. That son was Judah; hence Messiah is named the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5, cf. Gen. 49:9-10). "Leah's election is founded upon Jehovah's grace. Without any doubt, however, she was fitted to become the ancestress of the Messianic Line, not only by her apparent humility, but also by her innate powers of blessing, as well as by her quiet and true love for Jacob. The fulness of her life becomes apparent in the number and in the power of her children; and with these, therefore, a greater strength of the mere natural life predominates. Joseph, on the other hand, the favorite son of the wife loved with a bridal love, is distinguished from his brethren, as the separated (ch. 49) among them, as a child of a nobler spirit, whilst the import of his life is not as rich for the future as that of Judah. . . . The history of Jacob's and Leah's union sheds a softening light upon even the less happy marriages, which may reconcile us to them, for this unpleasant marriage was the cause of his becoming the father of a numerous posterity; for it, indeed, proceeded the Messianic Line; leaving out of view the fact that Leah's love and humility could not remain without a blessing upon Jacob. The fundamental condition of a normal marriage is doubtless bride love. We notice in our narrative, however, how wonderfully divine grace may change

misfortune, even in such instances, into real good. God is especially interested in marriage connections, because He is thus interested in the coming generations" (Lange, CDHCG, 533). The fact must not be overlooked, however, that, as we have stated heretofore several times, the manifestations of Divine grace are the products of the Divine foreknowledge of man's free choices; in this particular case, the foreknowledge of the blessing which Leah's humility and love would bring into Joseph's life and to his progeny, no small part of which was the foreknowledge of Judah's intercession with Joseph for the life of young Benjamin and the well-being of his aged father Jacob: one of the most touching incidents in the lives of the patriarchs (Gen. 44:18-34).

Jacob—Man of Many Wrestlings. "Jacob here appears clearly as the man of the wrestlings of faith and as the patriarch of hope. However prudent, it happens to him as to Oedipus in the Greek tragedy. Oedipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx, yet is blind, and remains blind in relation to the riddle of his own life. Laban cheated him, as his sons did afterward, and he is punished through the same transgression of which he himself was guilty. Jacob is to struggle for everything—for his birthright, his Rachel, his herds, the security of his life, the rest of his old age, and for his grave. But in these struggles he does not come off without many transgressions, from which, however, as God's elect, he is liberated by severe discipline. He, therefore, is stamped as a man of hope by the divine providence. As a fugitive he goes to Haran; as a fugitive he returns home. Seven years he hopes for Rachel; twenty years he hopes for a return home; to the very evening of his life he is hoping for the recovery of Joseph, his lost son in Sheol; even whilst he is dying upon Egyptian soil, he hopes for a grave in his native country. His Messianic hope, however, in its full development, rises above all these instances, as is evident in the three chief

stages in his life of faith: Bethel, Peniel, and the blessing of his sons upon his death-bed. His life differs from that of his father Isaac in this: that with Isaac the quickening experiences fall more in the earlier part of his life, but with Jacob they occur in the later half; and that Isaac's life passes on quietly, whilst storms and trials overshadow, in a great measure, the pilgrimage of Jacob. The Messianic suffering, in its typical features, is already seen more plainly in him than in Isaac and Abraham; but the glorious exaltation corresponds also to the deeper humiliation" (CDHCG, 532).

3. *Jacob's Family* (29:31—30:24).

Basic Facts: (1) Jacob became the father of twelve sons and one daughter. "The inferior value set on a daughter is displayed in the bare announcement of her birth." (2) The assignment of the names here by the respective mothers themselves is determined by the circumstances. (3) The entire history of the birth of these sons is reflected in their names. (Their names all reappear in Jacob's Blessing, ch. 49). (4) Most significant of all, in the birth of these twelve sons, we have the basis for the future development of the Old Covenant in the history of the twelve tribes, especially in their organization into the Hebrew theocracy at Sinai and occupancy of the Land of Promise. All this was, of course, prophetic of the strictly spiritual norms and institutions of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Hebrews, chs. 7, 8, 9, 10; John 1:17; 2 Cor., ch. 3; Col. 2:8-16; Gal. 3:15-29; 4:21-31; Eph. 2:11-22, etc.). "The account of the jealousy and contention between Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:31, 30:1-2), and the subsequent sinfulness and jealousy of the sons of Jacob (Gen. 34:25, 30; 35:22; 37:8, 18; 49:5-6) show vividly the fruits of polygamy. For the one man, Adam, God made the one woman, Eve. And why only one? Because He sought a godly seed (Mal. 2:15). Broken and ungodly homes produce ungodly offspring" (OTH, 101).

Leah's first four sons, 29:31-35. Jacob's weakness showed itself even after his double marriage in the fact that he loved Rachel more than Leah ("hated," in Leah's case, meant less loved; not so much "hated" as "rejected" or "unloved": ABG, 230). When Yahweh saw that Leah was thus less loved, He "opened her womb." "The birth of Leah's first four sons is specifically referred to Jehovah's grace; first, because Jehovah works above all human thoughts, and regards that which is despised and of little account (Leah was the despised one, the one loved less, comparatively the one hated, Deut. 21:15); secondly, because among her first four sons were found the natural first-born (Reuben), the legal first-born (Levi), and the Messianic first-born (Judah); even Simeon, like the others, is given by Jehovah in answer to prayer. Jacob's other sons are referred to Elohim, not only by Jacob and Rachel (30:2, 6, 8), but also by Leah (vv. 18, 20) and by the narrator himself (v. 17), for Jacob's sons in their totality sustain not only a theocratic but also a universal destination. *He opened her womb*, that is, God "made her fruitful in children, which should attach her husband to her. But theocratic husbands did not esteem their wives only according to their fruitfulness (cf. 1 Sam., ch. 1)." Leah named her firstborn *Reuben*, that is, *Behold, a son!* "Joyful surprise at Jehovah's compassion. From the inference she makes: *now, therefore, my husband will love me*, her deep, strong love for Jacob, becomes apparent, which had no doubt, also, induced her to consent to Laban's deception." *Simeon* (*he has heard*), her second son, "receives his name from her faith in God as a prayer-answering God." *Levi* (*he will cling, joined, reconciler, etc.*). "The names of the sons are an expression of her enduring powerful experience, as well as of her gradual resignation. After the birth of the first one, she hopes to win, through her son, Jacob's love in the strictest sense. After the birth of the second, she hoped to be put on a footing of equality

with Rachel, and to be delivered from her disregard. After the birth of the third one she hoped at least for a constant affection. At the birth of the fourth she looks entirely from herself to Jehovah," hence the name of the fourth; *Judah* (*I shall praise*, or just *praised*). (Quotes above are from Lange, CDHCG, 529, 530). "The eye of the Lord is upon the sufferer. It is remarkable that both the narrator and Leah employ the proper name of God, which makes the performance of promise a prominent feature of his character. This is appropriate in the mouth of Leah, who is the mother of the promised seed. *That Leah was hated*—less loved than Rachel. He therefore recompenses her for the want of her husband's affection by giving her children, while Rachel was barren. *Reuben*—behold a son. *The Lord hath looked on my affliction.* Leah had qualities of heart, if not of outward appearance, which commanded esteem. She had learned to acknowledge the Lord in all her ways. *Simeon*—answer. She had prayed to the Lord, and this was her answer. *Levi*—union, the reconciler. Her husband could not, according to the prevailing sentiments of those days, fail to be attached to the mother of three sons. *Judah*—praised. Well may she praise the Lord, for this is the ancestor of the promised seed. It is remarkable that the wife of priority, but not of preference, is the mother of the seed in whom all nations are to be blessed. Levi the *reconciler* is the father of the priestly tribe. Simeon is attached to Judah. Reuben retires into the background. "On the etymology of the proper names of this and of the next chapter it has been remarked: 'the popular etymologies attached to the names are here extremely forced and sometimes unintelligible' (Skinner). Such a statement is the result of the critic's confusion. He acts on the assumption that these etymologies are to be scholarly efforts based on a careful analysis of Hebrew roots according to the Hebrew lexicon. Whereas, in reality, these are not etymologies at all but expres-

sions wrought into the form of proper names, expressing the sentiments or the hopes associated with the birth of these sons. So someone or even the mother may have remarked at the birth of the first-born, 'Look, a son,' *Reu-bhen*.' What is there 'forced' or 'unintelligible' about such a name? The added explanation as to what further thoughts Leah associated with this name 'Reuben' do, indeed, not grow out of the words, 'look, a son,' but they lay bare the inmost thoughts of her heart. Leah knows God as 'Yahweh,' an index of fine spiritual understanding and faith, and ascribes to him her fertility. She sees that Yahweh delights in being compassionate toward them that have 'affliction,' and hers was a state of affliction; and she anticipates that her husband will love her more." As for the second son Simeon, "Yahweh heard (*shama*), so she calls him 'hearing.'" "So in Hebrew the idea becomes more readily apparent. Leah implies that she has asked for this child in prayer. Again she ascribes the son to the graciousness of 'Yahweh.' She must have been a woman of faith." With respect to the name Levi, "here the play on words centers upon the root *lawah* which in the passive signifies 'grow attached to.' How poor Leah must have thirsted for the love that was denied her! Leah now stands on pretty firm ground; any man would be grateful for three healthy sons: especially are men in the Orient minded thus." As for the fourth, *Judah* (Praised), "apparently her hopes are by this time realized: she is no longer disregarded or loved but little. But in a sense of true devoutness she lets all praise be given to Yahweh and here contents herself with pure praise" (Leupold, EG, 801-803).

Rachel's adopted sons, 30:1-8. A rather passionate scene, in which Rachel does not appear to advantage by any means. She even vented her spleen on Jacob: "*Give me children, or else I die.*" Certainly not, I will take my life; but rather, I die from humiliation or dejection.

Driven by jealousy of her sister, she yields her place to her maid, Bilhah. "Her vivid language sounds not only irrational, but even impious, and therefore she rouses also the anger of Jacob" (Lange). "Her petulant behavior recalls that of Sarah (16:5), but Jacob is less patient than Abraham, as he exclaims, in substance: *Why ask me to play God? You know that God alone controls the issues of life and death* (cf. Deut. 32:39, 1 Sam. 2:6). In Freudian terms, Rachel was "projecting" her own weakness upon her husband, a favorite avocation of humankind generally (cf. Gen. 3:12, 13). (Cf. Gen. 50:19, 2 Ki. 5:7). "Rachel becomes impatient of her barrenness and jealous of her sister, and unjustly reproaches her husband, who indignantly rebukes her. God, not he, has withheld children from her. She does what Sarah had done before her (16:2, 3), gives her handmaid to her husband. No express law yet forbade this course, though nature and Scripture by implication did (2:23-25)" (Murphy, MG, 397). Since Jacob had already sired offspring by Leah, Rachel could hardly have doubted his ability to do so by her, and must have recognized that the fault was with her. But she was unwilling to face the facts and tried to palm off the responsibility for the situation on Jacob. V. 3—that she, Bilhah, "*may bear upon my knees*, and I also may obtain children by her." (cf. 50:19, 23; 2 Ki. 5:7). "From the fact that children were *taken upon the knees*, they were recognized either as adopted children (50:23), or as the fruit of their own bodies (Job 3:12)" (Lange). "An illusion to the primitive ceremony of adoption, which here simply means that Bilhas's children will be acknowledged by Rachel as her own" (Skinner). "To place a child on one's knees is to acknowledge it as one's own; cf. the Hurro-Hittite tale of Appu. . . . This act is normally performed by the father. Here, however, it is of primary interest to the adoptive mother who is intent on establishing her legal right to the child" (Speiser, ABG, 230). The

ceremony may be traced to a widespread custom, according to which, "in lawful marriage, the child is actually brought forth on the father's knees. . . . Then it became a symbol of the legitimization of a natural child, and finally a form of adoption generally" (ICCG, 386). (Cf. Job 3:12; *Iliad* 9:455ff.; *Odyssey* 19, 401ff.; Gen. 50:23). In the case before us, "the putative mother names the adopted child." Rachel named Bilhah's first son *Dan* ("judge"; "*dananni*", "he has done justice to me"), i.e., God had procured justice for her, hearkened to her voice and removed the reproach of childlessness. Bilhah's second son: Rachel named him *Naphtali* ("wrestlings," "wrestlings of prayer she had wrestled with Leah"). "The wrestlings of God could only be in the wrestlings of prayer, as we afterward see from Jacob's wrestlings, through which he becomes Israel" (Lange, 530; cf. Gen. 32:24-25). "In reality, however, with God Himself, who seems to have restricted His mercy to Leah alone" (Delitzsch). "Leah, who had been forced upon Jacob against his inclination, and was put by him in the background, was not only proved by the four sons whom she had bore to him in the first years of their marriage, to be the wife provided for Jacob by Elohim, the ruler of human destiny; but by the fact that these four sons formed the real stem of the promised numerous seed, she was proved still more to be the wife selected by Jehovah, in realization of His promise, to be the tribe-mother of the greater part of the covenant nation. But this required that Leah herself should be fitted for it in heart and mind, that she should feel herself to be the handmaid of Jehovah, and give glory to the covenant God for the blessing of children, or see in her children actual proofs that Jehovah had accepted her and would bring to her the affection of her husband. It was different with Rachel, the favorite and therefore high-minded wife. Jacob should give her what God alone could give. The faithfulness and blessing of the covenant God were still

hidden from her. Hence she resorted to such earthly means as procuring children through her maid, and regarded the desired result as the answer of God, and a victory in her contest with her sister. For such a state of mind, the term *Elohim*, God the sovereign ruler, was the only fitting expression" (BCOTP, 288-289). "But how can Rachel speak of a victory over her sister rich in children? Leah has left bearing, while Bilhah her maid, begins to bear; at the same time, Rachel includes as much as possible in her words in order to overpersuade herself. [She believes she has overcome—Gosman]. Hence, still, at Joseph's birth, she could say: Now (not before) God has taken away my reproach" (Lange, CDHCG, 530; cf. 30:23-24).

Leah's adopted sons, 30:9-13. Leah, however, was not content with the blessing of four sons bestowed on her by Yahweh. The means employed by Rachel to retain the favor of her husband made her jealous, and this jealousy moved her to resort to the same device, viz., that of giving her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob for the begetting of adopted sons. Jacob begat two sons by Zilpah. Leah named the first one *Gad* (*good fortune*, or *good fortune has come*). She named the second *Asher* (*the happy one*, or *the bringer of happiness*). "Leah is still less excusable than Rachel, since she could oppose her own four sons to the two adopted sons of Rachel. However, the proud and challenging assertions of Rachel seem to have determined her to a renewed emulation; and Jacob thought that it was due to the equal rights of both to consent to the fourth marriage. That Leah now acts no longer as before, in a pious and humble disposition, the names which she calls her adopted sons clearly prove" (Lange, *ibid.*, 530) (It is worth noting that *Gad* was the name of an Aramean and Phoenician god of Luck (*Tyche*, cf. Isa. 65:11. It is possible also that the name *Asher* is historically related to

the Canaanite goddess Asherah, consort of El in Ras Shamra texts.)

Leah's last two sons, 30:14-20. We have here what might be called a primitive tradition. These occur in Scripture, simply as matters of fact, historically; even though they may savor of magic they serve to give us the background against which the careers of the patriarchs are portrayed. It must be understood that *the mere recording of magical theories and practices, and popular superstitions, of any period, as historical facts, does not mean that they are Biblically sanctioned.* According to the story of Gen. 30:14-16, Reuben, when a boy of some four or five years of age, brought to his mother a plant found in the fields, of the kind known as *Mandragora officinarum*. This is described as a narcotic, laxative perennial of the nightshade family, related to the potato and the tomato. Out of the small white-and green flowers of this plant, according to the Song of Solomon 7:13, there grows at the time of the wheat harvest, yellow, strong, but sweet-smelling apples, of the size of a nutmeg. These were thought to promote fruitfulness. "The fruit of the plant is still considered in the East to have aphrodisiac properties" (ABG, 231), hence the common designation, *love-apples*. Theophrastus (who took over the Lyceum after the death of Aristotle) tells us that love-potions were prepared from the plant's roots. It was held in such high esteem by the ancients that the goddess of love, in some areas, was known as Mandragoritis. Mandrakes are still used by Arabs as a means of promoting child-bearing. "As for mandrakes themselves something may be said. Reuben gathered them in wheat-harvest, and it is then that they are still found ripe and eatable on the lower ranges of Lebanon and Hermon, where I have most frequently seen them. The apple becomes of a very pale yellow color, partially soft, and of an insipid, *sickish* taste. They are said to produce dizziness; but I have seen people eat them without experiencing any

such effect. The Arabs, however, believe them to be exhilarating and stimulating, even to insanity, and hence the name *tuffah el jan*—‘apples of the jan’” (Thomson, LB, 577).

The incident of the mandrakes shows how thoroughly the two wives were “carried away by constant jealousy of the love and attachment of their husband.” When Rachel requested that Leah give her some of the mandrakes, the latter bitterly upbraided her with not being content to have withdrawn (alienated?) her husband from her, but now wanting to get possession of the mandrakes which her little son had brought in from the field. It would seem that peculiar, even paradoxical, emotions are involved in the actions of these two women. It should be remembered that Leah is said to have left off bearing, after the birth of Judah (29:35). Was she now fearful that Rachel might now, with the help of the mandrakes, excel her in prolificness? “It is obviously the design [of the narrator] to bring out into prominence the fact that Leah became pregnant again without mandrakes, and that they were of no avail to Rachel. . . . Moreover, it could not be the intention of Rachel to prepare from these mandrakes a so-called love-potion for Jacob, but only to attain fruitfulness by their effects upon herself. Just as now, for the same purpose perhaps, unfruitful women visit or are sent to certain watering-places. From this standpoint, truly, the assumed remedy of nature may appear as a premature, eager self-help” (Lange, *ibid.*, 530-531). It should be noted that Rachel asked only for *some* of the mandrakes: it seems that there was no thought in her mind of depriving Leah of all these potent means of fruitfulness, nor is there any evidence that she thought of her sister as having “left off bearing” (a statement of the author of the narrative). “Reuben, as little children will, presents the mandrakes to his mother. Rachel, present at the time, and much concerned as usual about her sterility, thinks

to resort to this traditional means of relieving the disability and asks for 'some of the mandrakes' (*min*, 'some of') of Reuben. She had hardly thought that this harmless request would provoke such an outbreak on her sister's part. For Leah bitterly upbraids her with not being content to have withdrawn her husband from her, but, she petulantly adds, Rachel even wants to get the mandrakes of her son Reuben. Apparently, her hope that her husband would love her after she had born several sons (29:32) had not been fully realized. Childless Rachel still had the major part of his affection. Quite unjustly Leah charges Rachel with alienation of affection where such affection had perhaps never really existed. Leah was still being treated with more or less tolerance. So Leah certainly begrudges her sister the mandrakes, lest they prove effective and so give her sister a still more decided advantage. . . . Rachel desires to preserve peace in the household, and so concedes to yield the husband to her sister for the night, in return for the mandrakes which she nevertheless purposes to eat. The frank narrative of the Scriptures on this point makes us blush with shame at the indelicate bargaining of the sisters—one of the fruits of a bigamous connection" (EG, 812). "A bitter and intense rivalry existed between Leah and Rachel, all the more from their close relationship as sisters; and although they occupied separate apartments with their respective families, as is the uniform custom where a plurality of wives obtains, and the husband and father spends a day with each in regular succession, this arrangement did not, it seems, allay the mutual jealousies of Laban's daughters. The evil lies in the system, which, being a violation of God's original ordinance, cannot yield happiness. Experience in polygamous countries has shown that those run great risk who marry two members of one family, or even two girls from the same town or village. The disadvantages of such unions are well understood" (Jamieson, CECG, 205). Matthew Henry suggests a some-

what different interpretation of sisterly motivation in the case before us, one which is certainly well worth considering: "Whatever these mandrakes were, Rachel could not see them in Leah's hands, where the child had placed them, but she must covet them. The learned Bishop Patrick very well suggests here that the true reason of this contest between Jacob's wives for his company, and their giving him their maids to be his wives, was the earnest desire they had to fulfil the promise made to Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven in multitude. And he thinks it would have been below the dignity of the sacred history to take such particular notice of these things if there had not been some such great consideration in them" (CWB, 50). (However, certain objections to this view would be the following: (1) Rachel asked for only *some*—not all—of the mandrakes: this would seem to indicate she was seeking only to put an end to her own sterility; (2) implicit in this view is the assumption that the sisters were fully cognizant of the *details* of the Abrahamic Promises, but we find no sure evidence that this was the fact; (3) implicit in this view also is the failure to apprehend fully the stark *realism* of the Biblical narratives; the Bible is one book that pictures life as men and women live it, never turning aside from truth even to hide the faults of men of great faith. The Bible is pre-eminently the Book of Life. It makes us fully aware of human character and its weaknesses.)

Leah parted with the mandrakes on condition that Rachel would permit Jacob to sleep with her that night. "After relating how Leah conceived again, and Rachel continued barren in spite of the mandrakes, the writer justly observes (ver. 17), '*Elohim hearkened unto Leah*,' to show that it was not from such natural means as love-apples, but from God the Author of life, that she had received such fruitfulness" (BCOTP, 290). Leah then bore Jacob two more sons: (1) the first she named *Issachar*

("hire," "reward"), that is to say, "there is reward" or "he brings reward." (2) The second she named *Zebulun* ("dwelling"). The import of the first name is, either that she had hired her husband, or that she had received her hire—*i.e.*, a happy result—from God. The name of the second signified "she hoped that now, after God had endowed her with a good portion, her husband to whom she had borne six sons, would dwell with her, *i.e.*, become more warmly attached to her" (Delitzsch). "The birth of a son is hailed with demonstrations of joy, and the possession of several sons confers upon the mother an honor and respectability proportioned to their number. The husband attaches a similar importance to the possession, and it forms a bond of union which renders it impossible for him ever to forsake or to be cold to a wife who has borne him sons. This explains the happy anticipations Leah founded on the possession of her six sons" (Jamieson). It is to be noted that "in connection with these two births, Leah mentions Elohim only, the supernatural Giver, and not Yahweh, the covenant God, whose grace has been forced out of her heart by jealousy" (Delitzsch). It should be noted that the reference here to the "wheat harvest" (v. 14) has prompted the critics to affirm that *the agricultural background shows the episode here to be out of place in its nomadic setting*. But the text does not say that the nomads did the harvesting. Besides, no one would deny the possibility of their using the expression 'wheat harvest' to specify a definite season of the year even if they themselves did no harvesting. Moreover, this may be only the author's remark, used to specify the particular season when, as his readers would know, mandrakes usually ripened. In addition to all these considerations, there is the explicit information that the patriarchs on occasion sowed and reaped in their homeland (cf. 26:12) and perhaps their relatives did so in Mesopotamia. It is quite possible, too, that the lad

Reuben might have wandered into the fields where some of his farmer-neighbors were harvesting, and gathered his mandrakes there. We see no reason for accepting the critical view stated above as the only explanation of the milieu of this incident. (Cf. Exo. 9:32, Deut. 8:8, Judg. 6:11, Ruth 2:23; 1 Sam. 6:13, 12:17; 1 Chron. 21:20; 2 Chron. 2:10-15, 27:5; Ezra 6:9, 7:22; Matt. 13:25, 29; Luke 3:17; John 12:24).

Leah's daughter, v. 21. The name *Dinah*, about the same in meaning as *Dan*, could signify "Vindication." However, the etymology is not indicated in the text. Moreover, *Dinah* is not included in Gen. 32:22, where Jacob's household is said to have consisted of his two wives, his two handmaids, and his eleven children. Later Scriptures would seem to indicate that *Dinah* was not Jacob's only daughter (cf. Gen. 37:35, 46:7). It is likely that *Dinah* is specifically mentioned here in passing, as preparatory to the incident in her history—that of her defilement—related in ch. 34. The fact that *Dinah* is given only passing mention here is ample evidence of the subordinate place of the daughter in the patriarchal household.

Rachel's first son, 30:22-24. God remembered Rachel and hearkened to her (prayers) and opened her womb. The expression used here denotes a turning-point after a long trial (cf. 8:1) and in the matter of removing unfruitfulness (1 Sam. 1:19-20). God gave Rachel a son, whom she named *Joseph*, one that takes away, or he may add: "because his birth not only furnished an actual proof that God had removed the reproach of her childlessness, but also excited the wish, that Jehovah might add another son. The fulfilment of this wish is recorded in chap. 35:16ff. The double derivation of the name, and the exchange of *Elohim* for *Jehovah*, may be explained, without the hypothesis of a double source, on the simple ground, that Rachel first of all looked back at the past, and, think-

ing of the earthly means that had been applied in vain for the purpose of obtaining a child, regarded the son as a gift of God. At the same time, the good fortune which had now come to her banished from her heart her envy of her sister (ver. 1), and aroused belief in that God, who, as she had no doubt heard from her husband, had given Jacob such great promises; so that in giving the name, probably at the circumcision, she remembered Jehovah and prayed for another son from His covenant faithfulness" (BCOTP, 290). According to Lange, the text allows only one derivation: *he may add*: "to take away and to add are too strongly opposed to be traced back to one etymological source. Rachel, it is true, might have revealed the sentiments of her heart by the expression, God hath taken away my reproach; but she was not able to give to her own sons names that would have neutralized the significance and force of the names of her adopted sons, Dan and Naphthali. That she is indebted to God's kindness for Joseph, while at the same time she asks Jehovah for another son, and thereupon names Joseph, does not furnish any sufficient occasion for the admission of an addition to the sources of scripture, as Delitzsch assumes. The number of Jacob's sons, who began with Jehovah, was also closed by Jehovah. For, according to the number of twelve tribes, Israel is Jehovah's covenant people" (CDHCG, 531). The majority of Old Testament commentators seem to agree that the meaning of Joseph's name is more literally, "add"; that is to say, *May Yabweb add to me another son.* "At last Rachel bears a son, long hoped for and therefore marked out for a brilliant destiny" (ICCG, 389). "A double thought plays into the name Joseph: it incorporates both of Rachel's remarks. For *yoseph* may count as an imperfect of '*asaph*', 'to take away.' Or it may also count more definitely as imperfect (*Hifil*) of the verb *yasaph*, 'to add.' We must admit this to be very ingenious. But why deny to a

mother a happy ingenuity on the occasion of her greatest joy? Why try to inject the thought of a confusion of two sources?" (EG, 816). We are disposed to conclude this phase of our study with the pertinent and (one might well say) almost facetious remarks of Dr. Leupold in relation to Leah's action, v. 16: "Jacob's lot cannot have been a very happy one. To an extent he was shuttled back and forth between two wives and even their handmaids. Almost a certain shamelessness has taken possession of Jacob's wives in their intense rivalry. Leah almost triumphantly claims him as a result of her bargain, as he comes in from the field" (EG, 813). We are glad to note that with the birth of Joseph, the "shuttling back and forth" on Jacob's part seems to come to an end and the dove of peace settles down over his household, as evidenced especially by the loyalty of both daughters to their husband in the continued contest with their father Laban (cf. 31:4-16).

4. Negotiations With Laban (30:25-43).

Jacob proposes to provide for his own household, 30:25-31. From the reading of the text it seems that Joseph must have been born at the end of the fourteen years of Jacob's service. However, it must be understood that apparently there is no attempt made here to report the births of Jacob's sons in strict sequence chronologically. Apparently the children born of one mother are listed in a group "in order to dispose of all of them at once, except in the case of Leah where approximately a year may have elapsed between the birth of her fourth and fifth sons." By this time Jacob's family was almost complete, and he might well be thinking of establishing his own household. When the birth of Joseph occurred, evidently at the earliest in the fifteenth year, Jacob enters into a preliminary parley with Laban for the purpose of taking his household back unto *his own place and his own country*, that is, to Canaan in general, and to that part of it where

he had formerly resided (28:10, 34:18, 35:6-7). Since Jacob had pledged himself to seven additional years of service for Rachel, he could hardly call his whole household his own until the second seven years were fulfilled. He now wants Laban to acknowledge the fulfilment of his contract by giving him his wives and children so that he may depart, pointing out the fact that his service throughout all these years had been marked by faithfulness (v. 26). "There is no obsequiousness about Jacob's attitude, no difference. -He knows his father-in-law must be dealt with firmly. On the other hand, he also knows how to treat him with becoming respect. Laban deferentially replies that he has "divined" that Jehovah was blessing Jacob's endeavors, and through His blessing of Jacob's service was indirectly blessing him, *i.e.*, Laban himself, with material prosperity. What is the import of the word "divined" as used here (v. 27)? Does it mean simply *close observation and minute inspection* (Murphy)? Or is there a reference here to augury, divination, or something of the kind? Leupold gives it, he had "consulted omens." "What heathen device Laban had resorted to in consulting the omens cannot be determined. But the act as such does reveal a departure from the true service of God and practically stamps him as an idolator. His reference to God as Yahweh is merely a case of accommodating himself to Jacob's mode of speech. Laban did not know Him as such or believe in Him. Any man with even a measure of insight could have determined without augury what Laban claimed had been revealed to him by augury. Jacob's faithful service of Yahweh was not kept hidden from him" (EG, 818). "In a Mesopotamian context, such as the present, the term refers undoubtedly to inquiries by means of omens: cf. Ezek. 21:26)" (Speiser, ABG, 236). We know that Laban was addicted to heathen superstitions (cf. 31:22-32).

Laban, an eminently selfish man, was ready to go to almost any limit to retain a man whose service had been so advantageous to himself. "He makes Jacob a proposition which at once substantially alters Jacob's status. From the position of a bond servant he is raised to that of a partner who may freely dictate his own terms. Now, indeed such an offer is not to be despised, for it puts Jacob in a position where he can build up a small fortune of his own and removes him from the necessity of returning home practically a penniless adventurer, though a man with a good-sized family." (We present here the translation which is given us in the *Jerusalem Bible*, which, for simplicity and clarity is unexcelled, as follows: "When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Release me, and then I can go home to my own country. Give me my wives for whom I have worked for you, and my children, so that I can go. You know very well the work I have done for you.' Laban said to him, 'If I have won your friendship . . . I learned from the omens that Yahweh had blessed me on your account. So name your wages,' he added, 'and I will pay you.' He answered him, 'You know very well how hard I have worked for you, and how your stock has fared in my charge. The little you had before I came has increased enormously, and Yahweh has blessed you wherever I have been. But when am I to provide for my own House?' Laban said, 'How much am I to pay you?' and Jacob replied, 'You will not have to pay me anything; if you do for me as I propose, I will be your shepherd once more and look after your flock.'")

The new contract, 30:32-36. Continuing the JB rendering: "Today I will go through all your flock. Take out of it every black animal among the sheep, and every speckled or spotted one among the goats. Such shall be my wages, and my honesty will answer for me later: when you come to check my wages, every goat I have that is

not speckled or spotted, and every sheep that is not black shall rank as stolen property in my possession.' Laban replied, 'Good! Let it be as you say.' That same day he took out the striped and speckled he-goats and all the spotted and speckled she-goats, every one that had white on it, and all the black sheep. He handed them over to his sons, and put three days' journey between himself and Jacob. Jacob took care of the rest of Laban's flock."

Jacob's stratagem, 30:37-43. Jacob gathered branches in sap, from poplar, almond and plane trees, and peeled them in white strips, laying bare the white on the branches. He put the branches he had peeled in front of the animals, in the troughs in the channels where the animals came to drink; and the animals mated when they came to drink. They mated therefore in front of the branches and so produced striped, spotted and speckled young. As for the sheep, Jacob put them apart, and he turned the animals towards whatever was striped or black in Laban's flock. Thus he built up droves of his own which he did not put with Laban's flock. Moreover, whenever the sturdy animals mated, Jacob put the branches where the animals could see them, in the troughs, so that they would mate in front of the branches. But when the animals were feeble, he did not put them there; thus Laban got the feeble, and Jacob the sturdy, and he grew extremely rich, and became the owner of large flocks, with men and women slaves, camels and donkeys."

To understand Jacob's stratagem it must be understood that in the Orient sheep are normally white (Psa. 147:16; Song of Sol. 4:2, 6:6; Dan. 7:9), and goats are normally black or brownish black (Song 4:1). Exceptions to this differentiation, it is said, are not numerous. Jacob said at the beginning of the negotiations that Laban should not give him anything: in the proposition he is now making he is not changing his mind: he means simply that in subsequent breeding, separation of his animals from

those of his father-in-law shall be determined by the principles of "selective breeding" which he now proposes. "For his wages Jacob asks the abnormal animals (black sheep and white-spotted goats): Laban agrees, shrewdly, as he thinks. Jacob's plot is briefly this: 1. He sees to it that when the goats mate, vv. 37-39, they are in sight of white-striped rods: this affects the formation of the embryo. 2. At the same time he makes sure that the sheep are looking at the black goats in the flock, v. 40. 3. For this operation he selects the robust strains, leaving the weaker animals and their offspring to Laban. In this way Jacob takes his 'honorable revenge'" (JB, 51, n.).

Laban "not only recognizes, almost fawningly, Jacob's worth to his house, but is even willing to yield unconditionally to his determination—a proof that he did not expect of Jacob too great a demand. But Jacob is not inclined to trust himself to his generosity, and hence his cunningly calculated though seemingly trifling demand. Laban's consent to his demand, however, breathes in the very expression the joy of selfishness; and it is scarcely sufficient to translate: Behold, I would it might be according to thy word. But Jacob's proposition seems to point to a very trifling reward, since the sheep in the East are nearly all white, while the goats are generally of a dark color or speckled. For he only demands of Laban's herds those sheep that have dark spots or specks, or that are entirely black, and those only of the goats that are white-spotted or striped. But he does not only demand the speckled lambs brought forth thereafter, after the present number of such are set aside for Laban (Tuch, Baumgartner, Kurtz), but the present inspection is to form the first stock of his herds (Knobel, Delitzsch). ["The words, 'thou shalt not give me anything,' seem to indicate that Jacob had no stock from Laban to begin with, and did not intend to be dependent upon him for any part of his possessions. Those of this description which should

appear among the flocks should be his hire. He would depend on divine providence and his own skill. He would be no more indebted to Laban than Abraham was to the king of Sodom—Gosman]. Afterwards, also, the speckled ones brought forth among Laban's herds are to be added to his, as is evident from his following arts. For when he invites Laban to muster his herds in time to come, it surely does not mean literally the next day . . . but in time to come. As often as Laban came to Jacob's herds in the future he must regard all the increase in speckled and ringstreaked lambs as Jacob's property, but if he found a purely white sheep or an entirely black goat, then, and not only then, he might regard it as stolen. . . . Laban's language is submissive, while that of Jacob is very frank and bold, as became his invigorated courage and the sense of the injustice which he had suffered" (Lange, CDHCG, 536-537).

Jacob's management of Laban's herds. Note the three days' journey between them, v. 36. Certainly these days' journeys were those of the herds and are not to be measured according to journeys of human beings. Thus it will be seen that although separated by three days' journey of the animals, they were close enough that Laban could overtake Jacob at any time if he so desired. By means of this separation it would seem that Jacob not only gained Laban's confidence but his property as well. All in all, in this exchange of artifices it is difficult to determine which of the two—son-in-law or father-in-law—was the trickier, and more hypocritical, of the two. The first artifice that Jacob employed was that of the peeled rods in the watering troughs. "Jacob managed by skill to acquire the best portion of Laban's flock of sheep and goats. Black sheep, or goats other than black or brown, were rarities, and those Jacob was to have. According to the story he employed an ingenious breeding device to use maternal impression on the unborn of the flocks. He set

peeled rods in the watering-troughs, where the flocks came to breed, to impress the mothers of 'the stronger of the flocks.' Thus he managed to breed an ample supply of the new varieties" (Cornfeld, AtD, 86). Jacob, of course, must select rods from trees whose dark external bark produced the greatest contrast with the white one below it. The text suggests the fresh poplar (or styrax-tree), the almond-tree (or perhaps the hazelnut tree), and the plane tree (which resembled somewhat the maple tree). For the purpose Jacob had in mind, "the gum-tree," we are told, "might be betted adapted than white poplars, almond-tree or walnut better than hazelnut, and maple better than plane-tree"). Jacob "took fresh rods of storax, maple and walnut-trees, all of which have a dazzling white wood under their dark outside, and peeled stripes upon them, 'peeling the white naked in the rods.' These partially peeled, and therefore mottled rods, he placed in the drinking-troughs . . . to which the flock came to drink, in front of the animals, in order that, if copulation took place at the drinking time, it might occur near the mottled sticks, and the young be speckled and spotted in consequence. . . . This artifice was founded upon a fact frequently noticed, particularly in the case of sheep, that whatever fixes their attention in copulation is marked upon the young" (K-D, BCOTP, 293). Was this an old wives' superstition? Or had it some validity? "The physiological law involved is said to be well established (Driver), and was acted on by ancient cattle breeders (see the list of authorities in Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, etc. II, c. 49, also Jeremias, *Das Alte Testamunt im Lichte des alten Orients*, 2nd ed. 1906). The full representation seems to be that the ewes saw the reflection of the rams in the water, blended with the image of the parti-colored rods, and were deceived into thinking they were coupled with parti-colored males (Jer., We [Illhausen], *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, 41)" (Skinner, ICCG, 393). "This artifice was

founded upon a fact frequently noticed, particularly in the case of sheep, that whatever fixes their attention in copulation is marked upon the young" (K-D, *ibid.*, 293). "This crafty trick was based upon the common experience of the so-called fright of animals, especially of sheep, namely, that the representations of the senses during coition are stamped upon the form of the foetus (see Boch, *Hieroz*, I, 618, and Friedreich on the Bible, I 37, etc.") (Lange *ibid.*, 537). Jacob's *second artifice* was the removal of the speckled animals, from time to time, from Laban's herds and their incorporation into Jacob's; in the exchange Jacob put the speckled animals in front of the others, so that Laban's herds had always these parti-colored before their eyes, and in this manner another impression was produced upon the she-goats and sheep. Obviously, this separation of the new-born lambs and goats from the old herds could only be gradual; indeed this whole transaction was gradual, extending over several years (cf. 38:41). Jacob's *third artifice*. "He so arranged the thing that the stronger cattle fell to him, the feebler to Laban. His first artifice, therefore, produced fully the desired effect. It was owing partly, perhaps, to his sense of equity toward Laban, and partly to his prudence, that he set limits to his gain; but he still, however, takes the advantage, since he seeks to gain the stronger cattle for himself" (Lange *ibid.*, 537).

Vv. 40-42. "A further refinement: Jacob employed his device only in the case of the sturdy animals, letting the weaker ones gender freely. The difference corresponds to a difference of breeding-time. The consequence is that Jacob's stock is hardy and Laban's delicate" (ICCG, 393).

The following summarization is clear: "V. 40—Jacob separated the speckled animals from those of a normal color, and caused the latter to feed so that the others would be constantly in sight, in order that he might in this way obtain a constant accession of mottled sheep. As soon as

these had multiplied sufficiently, he formed separate flocks (viz., of the speckled additions) and *put them not unto Laban's cattle*, i.e., he kept them apart in order that a still larger number of speckled ones might be produced, through Laban's one-colored flock having this mottled group constantly in view. Vv. 41, 42—He did not adopt the trick with the rods, however, on every occasion of copulation, for the sheep in those countries lamb twice a year, but only at the copulation of the strong sheep . . . but not 'in the weakening of the sheep,' i.e., when they were weak, and would produce weak lambs. The meaning is probably this: he adopted this plan only at the summer copulation, not the autumn, for, in the opinion of the ancients (*Pliny, Columella*), lambs that were conceived in the spring and born in the autumn were stronger than those born in the spring (*Bichart*, p. 582). Jacob did this, possibly, less to spare Laban, than to avoid exciting suspicion, and so leading to the discovery of his trick" (BCOTP, 294).

Murphy explains as follows: "Jacob devises means to provide himself with a flock in these unfavorable circumstances. Vv. 37-40: His first device is to place partly-colored rods before the eyes of the animals at the rutting season, that they might drop lambs and kids varied with speckles, patches, or streaks of white. He had learned from experience that there is a congruence between the colors of the objects contemplated by the dams at that season and those of their young. At all events they bare many straked, speckled, and spotted lambs and kids. He now separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flock toward the young of the rare colors, doubtless to affect them in the same way as the peeled rods. *Put his own folds by themselves.* These are the party-colored animals that from time to time appeared in the flock of Laban. Vv. 41, 42: In order to secure the stronger cattle, Jacob added the second device of employing the party-colored rods only when the strong cattle conceived. The sheep in the

East lamb twice a year, and it is supposed that the lambs dropped in autumn are stronger than those dropped in the spring. On this supposition Jacob used his artifice in the spring, and not in the autumn. It is probable, however, that he made his experiments on the healthy and vigorous cattle, without reference to the season of the year. V. 43—the result is here stated. *The man brake forth exceedingly—became rapidly rich in lands and cattle*" (MG, 399-400). (The reader probably will need to go to the dictionary for the meaning of the word "cattle," as this word is used in the foregoing paragraph).

The original proposal made by Jacob, and Laban's quick acceptance, must be recalled here. *Thou shalt not give me anything*, v. 31. This certainly shows that Jacob had no live stock from Laban at the outset. *I will pass through all thy flock today (with thee, of course). Remove every speckled and spotted sheep, and every brown sheep among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats. And such shall be my hire.* That is, not those of this description that are now removed, but the uncommon parti-colored animals when they shall appear among the flock already cleared of them. These were the animals of the rare coloring. Not those of this description that are now removed, for in this case Laban would have given Jacob something; whereas Jacob evidently was resolved to be entirely dependent on Divine providence for his hire: Note especially his statement: *My righteousness shall answer for me*, v. 33, that is, at the time of inspection and accounting to Laban. The color will determine at once to whom the animal belongs. (In view of the complex artifice that Jacob had in mind, was this really righteousness, or was it a kind of self-righteousness? Was Jacob thinking that the means would justify the end, in this instance? If so, was he assuming that Providence would support such a rule of action? At any rate, Laban consented willingly to this proposal. Why?

Because, obviously, he thought his son-in-law's proposal was rather naive, to say the least: from his point of view, it was a course of action that would play right into his own hands, for the simple reason that parti-colored cattle were uncommon. Jacob is now to begin with nothing, and to have for his hire any parti-colored lambs or kids that would appear in the flocks from which every specimen of this rare class had been carefully removed. Laban simply could not lose in this kind of deal! So Laban thought. But Laban was not aware of Jacob's cleverness! In this contest of wits, it is difficult to determine which of the two was the greater *con man!*)

Dr. Cuthbert A. Simpson evaluates this Jacob-versus-Laban (or vice versa) series of transactions bluntly, yet withal so realistically, that his analysis is certainly in order here, as follows: When Jacob proposed to set up an establishment (household) for himself, "Laban, unwilling to lose his services, offered to allow him to fix his own wages. Jacob replied that he wanted nothing at the moment, but proposed that Laban should remove from his flocks all the speckled and spotted animals. These were to be set apart by themselves (cf. v. 36). Jacob would then care for the rest of the flock and would receive as his wages any speckled and spotted that might be born to these normally colored animals in the future. To this Laban promptly agreed (vss. 34-36)—indeed, why should he not accept a proposal so favorable to himself? If Jacob was such a fool to suggest it, let him take the consequences! But Jacob, though he may have been a knave, was no fool. He placed rods upon which he had peeled white streaks before the eyes of the stronger animals in the flocks at rutting time, with the result that the young born to them were *striped, speckled, and spotted*, and so belonged to him (vss. 37-39, 42a). Thus his substance increased rapidly (v. 43), and Laban was left with the feebler animals (vs. 42b). This story of one knave out-

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witting another—doubtless another piece of shepherd lore—is of a piece with that in 25:27-34 (cf. also 26:1-11, 27:1-40), and it was told by J-1 with unfeigned delight; clever Jacob had outwitted the dull nomad Aramaean" (IBG, 708). With this analysis in general we are inclined to agree. However, the fact must not be overlooked that these sections cited had very definite connection, both morally and spiritually, with the history of the Messianic Line. (Moreover, the deceptions practised on Jacob were moral and spiritual—impositions on his familial relationships—whereas those perpetrated on Laban were of a material and hence secondary character.)

The "conclusion of the whole matter" is precisely as Jacob had planned: "the man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, and maid-servants and men-servants, and camels and asses" (v. 43). This progress materially was evidently a matter of years, not just days: (cf. 31:41). The account simply closes with this remark, *i.e.*, concerning Jacob's wealth, without intimating approbation of his conduct or describing his increasing wealth as a blessing from God. "The verdict is contained in what follows."

5. *Jacob's Preparation for Flight (31:1-16).*

The complete success that Jacob achieved excited the envy and jealousy of Laban's sons, who were evidently old enough to be entrusted with the care of their father's flocks (cf. 30:35), whose conduct as described here shows that the selfish disposition peculiar to this family was as fully developed in them as in Laban himself. It must have been from rumor that Jacob obtained knowledge of the invidious reflections cast on him by these cousins (31:1), as evident from the fact that they were separated from him at a distance of three days' journey (a journey measured obviously by the movement of the animals involved). Jacob had also sensed a growing change in Laban's feelings toward him (v. 2). Inwardly he was

prepared for the termination of all his connections with his father-in-law; at the same time he received instructions from Yahweh in a dream to return to his homeland with an accompanying promise of Divine protection (vv. 10-13). (No matter to what extent we may be disposed to inveigh against Jacob's trickery, we must never lose sight of the fact that Laban had deceived and exploited him for fourteen years or more. And we must realize also that God is often compelled to achieve his purposes through very weak and selfish human vessels. Such was undoubtedly the case here.) V. 2—*the countenance of Laban was not toward him as before: lit.*, was not the same as yesterday and the day before: a common Oriental form of speech. "The insinuations against Jacob's fidelity by Laban's sons, and the sullen reserve, the churlish conduct, of Laban himself, had made Jacob's situation, in his uncle's establishment, most trying and painful. It is always one of the vexations attendant to worldly prosperity, that it excites the envy of others (Eccl. 4:4); and that, however careful a man is to maintain a good conscience, he cannot always reckon on maintaining a good name in a censorious world. This Jacob experienced; and it is probable that, like a good man, he had asked direction and relief in prayer. Notwithstanding the ill usage he had received, Jacob might not have deemed himself at liberty to quit his present sphere under the impulse of passionate fretfulness and discontent. Having been conducted to Haran by God (cf. 28:15), and having got a promise that the same heavenly Guardian would bring him again into the land of Canaan—he might have thought he ought not to leave it, without being clearly persuaded as to the path of duty. So ought we to set the Lord before us, and to acknowledge him in all our ways, our journeys, our settlements and plans in life. Jacob did receive an answer, which decided his entrance upon the homeward journey to Canaan, with a re-assurance of the Divine presence and

protection by the way. But he himself alone was responsible for making his departure a hurried and clandestine flight" (CECG, 208). So Jacob called Rachel and Leah to him, evidently to the field where he was watching his flocks, in order to communicate to them his intentions and the reasons for them. Note that Rachel and Leah only were called; the other two women were still in a state of servitude and hence not entitled to be taken into account. "Having stated his strong grounds of dissatisfaction with their father's conduct, and the ill requital he had gotten for all his faithful services, he informed them of the blessing of God, that had made him rich notwithstanding Laban's design to ruin him; and, finally, of the command from God he had received to return to his own country, that they might not accuse him of caprice, or disaffection to their family, but be convinced that, in resolving to depart, he acted from a principle of religious obedience" (CECG, 209).

Note the sequence of names here: Jacob sent and called *Rachel and Leah*: "Rachel first, because she was the principal stay of his household, it having been for her sake that he entered into relations with Laban. Leah's descendants admitted Rachel's precedence inasmuch as Boaz, a member of the tribe of Judah, Leah's son, and his kinsmen said, *The LORD make the woman . . . like Rachel and like Leah*, Ruth 4:11" (Rashi, SC, 179).

Note also Jacob's charge, that Laban had deceived him and *had changed his wages ten times*, i.e., many times: ten, besides signifying a definite number, frequently stands in Scripture for many (cf. Lev. 26:26, 1 Sam. 1:8; Eccl. 7:9; Dan. 1:26, Amos 6:9, Zech. 8:23). Note that the *Angel of God* who spoke to Jacob in a dream was the Divine Being who identified Himself as the God of Bethel (v. 13; cf. 32:24-32, 35:9-15, 48:15-16). That is to say, he was not one of the angels who were seen ascending and descending on the symbolic ladder of Jacob's dream-vision

at Bethel (28:12-15): He identified Himself with God. (See art., "Angel of Jehovah," in my *Genesis* textbook, Vol. III, pp. 216-220, 496-500). Vv. 11-13, "The Angel of God specially draws Jacob's attention to what he sees. Jacob is not to regard the thing seen as trivial but as indicative of the fact that God 'had taken note of all that Laban had done' to him and was, of course, Himself taking measures to safeguard Jacob in what seemed like an unequal contest. Very definitely God identifies Himself to Jacob as the one who formerly had appeared at Bethel and to whom Jacob had appointed a pillar and vowed a vow. This is another way of saying that what He had then promised to do for Jacob is now actually being done. For assuredly, but for divine interference Jacob would have suffered irreparable loss" (EG, 835).

It should be noted that the two wives were of one mind and were in complete agreement with their husband (vv. 14-16). In fact, they say, their father has treated them as if they were "foreigners," and not of his own flesh and blood. Proof of this, said they, was in the fact that he had, to all intents and purposes *sold* them as servants would be sold: seven (or fourteen) years of service had been the price paid. Besides, whereas a less greedy father would have used the gift from his prospective son-in-law to provide a dowry for his daughters, Laban had entirely used it up, most likely by investing it directly in flocks and herds until it was completely absorbed. Now therefore, said they, *whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do* (v. 16). "From one point of view the wives are correct when they assert that all the present wealth of their father belongs to them and to their children, because he apparently had been wealthy before Jacob came, who by his assiduous and skillful management increased his father-in-law's 'riches' enormously. By all canons of right Jacob's family ought to have been adjudged as deserving of a good share of these riches. But the wives saw that their

father was not minded to give them or their husband anything at all. Apparently, the long pent-up grievances find expression in these words. Ultimately, then, the wives arrive at the conclusion that the best thing Jacob can do is to obey God's command and depart. Their mode of arriving at this conclusion is not the most desirable; they finally conclude to consent to what God commands because their best material interests are not being served by the present arrangement. Jacob, no doubt, approached the problem on a higher plane: he was obeying the God of his fathers, who had made promises to Jacob previously and was now fulfilling these promises. So in Jacob's case we have fidelity to God; in the case of his wives a greater measure of interest in material advantage. For that reason, too, Jacob's wives refer to Him only as *Elohim*" (EG, 836).

Vv. 17-21. So the father "rose up" and set the members of his family on camels, and with all his cattle and his substance which he had accumulated, and while Laban was engaged in shearing sheep, he "stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian." That is to say, he fled posthaste. *He took about the only course he could to liberate himself from the clutches of his father-in-law.*

The following summarizations of Jacob's experiences in Paddan-Aram are excellent: "After the birth of Joseph, Jacob wished to become his own master; but Laban prevailed on him to serve him still, for a part of the produce of his flocks, to be distinguished by certain marks. *Jacob's artifice to make the most of his bargain may be regarded as another example of the defective morality of those times; but, as far as Laban was concerned, it was a fair retribution for his attempt to secure a contrary result.* Jacob was now commanded in a vision by 'the God of Bethel' to return to the land of his birth; and he fled secretly from Laban, who had not concealed his envy, to go back to his father Isaac, after twenty years spent in Laban's service—

fourteen for his wives, and six for his cattle. Jacob, having passed the Euphrates, struck across the desert by the great fountain at Palmyra; then traversed the eastern part of the plain of Damascus and the plateau of Bashan, and entered Gilead, which is the range of mountains east of Jordan, forming the frontier between Palestine and the Syrian desert" (OTH, 102. Italics mine—C.C.).

"In those days, getting the better of the other man was a sign of cleverness, and the Nuzi contracts also reflect this attitude. Jacob came under Laban's jurisdiction, and on condition that he would work for Laban a further seven years, he could finally marry his beloved Rachel. Then he agreed to work another seven years to acquire flocks of his own. He managed by skill to acquire the best portion of Laban's flock of sheep and goats. Black sheep, or goats other than black or brown, were rarities; and those Jacob was to have. According to the story he employed an ingenious breeding device to use maternal impression on the unborn of the flocks. He set peeled rods in the watering-troughs, where flocks came to breed, to impress the mothers of the 'stronger of the flocks.' Thus he managed to breed an ample supply of the new varieties. . . . Jacob came besides into possession of great wealth: two wives, two handmaids brought in by his wives as marriage gifts, in accordance with Mesopotamian custom (they were also his concubines who gave him children), and a large retinue of servants and followers, and also children, of whom he had eleven. But after twenty years of hard work Jacob's hopes were dashed. Laban had had sons born to him after their contract had been made: sons who, according to local usage, would become Laban's chief heirs rather than the adopted son. They were younger men who resented the position he had attained. The whole picture presented is of crafty tribesmen, each partly in the right, seeking loopholes in the laws. And Laban insisted on one item in the original

contract: that Jacob would not be permitted to take another wife in addition to the two daughters of Laban. The narrator of the story makes it clear that Jacob could only extricate himself from Laban's control by flight in the spring; and the two wives sided with their husband, agreeing that home was no longer the place for them" (Cornfeld, AtD, 86).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

Reflections

"Sinful marriages have sad consequences. Wives chosen for their beauty often bring a troublesome temper along with them. Envious discontentment and disappointed pride make multitudes miserable! Immoderate desire of children, or other created enjoyments, hurry many into fearful disorders! But it is vain ever to expect that happiness from creatures which can be had only in and from God himself. No love to persons should hinder our detestation and reproof of their sins. Even the godly are apt to fall into snares laid for them by their near relatives. And bad examples are more readily imitated than good ones. If we are once overcome by sin, we are apt to yield to it more easily afterward. Many are more governed by the estimation of the world than by reason or religion. It is very wicked for parents to transmit their quarrels to their children. It is no lessening of our guilt that God brings good out of our evil. People often promise themselves happiness in that which will be their death or ruin. Saints have need to trust their God, as all others may deceive them; and reason to desire their heavenly home, as this world is not their rest. What an advantage to families are servants remarkably pious! How criminal for covetous masters to defraud them of their wages! What good words worldly men can give to serve their own ends, and how wise they are for their own carnal interests! But their

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caution is vain when God designs to frustrate their purposes; and they often outwit themselves who intend to impose upon others. All agreements ought to be made with great clearness and accuracy, that no stain be thereby occasioned to our character; and in the use of lawful means to promote our wealth, our trust should be fixed on the promised providence of God. His blessing can quickly increase a little, and make it a great store." Again, on ch. 31, v. 13: "This is a simple statement, but there is most cheering truth embodied in it. He had vowed prospectively to dedicate a tenth of his property to the Lord, and thus in the ordinary affairs of life to testify to his complete dependence on the divine will. Now after a long and hard struggle, when wealth was acquired, and by the envy of an unjust master was placed in peril, the Lord graciously reminds him of the vision at Bethel" (SIBG, 263, 264).

Jacob's Vision of the Eternal

Gen. 28:11-22; John 14:1-9

Jacob was now fleeing from the face of Esau, and was on his way to Paddan-Aram. The first day he journeyed about forty-eight miles, and arrived at a place originally called Luz, but which, on account of the vision he had there, he afterwards called Beth-el. There never was a scene more truly solemn and interesting, than that with which the patriarch was favored on this memorable occasion. It was designed for his instruction and support; and the devout Christian, in reviewing it in the spirit of devout contemplation, cannot fail to receive both information and comfort from it. Let us, then, notice,

1. *What Jacob saw on this Occasion.* Overcome with the fatigue of the journey, he had selected a spot of ground for his couch, a stone for his pillow, and the outstretched canopy of heaven for his only covering. Wearied nature

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was recruiting her energies by balmy sleep, when God was pleased to manifest himself to his servant, through the medium of a striking vision or dream.

(1) The object presented to his notice was a ladder. (2) Its position—between heaven and earth, filling the whole of the vast space between the two. (3) Its base—rested on the earth, close to the spot where he lay. (4) The top of it—reached to heaven, the place of Deity. (5) Above it—watching it, and viewing it with complacency and delight, stood the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts. (6) Upon it—were angels, the spiritual host of God, and they were ascending and descending as messengers, bearing tidings from heaven to earth, from God to man.

The appearance of the ladder might be intended to illustrate,

(1) The doctrine of divine providence. Both heaven and earth are under the divine government. Both worlds connected. God's eye constantly directed to the concerns of men. Angels minister to the necessities of the saints. This was eminently calculated to console the mind of Jacob in his present circumstances.

It might be intended to prefigure,

(2) The mediatorial work of Christ. Jesus is, emphatically, the sinner's ladder or way to heaven. None can come to God but by him. He has reconciled heaven to earth. The father looks upon men, through the work of his Son, with pleasure and delight. Angels, too, are now incorporated with believers, form a distinguished branch of this one family, and are all ministering spirits to those who shall be heirs of salvation: John 14:6, Heb. 1:14. Notice,

2. *What Jacob heard.* "And the Lord said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, etc." Here Deity, (1) Proclaimed himself the God of his fathers. "God of Abraham and Isaac," etc. He who made them a separate people, distinguished them, blessed them, etc. Him whom they had

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worshiped, trusted, etc. (2) He promised him the possession of the country where he then was. "The land whereon thou liest," etc., v. 15. (3) He promised him a numerous progeny, and that of him should come the illustrious Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. (4) He promised him his divine presence and protection. "I am with thee, and will keep thee," etc. This promise extended to all times and to all places, and to the end of life. "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken," etc., v. 15. How condescending and gracious on the part of Deity! What comfort for Jacob! Yet how infinitely short of those rich promises given to believers in the gospel. Notice,

3. *What Jacob felt.* "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place," v. 16. (1) He felt the influence of the Divine Presence. "The Lord is in this place." (2) He felt a sacred and solemn fear. "And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place!" Where God is, how solemn! Angels prostrate themselves before him, etc. ("Religious Dread." When Jacob woke from his vision and felt that he had stood at the gate of heaven, there was first the sense of wonder and thanksgiving at the revelation of God's mercy; but then there swept over him an overwhelming awe. *How dreadful is this place!* he cried. When a man is made to know that God has not forgotten him, even though he has been a moral failure, there is the moment of rapturous exaltation such as Jacob had when he saw the shining ladder and the angels; but when he remembers the holiness of God, he turns his face away from its intolerable light. The vision must be more than the immediate emotion: it calls him to account. Who can contemplate the distance between him and God, even when the angels of God's forgiveness throw a bridge across it, and not bow down in agonized unworthiness? So it was with Jacob. The consciousness of guilt in him made him

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shrink from the revelation of God even when he craved it. He had done wrong, and he was trying to escape its consequences. His brother's anger was formidable enough: but there was something more formidable which he wanted to forget but which confronted him. His conscience was shocked into the certainty that he could not get away from God. The dread of that perception was on him now. Before he could ever be at peace with himself and with his world, he would have to come to grips with the facts of his past experience—and with the invisible power of the righteousness he had violated—and wrestle with them for his life, as he would one day at Peniel. It was well for Jacob that his awareness of "God did not end with the vision of the ladder, but went on to realize the purification through which he must go before he could take the blessings which the angels of the ladder might bring to him. For Jacob, and for all men, there can be no flippant self-assurance. In relation to their sins the inexorable love of God must first seem dreadful before it can be redeeming" [IBG, 691, 692].) (3) He felt himself on the precincts of the heavenly world. "This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Where God reveals his glory, is heaven. He might well exclaim thus; for here he was surrounded with heavenly intelligences—had a vision of Jehovah, etc. Notice,

4. *What Jacob did.* (1) He expressed his solemn sense of the Divine Presence, vv. 16, 17. (2) He erected and consecrated a memorial of the events of that eventful night. Took the stone—made a pillow—poured oil upon it—called the place Beth-el. How pious! God had honored him, and he now desired to erect a monument to His glory. How necessary to keep up in his mind a remembrance of God's gracious manifestation! How proper to give God a public profession of our love, and fear, and obedience! (3) He vowed obedience to the Lord. Seeing that God had thus engaged to bless and keep him, he now

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resolved, and publicly avowed his resolution to love God, and to serve him with all his life and substance, v. 22. (4) He went on his way in peace and safety. How could he fail to proceed in peace and safety, when the Omnipotent God guided, and the Almighty God protected him! Yet, this privilege have all his saints.

Application. Learn, 1. The privileges of piety. Divine manifestations, promises, etc. "In all thy ways acknowledge him," etc. 2. The duties of piety. God distinguishes his people, that they may be brought to holy obedience, and conformity to himself. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," etc., Rom. 12:1. 3. The delights of public worship. God's house is indeed the gate of heaven, the way to heaven is through his house. 4. How glorious a place is heaven, where the pure in heart shall see God and dwell in his presence forever! (The foregoing is taken verbatim [with the bracketed exception] from the volume, *Five Hundred Sketches and Skeletons of Sermons*, Appleton Edition, New York and London, 1913).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-ONE

1. Where was Paddan-aram? Why did Jacob go there? Whom would he find there?
2. How had this area figured in patriarchal history prior to that time?
3. What was the first scene which Jacob encountered on arriving there?
4. Summarize Thomson's description of Mesopotamian wells, cisterns, and stone coverings.
5. What conversation took place between Jacob and the shepherds?
6. Explain the phrase, "Rachel the Shepherdess" as indicated in ch. 29:9.
7. What was Jacob's reaction on seeing Rachel the first time?

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8. How was Jacob related to Rachel? Who was her father? Her sister?
9. In what rather unusual ways did Jacob react on seeing Rachel the first time?
10. Explain how the story of Jacob and Rachel parallels that of Eliezer, Rebekah and Isaac. In what respects do they differ? Why are they frequently referred to as "idylls"?
11. How is Jacob's weeping at his meeting Rachel the first time to be explained?
12. What are some of the rabbinical explanations of his show of emotion?
13. State the circumstances of Jacob's meeting with Laban. Where have we met Laban before?
14. Explain what is meant by Leah's "weak" eyes.
15. What was the first deception which Laban perpetrated on Jacob? What circumstance made it easy for him to do this?
16. How did Laban try to "rationalize" this deception?
17. To what additional service did Jacob commit himself in order to get Rachel as his wife? Is this service to be regarded as a kind of "dowry" to offset his coming to Laban without material gifts of any kind?
18. In what respects did Laban reveal himself as a "selfish schemer"?
19. What was the prevailing custom with respect to the giving of the younger daughter in marriage before giving the older?
20. What service did Jacob accept to obtain Rachel in marriage?
21. Are we right in saying that Jacob remained with Laban all these years as a result of his inability to pay the *bridal gift* otherwise than by personal service?
22. What is the full significance of the statement that the seven years of service for Rachel "seemed unto Jacob but a few days, for the love that he had to her"?

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23. Explain how Laban by his sharp practices inveigled Jacob into bigamy directly and indirectly into polygamy.
24. What was the *mobar* in the patriarchal culture?
25. Explain how bigamy and polygamy violate the will of God with respect to the conjugal union. Relate Acts 17:30 to these Old Testament practices.
26. Explain the circumstances of Jacob's double wedding.
27. Was the bigamous relationship here a case of incest? Explain your answer?
28. When was such a relationship as that which Jacob had with the two sisters prohibited by the Mosaic Law? In what Scripture is this prohibition found?
29. Explain why we say that in these various incidents Jacob was suffering what is called Retributive Justice? What name did the Greeks give to the personification of Retributive Justice?
30. Which of Jacob's sons became the ancestor of Messiah? What was his name? Who was his mother?
31. Why do we call Jacob a "man of many wrestlings"?
32. What do we learn about Jacob's feeling for Leah as compared with his feeling for Rachel?
33. Write from memory the names of Jacob's thirteen children and the names of their mothers respectively?
34. Are we justified in thinking that the Divine promise that Abraham's seed should be as the stars of the heavens in multitude was involved in any way with the motivation that produced Jacob's numerous progeny?
35. Show how the jealousy between Rachel and Leah continued to produce unpleasant consequences.
36. Explain why we speak of the sons of the two handmaids as "adopted" sons.
37. What is the import of Rachel's cry, "Give me children, or else I die"?

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38. What was Jacob's rather harsh reply to Rachel's complaints? Was it justified?
39. What, later, caused Leah to become discontented with being the mother of only four sons? What did she do about it?
40. Explain fully the story of the mandrakes. Was this pure superstition, or did it have some basis in fact?
41. How was the lad Reuben innocently involved in this?
42. How would you answer the criticism that the agricultural background shows the episode to be out of place in a nomadic setting? How does the reference to the "wheat harvest" figure in this discussion?
43. What step did Jacob take after his fourteen years of service for Leah and Rachel?
44. What is the probable explanation of Laban's statement that he had "divined" that Yahweh was blessing Jacob's endeavors?
45. What was the new contract into which Jacob entered at this time with Laban? What was the purpose of each in entering into this contract?
46. What three artifices did Jacob use to increase his wealth at Laban's expense?
47. Do we know of any real scientific evidence to support the principle of selective breeding which Jacob employed here?
48. On what grounds can we justify Jacob in resorting to such methods, if at all?
49. What was the result, in so far as Jacob was concerned, of his strategy in this selective breeding?
50. What does Scripture tell us with regard to Jacob's wealth?
51. For how long a time did Jacob continue in service for Laban? What was he doing through the last six years of this service?
52. What caused him to decide to break away from Laban and return home?

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53. What attitude did his two wives take with reference to this decision, and why?
54. What caused Jacob to depart hastily? What route did he take? Of what did his retinue consist?
55. Summarize your final evaluation of the characters of Jacob and Laban. Would you say that Laban was the more deceptive of the two? Would you justify Jacob's acts with reference to Laban? Explain your answer.

PART FORTY-TWO

THE STORY OF JACOB: HIS RETURN TO CANAAN

(Genesis 31:17—33:20)

1. *The Covenant in Gilead: The Biblical Account (31:17-55).*

17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon the camels; 18 and he carried away all his cattle, and all his substance which he had gathered, the cattle of his getting, which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to Isaac his father unto the land of Canaan. 19 Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's. 20 And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. 21 So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.

22 And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. 23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the mountain of Gilead. 24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said unto him, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 25 And Laban came up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain: and Laban with his brethren encamped in the mountain of Gilead. 26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword? 27 Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp; 28 and didst not suffer me to kiss my sons and my daughters? now hast thou done foolishly. 29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your

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father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 30 And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longest after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? 31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Lest thou shouldest take thy daughters from me by force. 32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, he shall not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maid-servants; but he found them not. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. 34 Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat upon them. And Laban felt about all the tent, but found them not. 35 And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise up before thee; for the manner of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the teraphim.

36 And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast hotly pursued after me? 37 Whereas thou hast felt about all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us two. 38 These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flocks have I not eaten. 39 That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. 40 Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes. 41 These twenty years have I been in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock:

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and thou hast changed my wages ten times. 42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

43 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these daughters, or unto their children whom they have borne?

44 And now come, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. 45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made a heap; and they did eat there by the heap.

47 And Laban called it Jegar-saha-dutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. 48 And Laban said, This heap is witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed:

49 and Mizpah, for he said, Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, and if thou shalt take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold the pillar, which I have set betwixt me and thee.

52 This heap be witness, and the pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nabor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the Fear of his father Isaac.

54 And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mountain.

Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed and returned unto his place.

(1) *Flight and Pursuit* (vv. 17-25). It seems to have become obvious to Jacob that flight was his only way of extricating himself and his household from Laban's shiftiness. Jacob's words to his wives will be recalled here: "*Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times,*" v. 7; that is, a round number signifying just as often as he could (Leupold, EG, 832). The daughters themselves joined in affirming their father's acts of exploitation—his efforts to fleece their husband—and even his avarice in his dealings with them (as if they were as of little concern to him as "foreigners" to be bought and sold at his will), vv. 14-16: "It was considered miserly if a father-in-law did not return to his daughter a part of the sum paid over by the husband at the time of marriage" (JB, 51, n.). "The point in this instance, is elucidated by tablets from Hurrian centers, is that part of the bride payment was normally reserved for the woman as her inalienable dowry. Rachel and Leah accuse their father of violating the family laws of their country. Significantly enough, the pertinent records antedate Moses by centuries" (Speiser, ABG, 245). "Rachel and Leah mean to say that what Jacob had acquired by his six years of service with their father was no more than would naturally have belonged to him had they obtained their portions at the first" (PCG, 376). The wives were already alienated from their father and willingly espoused their husband's cause. Encouraged, in addition, by the assurance of the "God of Bethel" that his vow had been accepted (28:20-22) and the accompanying Divine authorization to get out of the land where he was and return to the "land of his nativity," Jacob gathered all his possessions and departed at a most opportune time,

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namely, when Laban was away on a sheep-shearing mission. (Sheep-shearing, we are told, was the occasion of an important festival in ancient Israel [cf. Gen. 38:12ff., 1 Sam. 25:2ff., 2 Sam. 13:23]). Jacob with his retinue ("all he had"—cf. 30:43, sheep, goats, camels, asses, maid-servants, men-servants, wives, and offspring) *rose up* and *drove away*, not leisurely, but with all possible haste; flocks, of course, had to be driven carefully lest they perish from over-exertion. (Note that he set the members of his family upon camels, v. 17). Crossing the "River" (the Euphrates, cf. 1 Ki. 4:21, Ezra 4:10, 16), probably at the ancient ford at Thapsacus, the procession (one might well call it that) struck across the Damascus plain, and then the plateau of Bashan, thus finally entering the region known as Gilead, the area east of the Jordan that formed the frontier between Palestine and the Syrian desert. Gilead was a mountainous region, some sixty miles long and twenty miles wide, bounded on the north by Bashan and on the south by Moab and Ammon (Gen. 31:21, Deut. 3:12-17). (Cf. the cities of refuge, Deut. 4:41-43, namely, Bezer in the table-land, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in Bashan). From the crossing of the Euphrates at Thapsacus, the next objective naturally had to be the mountain of Gilead or "Mount Gilead."

Jacob had not been, and was not intending to be after his return, a nomad. V. 18—"In addition to the cattle there were other possessions of Jacob that he had acquired in Paddan-aram or Mesopotamia. . . . By a repetition of *miqneb*, "cattle," this part of his possessions is reverted to as 'constituting' the major part of his 'property,' *quinyano*, as K.W. well translates: *der Viehbesitz, der sein Vermoegen bildete*. The statement is rounded out by a double statement of the objective of his journey: on the one hand, he was going back 'to Isaac, his father,' under whose authority he felt he still belonged, and 'to the land of Canaan,' which according to divine decree was

ultimately destined to be the possession of his posterity. Such precise formal statements including all the major facts are wont to be made by Moses when he records a particularly momentous act. The very circumstantiality of its form makes one feel its importance—a device, by the way, quite naturally employed for similar purposes to this day. Critics miss all these finer points of style, for the supposed authors that the critics imagine have wrought out parts of Genesis (E, J, P, D) are poor fellows with one-track minds, not one of whom has the least adaptability of style, but all of whom write in a stiff, stilted fashion after one pattern only" (EG, 838-839).

Perhaps we should give more careful attention here, in passing, to Jacob's conversation with his wives prior to the flight, vv. 7-13. This section is clarified greatly by Keil and Delitzsch as follows: "From the statement that Laban had changed his wages ten times, it is evident that when Laban observed, that among his sheep and goats, of one color only, a large number of mottled young were born, he made repeated attempts to limit the original stipulation by changing the rule as to the colors of the young, and so diminishing Jacob's wages. But when Jacob passes over his own stratagem in silence, and represents all that he aimed at and secured by crafty means as the fruit of God's blessing, this differs no doubt from the account in chapter 30. It is not a contradiction, however, pointing to a difference in the sources of the two chapters, but merely a difference founded on actual fact, viz., that Jacob did not tell the whole truth to his wives. Moreover, self-help and divine help do not exclude one another. Hence, his account of the dream, in which he saw that the rams that leaped upon the cattle were all of various colors, and heard the voice of the angel of God calling his attention to what had been seen, in the words, '*I have seen all that Laban hath done to thee,*' may contain actual truth; and the dream may be regarded as a divine

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revelation, which was either sent to explain to him now, at the end of the sixth year, 'that it was not his stratagem, but the providence of God which had prevented him from falling a victim to Laban's avarice, and had brought him such wealth' (*Delitzsch*) ; or, if the dream occurred at an earlier period, was meant to teach him, that 'the help of God, without any such self-help, could procure him justice and safety in spite of Laban's covetousness' (*Kurtz*). It is very difficult to decide between these two interpretations. As Jehovah's instructions to him to return were not given till the end of his period of service, and Jacob connects them so closely with the vision of the rams that they seem contemporaneous, Delitzsch's view appears to deserve the preference. But the participial form in verse 12, "*all that Laban is doing to thee*," does not exactly suit this meaning. . . . The participle rather favors Kurtz's view, that Jacob had the vision of the rams and the explanation from the angel at the beginning of the last six years of service, but that in his communication to his wives, in which there was no necessity to preserve a strict continuity or distinction of time, he connected it with the divine instructions to return to his home, which he received at the end of his time of service. But if we decide in favor of this view, we have no further guarantee for the objective reality of the vision of the rams, since nothing is said about it in the historical account, and it is nowhere stated that the wealth obtained by Jacob's craftiness was the result of the divine blessing. The attempt so unmistakably apparent in Jacob's whole conversation with his wives, to place his dealings with Laban in the most favorable light for himself, excites the suspicion, that the vision of which he spoke was nothing more than a natural dream, the materials being supplied by the three thoughts that were most frequently in his mind, by night as well as by day, viz., (1) his own schemes and their success; (2) the promise received at Bethel; (3) the wish to justify his

actions to his own conscience; and that these were wrought up by an excited imagination into a visionary dream, of the divine origin of which Jacob himself may not have had the slightest doubt" (BCOTP, 295, 296).

We pause to say here, that *Jacob did outwit Laban*. Moreover, it is expressly emphasized that he outwitted Laban "the Syrian" (Hebrew, *Aramean*: vv. 20, 24). We are compelled to wonder whether this specific designation is designed to point up the fact of Laban's "ingrained trickery," an art which he practised on Jacob at every turn. History seems to show that from most ancient times to the present the Syrians were, and are, the prime trouble-makers in the Near East. Bowie rightly suggests that "the chronicler must have set down this account with a very human and perhaps unregenerate pleasure. Here was Jacob, the progenitor of Israel, outsmarting the uncovenanted Laban. From a natural point of view that seemed eminently appropriate. More than once Laban had deliberately cheated Jacob. He had promised him Rachel to wife, and after Jacob had served seven years for her he withheld Rachel and gave him Leah instead. According to Jacob, Laban had also changed his wages ten times (31:7). Jacob had good reason therefore to be suspicious when Laban tried to persuade him to stay and work for him further (vs. 27), and all the more so when Laban had added unctuously, *for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake*. Anybody would have said that if Laban could now be cheated in his turn, it would be what he thoroughly deserved. As a matter of fact, Jacob does not cheat him. He carries through exactly the terms of an agreement which he had proposed to Laban, and which Laban explicitly accepted. He was not false like Laban: he was more inventive and adroit. When he had proposed to Laban that all he asked in the way of wages was that little fraction of the flock which might be odd in color,

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that seemed to Laban a highly desirable bargain, especially since he, Laban, took the opportunity then and there to remove from the flock all the sheep and goats that might breed the type that would belong to Jacob. The trouble was that he did not foresee the extraordinary device by which Jacob would be able to make the flock breed according to his interest—a device not ruled out by the bargain. So by every secular standard Jacob was entitled to his triumph." However, Dr. Bowie goes on to say, "the interest of the story lies in the fact that the narrator was not judging by secular standards. He believed that Jacob's triumph was directly linked to his religion. He describes Jacob as saying to Rachel and Leah, 'God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me' (31:9). Moreover, an angel appears to Jacob and gives him God's message thus: 'I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of Bethel . . . where thou vowedst a vow unto me' (31:12-13). In other words, Jacob's clever stratagem and the success it brought him are the result of the commitment which he believed God had given to him at Bethel to make him prosperous. A curious blending of the earthly and the heavenly—a blending which one must recognize to exist in part of the O.T. and in influences which have flowed from it! The people of Israel were convinced that there is an intimate relationship between favor with heaven and material well-being in this world. The positive aspect of that was to give powerful sanction to keen-wittedness and commercial sagacity, so that the Jew in many practical matters has exhibited an intelligence greater than that of his non-Jewish rival. As with Jacob in his contest with Laban, he can show that he deserves to win. The negative aspect is of course the implication that prosperity ought to be the concomitant of religion. That is not confined to Judaism: John Calvin, who was greatly influenced by the O.T., tended to make it appear that the Christian

citizen, sturdy and reliant, would be more evidently a man of God if he was a success in business. It is true that there are qualities inspired by religion—integrity, diligence, faithfulness in familiar duties—which may bring this world's goods as their result. But to look toward these as a necessary reward of religion is to dishonor the love of God, which must be sought for itself, by trying to make it an instrument of our selfishness. It is not in Jacob's outwitting Laban that we see the true end of worship. It is rather in Jesus, who, 'though he was rich, yet for your sakes . . . became poor' (2 Cor. 8:9)" (IBG, 707-710). (*We must agree wholeheartedly with this expositor's thesis that an abundance of material goods is not a necessary reward of religion,* least of all of the Christian religion. We know of no Scriptures, either in the Old Testament or in the New, that would ascribe *either unusual material wealth or poverty* to God's special providence, *i.e.*, outside the general operation of economic cause-and-effect relationships, and these in relation to individual human character and effort. The divine ordinance that man shall earn his livelihood by honest labor, mental or physical or both (Gen. 3:19) has never been rescinded. Why, then, ascribe the notion of this correlation of material goods with religious commitment to the "chronicler's" attitude in the case before us, when as a matter of fact the whole affair is presented as a series of Jacob's own assumptions (or presumptions). As a matter of fact, all that is implicit in the account given in ch. 28:20-22, in the matter of material possessions, is simply "bread to eat and raiment to put on." These simple needs of everyday life are certainly a far cry from the contest waged between Jacob and Laban for this world's goods. Cf. John 5:40, 10:10; Matt. 6:19-34; Luke 8:14, 18:24; Mark 14:7; John 16:33; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:10; Jas. 5:1-6, etc.).

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The following evaluation of Jacob's conduct seems to be unbiased and just: "The deceit which Jacob practiced on Esau was returned to him by Laban, who practiced the same kind of deceit. For all of that, however, Jacob was under the covenant care of God and did not come out a loser in the end. Yet in later years Jacob's own sons practiced on him a similar form of deceit in connection with Joseph's abduction (37:32-36)" (HSB, 48, n.).

(2) *The Teraphim* (v. 19).

Jacob's flight with all his "substance" occurred at a time when the important task of sheep-shearing was engrossing Laban's attention. This means that the latter was at some distance from Jacob's flocks (30:36), and since all hands would be kept quite busy for a few days, no time could have been more opportune. Moreover, because her father was away from home, Rachel had a chance to carry out a special project of her own: *she stole the teraphim that were her father's.* Evidently these were her household gods. The plural may be a plural of excellence after the pattern of the name *Elohim*, and so only one image may have been involved. Whether these were larger, almost man-sized as 1 Sam. 19:13, 16 seems to suggest, or actually were only the small figurines yielded by excavations in Palestine matters little, as both types may have been in use. Apparently they were regarded as promoting domestic prosperity, and thus were a kind of gods of the hearth like the Roman *Penates*. "The teraphim was a god (31:30); its form and size were those of a man (1 Sam. 19:13, 16); it was used in private houses as well as in temples (Judg. 17:5, 18:14ff., Hos. 3:4), and was an implement of divination (Ezek. 2:21, Zech. 10:2). The indications point to its being an emblem of ancestor-worship which survived in Israel as a private superstition, condemned by the enlightened conscience of the nation (Gen. 35:2, 1 Sam. 15:23, 2 Ki. 23:24). It seems implied by the present narrative that the cult was

borrowed from the Arameans, or perhaps rather that it had existed before the separation of Hebrews and Arameans" (ICCG, 396). These were "household gods, idols of clay or metal" (HSB, 51, n.). It will be noted that in the narrative before us, Laban calls these objects "gods"; when Jacob does the same, he is probably only quoting Laban, vv. 30, 32). "The teraphim were the family or household gods represented in the form of idols. They varied in size. Those of Laban were small enough to be put in the pack-saddle of a camel upon which Rachel sat. 1 Samuel 19:13 speaks of such an image in the house of David, approximately of human size and shape. In ancient Israel the use of the teraphim seems to have been common, and not at all inconsistent with the pure worship of Israel's God: Judg. ch. 17, 18:14, 17, 18, 20; 1 Sam. 19:13; Hos. 3:4" (Morganstern, JIBG, *in loco*). "It seems hardly fair to assume that the Israelites carelessly carried these household divinities over from the time of these early Mesopotamian contacts and continued to use them almost uninterruptedly. When Michal happens to have such a figure handy (1 Sam. 19), that is not as yet proof that from Rachel's day to Michal's Israel had quite carelessly tolerated them. We should rather say that whenever Israel lapsed into idolatry, especially in Canaan, then the backsliders would also adapt themselves to the teraphim cult. Hos. 3:4 by no means lists them as legitimate objects of worship" (EG, 840).

Of greater significance to us, however, is the question, *Why did Rachel steal this teraphim?* "To be rejected are such conjectures as merely to play her father a prank; or to take them for their intrinsic worth, supposing that they were gold or silver figurines; or to employ a drastic or almost fanatical mode of seeking to break her father's idolatry—views current among Jewish commentators and early church fathers and to some extent to this day. More nearly correct might seem to be the opinion which suggests

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that she aimed to deprive her father of the blessings which might have been conferred by them. Most reasonable of all, though it does not exclude the last-mentioned view, is the supposition that Rachel took them along for her own use, being herself somewhat given to superstitious or idolatrous practices. For though 30:23-24 suggest a measure of faith and of knowledge of the true God, even as Jehovah, yet it would seem that as a true daughter of her father she had been addicted to his religion and now had a kind of divided allegiance, trusting in Jehovah and not wanting to be deprived of the good luck teraphim might confer. In any case, since she took what did not belong to her, she is guilty of theft—she 'stole'” (EG, 840). “The rabbis sought to excuse Rachel's theft by saying she took the teraphim because she feared they might disclose Jacob's whereabouts to Laban. Actually, the story gives no motive for her theft, unless it be that suggested, in the lesson, to prove the superiority of Jacob's God over the gods of Laban. For this reason probably the story told with considerable gusto not only that Rachel stole these gods, which were powerless to defend themselves, but also that she subjected them to greater indignity by sitting on them (v. 34). Use of teraphim became regarded as inconsistent with the pure worship of God and was prohibited: 2 Ki. 23:24; cf. 1 Sam. 15:23” (Morganstern, *ibid.*). “They were used for divination; hence she stole them that they should not reveal to Laban that Jacob had fled [Rashbam]. They were idols, and she stole them in order to keep Laban from idolatry [Rashi]. E [Abraham Ibn Ezra] inclines to the former reason, for if the latter were her purpose, she should have hidden them and not taken them with her. As for the *teraphim*, E mentions two views: that it was a kind of clock, or an image which was so made that at certain times it spoke. His own opinion is that it was a kind of dummy which could be mistaken for a human being, the proof being

that Michal deceived David's pursuers by putting teraphim in the bed, which they mistook for David (1 Sam. 19:13ff.). N [Nachmanides] also quotes the story of Michal, from which he deduced that not all teraphim were worshipped as idols, for in that case David would certainly not have possessed them. He conjectures that it was an object used to foretell the future (apparently a kind of fortune-telling clock). Men of little faith therefore worshipped it as an idol" (SC, 182). "Probably it is true . . . that the main purpose for the mention of the images is to disparage Laban for the superstitious value he put on them, and by contrast to indicate that Jacob was superior to such things. In that case, Rachel's sitting upon them would be only another stroke in the picture of the idols' degradation. But there is another road on which imagination travels. Suppose that Rachel sat upon the images not to make her father's search for them ridiculous, but because she craved to keep them for herself. Then that might be taken as evidence simply of pathetic superstition on her part; but it is possible to see in it something more than that. Suppose that on her way to an unfamiliar country and to a strange new relationship, Rachel wanted to carry with her what had been significant at home. That can be a wholesome human instinct. None of us is isolated and self-sufficient. The meaning of life is bound up with the complex of associations of the family or the group. If these are altogether left behind, the human being will be lonely and lost" (IBG, 713).

Lange: "Literally, Teraphim, Penates, small figures, probably resembling the human form, which were honored as guardians of the household property, and as oracles. But as we must distinguish the symbolic adoration of religious images (statuettes) among ancients, from the true and proper mythological worship, so we must distinguish between a gentler and severe censure of the use of such images upon Shemitic ground. Doubtless the symbolic

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usage prevailed in the house of Laban and Nahor. It is hardly probable that Rachel intended, by a pious and fanatical theft, to free her father from idolatry (Gregory Nazianzen, Basil), for then she would have thrown the images away. She appears to have stolen them with the superstitious idea that she would prevent her father from consulting them as oracles, and under their guidance, as the pursuer of Jacob, from overtaking him and destroying him (Ibn Ezra). The supposition of a condition of war, with its necessity and strategy, enters here with apologetic force. This, however, does not exclude the idea, that she attributed to the images a certain magical, though not religious, power (perhaps, as oracles. Chrysostom). The very lowest and most degrading supposition, is that she took the images, often overlaid with silver, or precious metals, from mercenary motives (Peirerius). Jacob himself had at first a lax rather than a strict conscience in regard to these images (see ch. 35:2), but the stricter view prevails since the time of Moses (Exo. 20, Josh. 24:2, 14f.) The derivation of the Hebrew word *teraphim*, always used in the plural, is doubtful. Some derive it from *taraph*, to rejoice—thus dispensers of good; others, from a like root, to inquire—thus they are oracles; and others, like Kurtz and Hofmann, make it another form of *Seraphim*. They were regarded and used as oracles (Judg. 17:5-6, Ezek. 21:21, Zech. 10:2). They were not idols in the worst sense of the word, and were sometimes used by those who professed the worship of the true god (1 Sam. 19:13). The tendency was always hurtful, and they were ultimately rooted out from Israel. Laban had lapsed into a more corrupt form of religion, and his daughters had not escaped the infection. We may modify our views of Rachel's sin, but it cannot be excused or justified" (CDHCG, 542). With the last statement in the foregoing we must agree. However, Rachel's theft of Laban's teraphim (which undoubtedly were figurines or

images in human form) is much better understood today, in the light of the documents from Nuzi, not far from modern Kirkuk, excavated 1925-1934. "In Hebrew *teraphim*, small domestic idols; possession of these could constitute a claim to inheritance" (JB, 51, n.). "The teraphim, which Rachel successfully hid while Laban searched all of Jacob's possessions, may have had more legal than religious significance for Laban. According to Nuzu law, a son-in-law who possessed the household idols might claim the family inheritance in court. Thus Rachel was trying to obtain some advantage for her husband by stealing the idols. But Laban nullified any such benefit by a covenant with Jacob before they separated" (Schultz, OTS, 36). "Then Rachel did an extraordinary thing without Jacob's knowledge. She stole the 'teraphim,' Laban's family gods, or household idols. The custom was that Laban's true son would share inheritance, and receive the teraphim, symbol of his rights. Only if there were no son would Jacob possess them. Rachel's act was therefore designed to secure an advantage for her husband and children. It is not likely in this case that the teraphim conveyed ownership of valuable property as Rachel was leaving the territory of her father. They may have betokened clan-leadership in the 'land of the people of the east,' or spiritual power, so that possessing them was of paramount importance" (Cornfeld, AtD, 87). V. 19—"Rachel stole the teraphim." "Appropriated, also v. 32. Heb. stem *gnb*, which usually means 'to steal.' But it also has other shadings in idiomatic usage. Thus the very next clause employs the same verb, no doubt deliberately and with telling effect, in the phrase 'lulling the mind,' i.e., stealing the heart; the phrase is repeated in 26; in 27, with Laban speaking, the verb is used by itself in the sense of 'to dupe.' Finally, in v. 29, the passive participle occurs (twice) to designate animals snatched by wild beasts. The range of *gnb* is thus much broader, in Heb. in general, and in the present

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narrative in particular, than our 'to steal' would indicate. A reasonably precise translation is especially important in this instance. The issue is bound up with the purpose of Rachel's act. If it was inspired by no more than a whim, or resentment, or greed, then Rachel stole the images. But if she meant thereby to undo what she regarded as a wrong, and thus took the law, as she saw it, into her own hands, the translation 'stole' would be not only inadequate but misleading. On the other hand, when Laban refers to the same act further down (v. 30), he clearly meant 'steal'" (Speiser, ABG, 245).

Whitelaw summarizes fully, as follows: "The teraphim, from an unused root, *taraph*, signifying to live comfortably, like the Sanscrit *trip*, Greek *trephein*, Arabic *tarafa* (Gesenius, Furst) appear to have been small human figures (cf. 31:34), though the image in 1 Sam. 19:13 must have been nearly life-sized, or a full-sized bust, sometimes made of silver (Judges 17:4), though commonly constructed of wood (1 Sam. 19:13-16); they were worshipped as gods (*eidola*, LXX; *idola*, Vulgate, cf. ch. 31:30), consulted for oracles (Ezek. 21:21, Zech. 10:2), and believed to be the custodians and promoters of human happiness (Judg. 18:24). Probably derived from the Arameans (Furst, Kurtz), or the Chaldeans (Ezek. 21:21, Kalisch, Wordsworth), the worship of teraphim was subsequently denounced as idolatrous (1 Sam. 15:23, 2 Ki. 13:24). (Compare Rachel's act with that ascribed to Aeneas, in Virgil, *Aeneid*, III, 148-150). Rachel's motive for abstracting her father's teraphim has been variously attributed to a desire to prevent her father from discovering, by inquiring at his gods, the direction of their flight (Aben Ezra, Rosenmuller), to protect herself, in case of being overtaken, by an appeal to her father's gods (Josephus), to draw her father from the practice of idolatry (Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Theodoret), to obtain children for herself through their assistance (Lengerke,

Gerlach), to preserve a memorial of her ancestors, whose pictures these teraphim were (Lightfoot); but was probably due to avarice, if the images were made of precious metals (Peirerius), or to a taint of superstition which still adhered to her otherwise religious nature (Chrysostom, Calvin), causing her to look to these idols for protection (Kalisch, Murphy) or consultation (Wordsworth) on her journey" (PCG, 376).

We have presented these various theories as to the nature of the teraphim and Rachel's motives in stealing them to show how great is the scope of speculation on these subjects. We terminate this study with what we consider to be the sanest and most thoroughgoing presentation of it, as follows: "The teraphim were figurines or images in human form. Rachel's theft of Laban's teraphim (Gen. 31:34) is much better understood in the light of the documents from Nuzu, not far from modern Kirkuk, excavated 1925-1934. The possession of these household gods apparently implied leadership of the family and, in the case of a married daughter, assured her husband the right to the property of her father. Since Laban evidently had sons of his own when Jacob left for Canaan, they alone had the right to their father's gods, and the theft of these household idols by Rachel was a serious offense (Gen. 31:19, 31, 35) aimed at preserving for her husband the first title to her father's estate. Albright construes the teraphim as meaning 'vile things,' but the images were not necessarily cultic or lewd, as frequently the depictions of Astarte were. Micah's teraphim (Judg. 17:15) were used for purposes of securing an oracle (cf. 1 Sam. 15:23, Hos. 3:4; Zech. 10:2). Babylonian kings oracularly consulted the teraphim (Ezek. 21:21). Josiah abolished the teraphim (2 Ki. 23:24), but these images had a strange hold on the Hebrew people even until after the Exilic Period" (Unger, UBD, 1085). The present writer finds it difficult to disassociate these objects from

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some aspect of the Cult of Fertility—the worship of the Earth-mother and the Sun-father—which was so widespread throughout the ancient pagan world; cf. the Apostle's description, Rom. 1:18-32. Every phase of this Cult of Fertility reeked with sex perversions of every kind, including ritual prostitution and phallic worship: remains of this cult have been brought to light in recent years by the discovery of hundreds of figurines of pregnant women throughout the Mediterranean world. Crete seems to have been the center from which this cult became diffused throughout the ancient world. The Children of Israel had to battle this cult from the time of their origin as a people, and apparently were always influenced to it by some extent: cf. the moral struggle of the prophet Elijah with the wicked queen Jezebel. It is our conviction that Rachel "appropriated" these (surely more likely than *this*) teraphim with the intention of using them for whatever ends they were supposed by her paternal household to serve. That the legal aspect, as indicated by the Nuzi records, could have been a very important part of her objective seems to be both historical and reasonable. However, we cannot get away from the basic conviction that Rachel was imbued with the spirit of paganism which seems to have characterized her people generally. Even Jacob himself and his people were not immunized against this cultism (cf. Gen. 35:2-4; Josh. 24:2, 14f.; Judg. 10:16). Again quoting Lange: "Laban had lapsed into a more corrupt form of religion, and his daughters had not escaped the infection. We may modify our views of Rachel's sin, but it cannot be excused or justified."

(3) *Laban the Syrian* (v. 24), *in Hebrew, Aramean*. "The Arameans were an important branch of the Semitic race, and closely akin to the Israelites. The kingdom of Damascus or Syria, during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., the most powerful and dangerous rival of the northern kingdom of Israel, was the leading Aramean state.

The language of the Aramean tribes and states consisted of several closely related dialects. After the Exile, Aramean gradually supplanted Hebrew as the vernacular of the Jewish people. Certain portions of the Bible (Jer. 10:11, Dan. 2:4—7:28, Ezra 4:8—6:18, 7:12-26) are written in Aramaic, as are considerable portions of rabbinic literature" (Morganstern, JIBG). (Our Lord Himself spoke Galilean Aramaic, cf. Matt. 27:46). The progenitor of the Aramean peoples was Aram, the son of Shem (Gen. 10:22-23). These peoples spread widely through Syria and Mesopotamia from the Lebanon Mountains on the west to the Euphrates River on the east, and from the Taurus Range on the north to Damascus and northern Palestine on the south. Contacts of the Arameans with the Hebrews began in the patriarchal age, if not earlier (cf. Paddan-aram, "the plain of Aram," Gen. 24:10, 28:5, 31:47). The maternal ancestry of Jacob's children was Aramaic (Deut. 26:5). During the long period of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, that of the wanderings in the Sinaitic Wilderness, and the extended period of the Judges in Canaan, the Arameans were spreading in every direction, particularly southward. By the time of the reign of Saul (c. 1000 B.C.), this expansion was beginning to clash with Israelite strength and several Aramaic districts appear prominently in the Old Testament Scriptures. (See UBG, s.v. "Aram," "Aramaic"). The Greeks called Aram, "Syria"; consequently the language is called "Syriac" (Dan. 2:4). David conquered these Aramean kingdoms at his very back door and incorporated them into his kingdom, thus laying the foundation of Solomon's empire. (*Aram-Naharaim*, "Aram of the Two Rivers," was the name by which the territory around Haran was known; the region where the Arameans had settled in patriarchal times, where Abraham sojourned for a time, and from which Aramean power spread. *Aram-Damascus* was a south Syrian state which became the inveterate foe of the Northern Kingdom of Israel for

more than a century and a half (1 Ki. 11:23-25). *Aram-Zobah*, a powerful kingdom which flourished north of Hamath, was conquered by David and incorporated into his realm (2 Sam., ch. 8). *Aram-Maacah* was a principality east of the Jordan near Mount Hermon (Josh. 12:5, 13:11). *Aram-Beth-Rehob* in the general vicinity of Geshur, probably near Maacah and Dan (Num. 13:21, Judg. 18:28). *Geshur* was a small principality east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee (Deut. 3:14, 2 Sam. 15:8, 13:37). *Tob* was also a small Aramaic principality east of the Jordan, some ten miles south of Gadara, (the region from which the Ammonite king drew soldiers to war against David. A battle ensued in which the "Syrians" were routed (2 Sam. 10:8-19). Vv. 20, 24—*Laban the Aramean*: "The reason for this apposition is puzzling. It hardly grows out of the Hebrew national consciousness which here proudly asserts itself. Perhaps the opinion advanced by Clericus still deserves most consideration. He believes Laban's nationality is mentioned because the Syrians were known from of old as the trickiest people; here one of this people in a kind of just retribution meets one trickier than himself. Yet this is not written to glorify trickery" (EG, 841).

Three days after Jacob's flight, the news of it reached Laban, who was already three days removed from Jacob and his retinue at the time the latter set out on his journey homeward. Laban set out after him—"pursued after him seven days' journey" (v. 23) "and overtook him in the mountain of Gilead." Skinner contends that "the distance of Gilead from Harran (c. 350 miles as the crow flies) is much too great to be traversed in that time (ICCG, 397). Speiser writes: "'a distance of seven days.' This is meant as a general figure indicating a distance of considerable length: cf. 2 Ki. 3:9. Actually, Gilead could scarcely have been reached from Har(r)an in seven days, especially at the pace of Jacob's livestock" (ABG, 246).

Leupold suggests as follows: "Some have computed that the distance involved is about 350 miles as the crow flies. This need not necessarily be assumed. We have accurate maps that represent it to be no more than about 275 miles to the fringes of Mount Gilead. Besides, in shifting his grazing ground Jacob may have so arranged things before he took his flight in hand as to gravitate some three days' journey to the south of Haran—certainly not an impossibility. If only fifteen miles constituted an average day's journey, the total distance would be cut down to almost 200 miles. Now, certainly, Jacob will have pressed on faster than the average day's journey, perhaps at the cost of the loss of a bit of cattle. The cooler part of the day and portions of the night may have been utilized in order to spare the cattle. Then, too, the boundaries of Gilead may originally have extended nearer to Damascus. . . . K.C. (Koenig's *Commentary* on Genesis) shows that 'Gilead' is used for the country east of the Jordan in general" (EG, 843). We see no valid reason for the assumption that the distance specified was too great to fit the time period specified. The following quotes seem to make this clear.

"*'It was told Laban on the third day,' etc., i.e., the third after Jacob's departure, the distance between the two sheep-stations being a three days' journey, cf. 30:36. . . . The distance between Padan-aram and mount Gilead was a little over 300 miles, to perform which Jacob must at least have taken ten days, though Laban, who was less encumbered than his son-in-law, accomplished it in seven, which might easily be done by traveling from forty to forty-five miles a day, by no means a great feat for a camel" (PCG, 379).*

The following seems to clarify the situation beyond any reasonable doubt: "A three days' distance separated them in the first place, and another three days were required for a messenger to go and inform Laban. At the time of the messenger's arrival Jacob was six days' journey distant. Since Laban caught up with him on the next

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day, he covered in one day what took Jacob seven days (Rashi). Sh (Rashbam) points out that this was natural since Jacob would be traveling slowly on account of the flocks" (SC, 182). Murphy suggests the following explanation: "On the third day after the arrival of the messenger, Laban might return to the spot whence Jacob had taken his flight. In this case, Jacob would have at least five days of a start; which, added to the seven days of pursuit, would give him twelve days to travel three hundred English miles. To those accustomed to the pastoral life this was a possible achievement" (MG, 406). Lange writes: "As Jacob, with his herds, moved slower than Laban, he lost his start of three days in the course of seven days" (CDHCG, 542). At any rate, no sooner did the information reach Laban that Jacob had fled than he set out in pursuit, and, being unencumbered, he advanced rapidly; whereas Jacob, with a young family and numerous flocks, had to move rather slowly, so that Laban overtook the fugitives after seven days' journey, as they lay encamped on brow of mount Gilead, an extensive range of mountains that formed the eastern boundary of Canaan. The mountains constituting the northern portion of the land of Gilead, which lay between the Yarmuk on the north and the Arnon on the south, was divided at about one-third of the distance by the deep valley of the Jabbok, "which cleaves the mountains to their base." This territory, in its whole length, is often spoken of as the land of Gilead, but rarely as Mount Gilead. The portions north and south of the Jabbok are each spoken of as "half Gilead" (Josh. 12:2, 5; 13:31; Deut. 3:12). Evidently it was in this "mount Gilead" that Laban overtook Jacob.

(4) *The Altercation*, (vv. 26-42). Laban evidently reached the "mount of Gilead" toward the end of the seventh day, and seeing Jacob's tents not too far away, he lodged over night where he had halted. It was during the night that Laban had the dream, v. 29. Evidently the

idea suggested is that Jacob and Laban were encamped, each on a different foothill. "In the case of Laban the specific statement that it was 'Mount Gilead' where the tents were pitched makes it entirely plain that both had pitched on the same mountain though over against one another. The critical correction, which tries to put Jacob on Mount Mizpah, grows out of the desire to prove that two threads of narrative intertwine. Critics are continually, though often unwittingly, 'doctoring up' the evidence" (EG, 844). When the two men came face to face the next morning, Laban, blustering and simulating righteous indignation, demands to know way Jacob has so deceived him, trying to present the latter's action in the most unfavorable light. "Laban is as much aware of the extent of his exaggeration as are all others who hear him. At the same time he himself knows best why Jacob fled secretly and without announcement" (EG, 845). Laban claims that he could do Jacob "hurt," when he knows he has no intention of doing so after having received a direct warning from God against that very thing. He is merely boasting. "Being accompanied by a number of his people, Laban might have used violence, had he not been Divinely warned in a dream to give no interruption to his nephew's journey. *Josephus* says that he reached the neighborhood of mount Gilead 'at eventide.' And having resolved not to disturb Jacob's encampment till the morning, it was during the intervening night that he had the warning dream, in which God told him, that if he (Laban) despised their small number, and attacked them in a hostile manner, He would Himself assist them (*Antiquities*, I, 19, 10). How striking and sudden a change! For several days he had been full of rage, and was now in eager anticipation that his vengeance would be fully wreaked, when lo! his hands are tied by invisible power (Psa. 76:10). He dared not touch Jacob, but there was a war of words" (CECG, 210). God's warning had been explicit: *he was*

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to speak to Jacob neither good or bad, that is, "nothing at all" (JB), "not pass from peaceful greetings to acrimonious" (Lange), "not say anything acrimonious or violent against Jacob" (Murphy). Or, perhaps the expression was simply a proverbial phrase for opposition or interference of any kind (Kalisch). At any rate, Laban plays the role of an outraged parent and grandparent. Smooth hypocrite that he is, he "offers a sentimental pretext for his warlike demonstration, that is, his slighted affection for his offspring and his desire to honor a parting guest" (Skinner). Incidentally, this manner of speeding a parting guest (*i.e.*, with mirth, songs, tabret, and harp) is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament; in New Testament terms it would be designated "revelings" (Gal. 5:21). Laban's recriminations are threefold: the secret flight, the carrying off of his daughters, and the theft of his gods. Obviously, the last-named charge was a very serious matter to Laban; hence it led to the chief scene of the altercation. We cannot avoid the impression that he was far more concerned about his "gods" than about the welfare of his daughters. "The meaning is this: even if thy secret departure can be explained, the stealing of my gods cannot." To Laban's hypocritical approach, Jacob replied with bluntness, specifying the hardships of his twenty years' service and the attempts to defraud him of his hire. Knowing nothing of Rachel's theft of the teraphim, Jacob proved to be so sure of the innocence of his household that he offered to give up the culprit to death if the theft could be proved. (As we have noted heretofore, for Laban these "gods" had more *legal* than religious import: according to Nuzi law, a son-in-law who possessed the household idols might claim the family inheritance in court. Laban intended to have nothing of that kind to happen.) Jacob admitted bluntly that he had resorted to flight because he feared that his father-in-law would take the daughters away from him by force. Whereupon,

Laban, with Jacob's permission, proceeded to search the tents of his son-in-law, his two daughters, and the two maid-servants. He searched Rachel's tent last. Rachel, too, resorted to a stratagem: she had taken the teraphim and concealed them in the camel's litter (pack-saddle), on which she apparently was resting within her tent. When her father entered, she apologized for not rising, pleading "the manner of women" that was upon her, which made her ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:19-23). Of course Laban's search was all in vain. "Since Jacob's cause was just and since he had just been charged with theft, Jacob feels the necessity of answering the last question or charge: He is so sure that no one would have been guilty of such a deed that he boldly asserts that the thief shall die, should he be found. Such a punishment for such a crime may have been suggested by the prevalent attitude of the times reflected in the Code of Hammurabi—a few centuries old by this time—that they who stole the property of a god (or temple) should die. Yet, though in himself entirely certain of his ground, Jacob ought never to have made such an assertion. Seemingly Jacob feels this, for as he invites the search, he merely asks Laban to take whatever he thinks Jacob or his retinue have taken wrongfully; he does not again threaten the death of the idol thief. That nothing be covered up Jacob asks that the search be made 'in the presence of our kinsmen.' Finally the necessary explanation that Jacob had never for a moment thought Rachel capable of such a deed" (EG, 848). Laban then proceeded to search Jacob's tent, and Leah's, and the tent of the two maid-servants, but he did not find the teraphim. Again: "The two maid-servants are inserted parenthetically for completeness' sake. Separate tents for the husband and the wives and the handmaidens apparently were the rule in those days. Disregarding the parenthesis, the writer goes on, working up to the climax of the search: he (Laban) came out of Leah's tent and entered

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into Rachel's. Rachel is a match for her father in craftiness. She has taken the teraphim and put them into the 'camel's litter,' a capacious saddle with wicker basket attachments on either side. Some describe it as a palanquin. Apparently it was so constructed that even when it was removed from the camel it offered a convenient seat for travelers. Laban feels over everything in the tent. The litter is all that remains. Had Rachel raised her protestation or excuse before this time she would have aroused suspicion. By waiting to the last critical moment she diverts attention from the fact that she might be sitting upon the teraphim. For who would care to trouble a menstruating woman suffering pain? Because, it may have actually been true what she was asserting. Nothing appears here of the taboo that some tribes and races associated with women in this condition, taboos which temporarily rendered such women untouchable. So Jacob appeared satisfied, for a painstaking search revealed no theft. We may well wonder what he would have done if Rachel's theft had come to light" (EG, 848). Jamieson disagrees to some extent: "Tents are of two descriptions—the family tent and the single tent. With the patriarchs the latter seem to have been the kind used (see 18:9, 10), especially in traveling, as recommended by its convenience, and formed in the manner described in the passage just referred to. The patriarch had the principal tent, and each of his wives, even the married handmaids and concubines, had their separate tents also. A personal scrutiny was made by Laban, who examined every tent; and having entered Rachel's last, would have infallibly discovered the stolen images, had not Rachel made an appeal to him which prevented further search. . . . She availed herself of a notion which seems to have obtained in patriarchal times, and which was afterwards enacted in the Mosaic Code as a law, that a woman in the alleged circumstances was unclean, and communicated a taint to everything with

which she came into contact. It was a mere pretext, however, on the part of Rachel, to avoid the further researches of her father" (CECG, 211). "The fact that Laban passed over Rachel's seat because of her pretended condition, does not presuppose the Levitical law in Lev. 15:9ff., according to which, any one who touched the couch or seat of such a woman was rendered unclean. For, in the first place, the view which lies at the foundation of this law was much older than the laws of Moses, and is met with among many other nations; consequently Laban might refrain from making further examinations, less from fear of defilement, than because he regarded it as impossible that any one with the custom of women upon her should sit upon his gods" (BCOTP, 298). To Jacob, undoubtedly, this minute search of Rachel's tent was the crowning indignity. (It should be noted, in passing that Rachel, by "covering her theft by subtlety and untruth," v. 35, proved herself a true daughter of Laban, and "showed with how much imperfection her religious character was tainted." "*I cannot rise up before thee*"; although Oriental politeness required children to rise up in the presence of their parents (cf. Lev. 19:32, 1 Ki. 2:19), in this case the apology was unnecessary: the plea of "the manner of women" (Gen. 18:11) made her ceremonially unclean, and indeed separate (or untouchable, Lev. 15:19). Some hold that this was a mere pretext on Rachel's part to prevent further searching by her father: she was indeed "a match for her father in craftiness.")

Jacob's pent-up emotions for years now break forth boldly and bluntly with mounting wrath. He challenges Laban to set forth before all their kinsmen whatsoever of his own he may have found in the course of his search. The kinsmen could serve as arbiters to render a fair public verdict in the presence of representatives of both parties to the altercation. "This challenge must have embarrassed even thick-skinned old Laban." "Although he [Jacob]

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had given Laban permission to make the search, it was because he thought that one of the servants might have stolen the teraphim. Now that they were not found, he suspected that the story of the theft was merely a pretext to enable him to make a general search" (SC, 184). Jacob pours out his own recriminations: (1) the hardships of his twenty years' service, and (2) the attempts to defraud him of his hire. All the submerged suffering and frustration for twenty years now comes to the surface. First of all he was deceived about Leah and Rachel. He had not been in the home of his uncle Laban a month before he was put to work (29:15). His industriousness had been unfaltering. His wages had been changed ten times, and we may be sure they were not raised each time. "Jacob's twenty years with Laban had taught him that God's man cannot live by cleverness." "The children of this world are . . . wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). Note especially vv. 38, 39: A custom of the East provided that as long as the shepherd could lay before the owner the torn beast, that was accounted sufficient evidence that the shepherd had driven off the predatory animal. But Jacob was accorded no such consideration: he was held accountable. The particular law in the Code of Hammurabi (par. 266) reads: "If there occurs in the fold an act of god, or a lion takes a life, the shepherd shall clear himself before the deity; the owner of the fold must then accept the loss incurred." Thus Laban is accused of disregarding the explicit legal provisions for such contingencies: cf. Exo. 22:13 (ABG, 247). "That which was torn of wild beasts through my neglect I made good of my own accord; but even where I could not be held responsible, you still demanded restitution" (SC, 185). V. 40—It is well known that in the East the cold by night corresponds to the heat by day: the hotter the day, the colder the night, as a rule. V. 42: "By the warning given to Laban, God pronounced sentence

upon the matter between Jacob and Laban, condemning the course which Laban had pursued, and still intended to pursue, towards Jacob; but not on that account sanctioning all that Jacob had done to increase his own possessions; still less confirming Jacob's assertion that the vision mentioned by Jacob (vers. 11, 12) was a revelation from God. But as Jacob had only met cunning with cunning, deceit with deceit, Laban had no right to punish him for what he had done. Some excuse may be found for Jacob's conduct in the heartless treatment he received from Laban; but the fact that God defended him from Laban's revenge did not prove it to be right. He had not acted upon the rule laid down in Prov. 20:22: cf. Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:15" (BCOTP, 299). *The Fear of Isaac:* that is, "the deity feared and worshiped by Isaac" (Skinner); "the Awesome One of Isaac" (Speiser; cf. 28:17); "the God of Isaac: Jacob avoided this latter designation because Isaac was still alive, although God had referred to Himself by that name (see 28:13)," as Jacob intended to say, "the merit of Isaac's fear of the Lord had stood me in good stead, and He has protected me as a reward" (SC, 185). "The God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Dread of Isaac, proved to be mine" (Rotherham, EB, 63); "a term used for Israel's God, object of Isaac's reverence" (HSB, 52); "the God whom Isaac fears" (Murphy, MG, 406). "*If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Kinsman of Isaac,* etc.: a name for God that appears only here and in v. 53; Arabic and Palmyrene Aramaic justify this translation; hitherto the phrase has been rendered 'the fear of Isaac'" (JB, 53, n.)

(5) *Laban's response* (vv. 43, 44) has been variously interpreted, that is, as to motivation. "These words of Jacob's 'cut Laban to the heart with their truth, so that he turned round, offered his hand, and proposed a covenant'" (K-D, 299). "Neither receiving Jacob's torrent of invective with affected meekness, nor proving himself to

be completely reformed by the angry recriminations of his 'callous and hardened' son-in-law (Kalisch); but perhaps simply owning the truth of Jacob's words, and recognizing that he had no just ground of complaint (Calvin), as well as touched in his paternal affections by the sight of his daughters, from whom he felt he was about to part for ever . . . not as reminding Jacob that he had still a legal claim to his (Jacob's) wives and possessions, or at least possessions, though prepared to waive it, but rather as acknowledging that in doing injury to Jacob he would only be proceeding against his own flesh and blood" (Whitelaw, PCG, 384). "Laban maintains his right, but speedily adopts a more pathetic tone, leading to the pacific proposal of v. 44, *what last kindness can I do them [his daughters]*" (Skinner, ICCG, 399). "These two relatives, after having given utterance to their pent-up feelings, came at length to a mutual understanding. Laban was so cut by the severe and well-founded reproaches of Jacob, that he saw the necessity of an immediate surrender, or, rather, God influenced him to make reconciliation with his injured nephew, Prov. 16:7" (Jamieson, CECG, 212). Leupold has a different view: "Laban skillfully avoids the issue, which centers on the question whether Jacob has ever treated him unfairly, and substitutes another, namely, whether there is any likelihood of his avenging himself on Jacob and his family. In a rather grandiose fashion he claims all that Jacob has—household and cattle—is his own. The only use he makes of this strong claim is that, naturally, these being his own family, he would not harm them. It hardly seems that he has been 'cut to the quick' by the justice of Jacob's defense. He is merely bluffing through a contention in which he is being worsted. But being a suspicious character, he fears that Jacob might eventually do what he apparently would have done under like circumstances, namely, after arriving home and having grown strong, he may come with an armed band to avenge

all the wrongs of the past. To forestall this he suggests a 'covenant.' This covenant might serve to deter Jacob, of whose justice and fairness he is convinced, and who, Laban trusts, will keep a covenant inviolate" (EG, 852).

Again, however, we turn to the Nuzi records for what seems to be the most important aspect of this whole case, namely, the part played by the teraphim and the theft thereof. "The author handles the entire episode with outstanding skill. When he speaks of the figurines on his own (19, 34f.), he uses the secular, and sometimes irreverent term (*teraphim*, perhaps 'inert things'); but Laban refers to them as 'my gods' (v. 30). The search is suspensefully depicted, as Laban combs through one tent after another until he gets to the tent of Rachel, where they have been hidden. Rachel's pretense of female incapacitation is a literary gem in itself. The crowning touch of drama and irony is Jacob's total unawareness of the truth—the grim danger implicit in his innocent assurance that the guilty party would be put to death. But the basic significance of the incident now transcends all such considerations of human interest or literary presentation. It derives from underlying social practices as they bear on the nature of the patriarchal narratives in general. According to the Nuzi documents, which have been found to reflect time and again the social customs of Haran, possession of the house gods could signify legal title to a given estate, particularly in cases out of the ordinary, involving daughters, sons-in-law, or adopted sons. This peculiar practice of Rachel's homeland supplies at last the motive, sought so long but in vain, for her seemingly incomprehensible conduct. Rachel was in a position to know, or at least to suspect, that in conformance with local law her husband was entitled to a specified share in Laban's estate. But she also had ample reason to doubt that her father would voluntarily transfer the images as formal proof of property release; the ultimate status of

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Laban's daughters and their maidservants could well have been involved as well. In other words, tradition remembered Rachel as a resolute woman who did not shrink from taking the law—or what she believed to be the law—into her own hands. The above technical detail would help to explain why Laban was more concerned about the disappearance of the images than about anything else (vs. 30). For under Hurrian law, Jacob's status in Laban's household would normally be tantamount to self-enslavement. That position, however, would be altered if Jacob was recognized as an adopted son who married the master's daughter. Possession of the house gods might well have made the difference. Laban knew that he did not have them, but chose to act as though he did, at least to save face. Thus his seeming magnanimity in the end (43f.) would no longer be out of character. He keeps up the pretense that he is the legal owner of everything in Jacob's possession; yet he must have been aware that, with the images gone, he could not press such a claim in a court of law" (Speiser, ABG, 250-251).

(6) *The Treaty* (vv. 45-55). "Two traditions appear to have been combined here: 1. A formal pact regulating the frontier between Laban and Jacob *i.e.*, between Aram and Israel, v. 52, together with an explanation of the name Gilead (Galed). 2. A private agreement concerning Laban's daughters, wives of Jacob, v. 50, together with an explanation of the name Mizpah, 'watch-post,' where a stele is erected. On the other hand it is possible that we have not here two traditions but simply explanations of the traditional composite name Mizpah of Gilead, 'watch-post of Gilead'; the place is known from Judg. 11:29 and lies south of the Jabbok in Transjordania" (JB, 53 n.). Laban proposed that they *cut* a covenant and let it be for a witness between them (v. 44). Jacob assented to the proposal at once, and the two proceeded to ratify the covenant. (7) *The Cairn of Witness*. "The way in which

this covenant was ratified was by a heap of stones being laid in a circular pile, to serve as seats, and in the center of this circle a large one was set up perpendicularly for an altar. It is probable that a sacrifice was first offered, and then that the feast of reconciliation was partaken of by both parties, seated on the stones around it (cf. v. 54). To this day heaps of stones, which have been used as memorials, are found abundantly in the region where this transaction took place" (CECG, 212). Jacob proceeded at once to furnish a practical proof of his assent to his father-in-law's proposal, by erecting a stone as a memorial and calling on his relatives also ('his brethren,' as in v. 23, by whom Laban and the kinsmen who came with him are indicated, as v. 54 shows) to gather stones into a heap, thus forming a table, as is briefly related in v. 46b, for the covenant meal (v. 54). This stone-heap (cairn) was called *Jegar-Sabadutha* by Laban, and *Galeed* by Jacob (v. 47). "*Jegar-sabadutha* is the exact Aramaic equivalent of *Galeed*, 'cairn of witness'" (JB, 53, n.): this incident, of course gave occasion to the name *Gilead*, the name applied to the mountainous region eastward of Argob (see Josephus, *Antiquities*, I, 19, 11). (It should be understood that the setting up of the stone-pillar by Jacob as a witness of the covenant about to be formed (v. 52) was a different transaction from the piling up of the stone-heap next referred to: cf. 28:18, Josh. 24:26-27). "Very strangely the critics, who are intent upon proving that two documents giving two recensions of the event are woven together, here hit upon the pillar or monolith, and the heap or cairn, and claim these two as one of the things that prove their point. Instead of pointing to a double recension or to two authors this merely points to the fact that Jacob was willing to go the limit to keep peace and harmony, as he had always been doing. The critics' argument is a *non sequitur*. All the rest of their so-called proof is of the same sort and

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too flimsy to refute. V. 47. Here Moses inserts a notice to the effect that Laban and Jacob each gave a name to the cairn, and each man in his native tongue, that of Laban being Aramaic and that of Jacob Hebrew. Nothing indicates that this was a later insertion. Why might not Moses consider it a matter worthy of record that in Mesopotamia Aramaic prevailed, whereas in Canaan Hebrew, perhaps the ancient Canaanite language, was spoken? The exactness of his observation is established by this definite bit of historical information. The two names are not absolutely identical, as is usually claimed, though the difference is slight. *Jegar-sahadhutha* means 'heap of testimony,' *gal'ed* means 'heap of witness' or 'witnessing heap.' For 'testimony' is an abstract noun, 'witness' is a personal noun or name of a person. We observe, therefore, that at the beginning of their history the nation Israel came of a stock that spoke Aramaic but abandoned the Aramaic for the Hebrew. After the Captivity the nation, strange to say, veered from Hebrew back to Aramaic" (EG, 853, 854).

(8) *The Purport of the Covenant*, vv. 50-52, was twofold: (1) Jacob swears that he will not maltreat Laban's daughters, nor even marry other wives besides these (*i.e.*, Leah and Rachel). "The stipulation against taking other wives is basic to many cuneiform marriage documents" (ABG, 248). Leupold thinks that "both these cases mentioned by Laban are in themselves harsh and unjust slanders." "Jacob had never given the least indication of being inclined to treat his wives harshly. Gentleness and goodness are characteristic of Jacob. Besides, as the account reads, Jacob had more wives already than he had ever desired. He apparently recognized the evils of bigamy sufficiently in his own home" (EG, 856). (2) Neither of the two was to pass the stone-heap and memorial-stone with a hostile intention towards the other. ("But they may pass over it for purposes of trade" (SC,

187). Note v. 52—The heap was Jacob's idea, now Laban appropriates what Jacob had proposed as if the entire transaction had been his very own. Moreover, Laban bound himself never to pass over the heap which he had erected as his witness, whereas Jacob was required to swear that he would never cross *the pillar and the pile*, both of which were witnesses on his part. (*Laban was undoubtedly even yet a very suspicious person*). “*That I will not pass over*. Here this covenant thought is purely negative, growing out of a suspicious nature, and securing a safeguard against mutual injuries; properly a theocratic separation” (Lange, 544). This treaty seems to have had even more extensive significance, however: as Morgenstern writes: “*Mizpah*, a secondary name for this heap of stones, meaning ‘watchpost,’ ‘place of lookout.’ Actually the district was called Gilead, while Mizpah (Mizpeh) was probably the name of the particular spot where the covenant was thought to have been made. It probably lay close to the boundary line between Syria and Gilead. It was the site of the covenant between Laban the Aramean and Jacob the Israelite by which the boundary line between the two peoples was fixed. Note the compact entered into between Syria and Israel, probably in Ahab’s time; the hegemony of Israel in the affairs of the several little states of Western Asia seems to have been nominally acknowledged by Syria, 1 Ki., ch. 20” (JIBG, *in loco*). Concerning the location of the site of Gilead and Mizpah, it seems evident that we are not to understand this to be the mountain range to the south of the Jabbok, the present *Jebel Jelaad*, or *Jebel es Salt*. “The name *Gilead* has a much more comprehensive signification in the Old Testament; and the mountains to the south of the Jabbok are called in Deut. 3:12 the half of Mount Gilead; the mountains to the north of the Jabbok, the *Jebel-Ajlun*, forming the other half. In this chapter the name is used in the broader sense, and refers primarily to the northern half of the mountains

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(above the Jabbok); for Jacob did not cross the Jabbok till afterwards, 32:23-24" (K-D, 300). It is held by some that the words, "*and Mizpah, for he said,*" etc., are a later explanatory interpolation. "But there is not sufficient ground even for this, since Galeed and Mizpah are here identical in fact, both referring to the stone heap as well as to the pillar. Laban prays specifically to Jehovah, to watch that Jacob should not afflict his daughters; especially that he should not deprive them of their acquired rights, of being the ancestress of Jehovah's covenant people. From this hour, according to the prayer, Jehovah looks down from the heights of Gilead, as the representative of his rights, and watches that Jacob should keep his word to his daughters, even when across the Jordan. But now, as the name Gilead has its origin in some old sacred tradition, so has the name Mizpah also. It is not to be identified with the later cities bearing that name, with the Mizpah of Jephthah (Judg. 11:11, 34), or the Mizpah of Gilead (Judg. 11:29), or Ramoth-Mizpah (Josh. 13:26), but must be viewed as the family name which has spread itself through many daughters all over Canaan" (Lange, CDHCG, 544). (Note disagreement with K-D quoted above). "Laban, forewarned by God not to injure Jacob, made a covenant with his son-in-law; and a heap of stones was erected as a boundary between them, and called Galeed (*the heap of witness*) and Mizpah (*watch-tower*). As in later times, the fortress on these heights of Gilead became the frontier post of Israel against the Aramaic tribe that occupied Damascus, so now the same line of heights became the frontier between the nation in its youth and the older Aramaic tribe of Mesopotamia. As now, the confines of two Arab tribes are marked by the rude cairn or pile of stones erected at the boundary of their respective territories, so the pile of stones and the tower or pillar, erected by the two tribes of Jacob and Laban, marked that the natural limit of the range of

Gilead should be their natural limit also" (OTH, 102). (Cf. the various Mizpahs, or Mizpehs, mentioned in the O.T., e.g., Josh. 11:3, 15:38; Judg. 10:17, 20:1; 1 Sam. 22:3: it seems that the name might have been given to any high point.) Skinner's treatment of the Gilead geographical problem is based on the presupposition that the account embodies "*ethnographic reminiscences*" in which Jacob and Laban were not private individuals, but represented Hebrews and Arameans respectively." He goes on to say: "The theory mostly favored by critical historians is that the Arameans are those of Damascus, and that the situation reflected is that of the Syrian wars which raged from c. 860 to c 770 B.C. Gunkel has, however, pointed out objections to this assumption; and has given strong reasons for believing that the narratives refer to an earlier date than 860. The story reads more like the record of a loose understanding between neighboring and on the whole friendly tribes, than of a formal treaty between two highly organized states like Israel and Damascus; and it exhibits no trace of the intense national animosity which was generated during the Syrian wars. In this connexion, Meyer's hypothesis that in the original tradition Laban represented the early unsettled nomads of the eastern desert acquires a new interest. Considering the tenacity with which such legends cling to a locality, there is no difficulty in supposing that in this case the tradition goes back to some prehistoric settlement of territorial claims between Hebrews and migratory Arameans" (ICCG, 403, 404). It should be noted here that the critical tendency so prevalent soon after the turn of the present century to interpret the outstanding personal names occurring in the patriarchal narratives as *tribal* rather than individual names has been all but abandoned in recent years. On the whole, this supposition (largely *a priori* on the part of the critics) has been pretty thoroughly "exploded" by archaeological discoveries. There is no longer any doubt

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that the patriarchs were real historical personages. (The student who wishes to delve into the irreconcilable analysis of the early twentieth-century critics should make a study of the classic work on this subject, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, by William Henry Green, onetime Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary. This book, first published in 1895, is now out of print, of course. Hence it goes unnoticed and even unknown, either through ignorance or by design, in present-day theological seminaries. It may be procured, however, from secondhand book stores, or rescued from out-of-the-way places on the dusty shelves of these same seminary libraries.) We now close this phase of our subject with the following quotation from Leupold: "We have nothing certain as to the location of the heap called 'Galed' or 'Mizpah' in Mount Gilead. 'Mizpah' itself is a rather general term: there were many points of eminence in the land which could serve as 'watch-stations.' We personally do not believe that the Mizpah located in Jebel Ajlun is far enough to the north. We can only be sure of this, that according to chapter 32 it must have lain to the north of the River Jabbok" (EG, 859).

(9) *The Mizpah Benediction*, v. 49. "Mizpah (Mizpeh), 'watchtower,' . . . an unknown site in the N. highlands of the Jordan overlooking the Jabbok, where Jacob and Laban witnessed their covenant by erecting a cairn and pronouncing words now known as 'the Mizpah benediction,' Gen. 31:45-52" (HBD, 450). J. Vernon McGee (*Going Through Genesis*, 42) has an interesting comment on this point, as follows: "Verse 49 has been made into a benediction which many church groups use habitually. This is unfortunate for it does not have that sort of derivation. It actually is a truce between two crooks that each will no longer try to get the better of the other. The pile of stones at Mizpah was a boundary line between Laban and Jacob. Each promised not to cross over on the other's

side. In other words Jacob would work one side of the street and Laban would take the other. Each had but little confidence in the other. Surely the Mizpah benediction has been misplaced and misapplied." Certainly these statements deserve serious consideration.

(10) *The Covenant Oath*, v. 53. "Although Laban proposed to swear by *the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor*, the latter might include idols, so Jacob swore by *the Fear of his father Isaac*, viz., the true God" (SC, 187). On v. 49, "God is called as a witness so that if either Jacob or Laban breaks the agreement the LORD will enforce the covenant" (HSB, 53). V. 50—"no man is with us"—i.e., "no one but God only can be judge and witness between us, since we are to be so widely separated" (Lange, 544). Of the terms of the covenant "the memorial was to serve as a witness, and the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father (Terah), would be umpire between them. To this covenant, in which Laban, according to his polytheistic views, placed the God of Abraham upon the same level with the God of Nahor and Terah, Jacob swore by 'the Fear of Isaac' (v. 42), the God who was worshipped by his father with sacred awe" (K-D, 300). The verb *judge*, v. 53, is plural," either because Laban regarded the Elohim of Nahor as different from the Elohim of Abraham, or because, though acknowledging only one Elohim, he viewed him as maintaining several and distinct relations to the persons named. Laban here invokes his own hereditary Elohim, the Elohim of Abraham's father, to guard his rights and interests under the newly-formed covenant; while Jacob in his adjuration appeals to the Elohim of Abraham's son" (PCG, 387). "In conclusion Laban offers his most solemn adjuration, stronger than v. 50b; for God is called upon not only to 'witness' but to 'judge.' Besides, he is called by the solemn title, 'God of Abraham.' In fact, another god is invoked, 'the god of Nahor.' If v. 29 and v. 42 are

compared, it seems most likely that two different deities are under consideration: the true God, and Nahor's, that is also Laban's idol. The plural of the verb 'judge' therefore points to two different gods. So the polytheist Laban speaks. The more gods to help bind the pact, the better it is sealed, thinks Laban. Without directly correcting Laban or his statement of the case, Jacob swears by the true God under the same as that used in v. 42, the Fear (*i.e.*, the object of fear, or reverence) of his father Isaac. Had the renegade Laban perhaps meant to identify his own god with the true God of Abraham? And is Jacob's statement of His name an attempt to ward off such an identification? This is not impossible" (Leupold, EG, 857, 858). Skinner writes: "Whether a polytheistic differentiation of the two gods is attributed to Laban can hardly be determined." V. 52—"this heap be witness." "Objects of nature were frequently thus spoken of. But over and above there was a solemn appeal to God; and it is observable that there was a marked difference in the religious sentiments of the two. Laban spake of the God of Abraham and Nahor, their common ancestors; but Jacob, knowing that idolatry had crept into that branch of the family, swore by the Fear of Isaac. It is thought by many that Laban comprehended, under the peculiar phraseology that he employed, all the objects of worship in Terah's family, in Mesopotamia; and in that view we can discern a very intelligible reason for Jacob's omission of the name of Abraham, and swearing only by 'the Fear of his father Isaac,' who had never acknowledged any deity but 'the Lord.' They who have one God should have one heart; they who are agreed in religion should endeavor to agree in everything else" (Jamieson, CECG, 212). "The monotheism of Laban seems gliding into dualism; they may judge, or 'judge.' He corrects himself by adding the name of their common father, *i.e.*, Terah. From his alien and wavering point of view he seeks for sacredness in the

abundance of words. But Jacob swears simply and distinctly by the God whom Isaac feared, and whom even his father-in-law, Laban, should reverence and fear. Laban, indeed, also adheres to the communion with Jacob in his monotheism, and intimates that the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor designate two different religious directions from a common source or ground" (Lange, 544). "The erection of the pillar was a joint act of the two parties, in which Laban proposes, Jacob performs, and all take part. *The God of Abraham, Nahor, and Terah.* This is an interesting acknowledgement that their common ancestor Terah and his descendants down to Laban still acknowledged the true God, even in their idolatry. Jacob swears by the Fear of Isaac, perhaps to rid himself of any error that had crept into Laban's notions of God and his worship" (Murphy, MG, 407).

(11) *The Covenant of Reconciliation*, vv. 54-55, was now ratified by the common sacrifice and the common meal. Jacob "then offered sacrifices upon the mountain, and invited his relatives to eat, i.e., to partake of a sacrificial meal, and seal the covenant by a feast of love" (K-D, 300). "We view Jacob's sacrifice as one of thanksgiving that this last serious danger that threatened from Laban is removed. We cannot conceive of Jacob as joining with the idolater Laban in worship and sacrifice. Consequently, we hesitate to identify 'the eating of bread' with the partaking of the sacrificial feast, unless the 'kinsmen' here are to be regarded only as the men on Jacob's side. . . . In that event the kinsmen are to be thought of as having the same mind as Jacob on questions of religious practices. But the summons to eat bread might also signalize that the transactions between Jacob and Laban are concluded. The events may well have consumed an entire day, and so the night had to be spent in the same place" (Leupold, EG, 858). According to Rashi, Jacob slaughtered animals

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for the feast; however, Rashi "apparently insists that it was not a sacrificial meal" (SC, 187). Whitelaw holds that "brethren" here referred to "Laban's followers, who may have withdrawn to a distance during the interview," and hence had to be "called to eat bread" (PCG, 887). The sacrificial meal later became an integral part of the Hebrew ritual (cf. Exo. 24:3-8, 29:27-28; Lev. 10:14-15). "At all events, the covenant-meal forms a thorough and final conciliation. Laban's reverence for the God of his fathers, and his love for his daughters and grandsons, present him once more in the most favorable aspect of his character, and thus we take our leave of him. We must notice, however, that before the entrance of Jacob he had made little progress in his business. Close, narrow-hearted views, are as really the cause of the curse, as its fruits" (Lange, 545). The following morning Laban and his retinue departed and returned "to his place," that is, Paddan-aram (28:2).

The following summarization of this section, by Cornfield (AtD, 87-88), is excellent: "Laban pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the highlands of Gilead, east of Jordan. What troubled him more than the loss of his daughters, their husband and livestock, was the loss of the teraphim. He demanded indignantly, 'But why did you steal my gods?' As Rachel was unwell, religious custom prevented her father from forcing her off the saddle, and the theft remained unexposed. Laban and Jacob apparently agreed to maintain an amicable relationship on the basis of a new covenant. They exchanged blessings, made the covenant and set up a cairn and pillar ('matzeba') as a witness to their sincerity; the inanimate object was naively thought to 'oversee' the covenant. They swore that neither would transgress the boundary to harm the other. This patriarchal clan covenant seems to reflect either a remote separation of the clans, or the story

may serve to justify territorial status of later times, when the Israelite and Aramean peoples upheld a treaty of amity and marked the boundary between them. . . . They invoked their respective ancestral gods to judge between them: 'The God of Abraham' and 'The God of Nahor.' Jacob also swore by a special epithet of God: the 'Fear of his father Isaac' (meaning, according to the interpretation, 'The Kinsman of Isaac'). This devotion to the God of one's father is one of the features of patriarchal religion that stemmed from the pre-Hebraic Semitic past. . . . An especially impressive conclusion of the compact was the animal sacrifice offered, and a meal at which the solemn covenant act was performed: to 'cut a covenant' (the rite of sacrifice) and to 'eat bread' remained a familiar idiom of Israelite religious symbols. In eating and drinking, life is perfectly symbolized, and gains profound religious connotation. This is the root of the Jewish and Christian practice of grace before meals, for eating is the epitome of man's dependence upon God and other men. The central ceremonies of Judaism, such as the Passover, and the Eucharist of Christianity, are reminiscent of such very ancient Hebrew cultic practices. The covenant between Jacob and Laban was of course a parity treaty made between equals, unlike the covenants between God as Lord and the Patriarchs, His servants." Thus we can readily grasp the idea of the relation of the eating of the bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine of the Lord's Supper to the spiritual life of the participant. Through the ministry of thanksgiving, commemoration, meditation, and prayer, the Christian does actually—and not in any magical way, either—effect the deepening of his spiritual life (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-21, 11:20-30; Matt. 26:26-29).

Concerning the alleged "sources" of the account of the Covenant of Gilead, we suggest the following: "There can be no doubt that vers. 49 and 50 bear the marks of a

subsequent insertion. But there is nothing in the nature of his interpolation to indicate a compilation of the history from different sources. That Laban, when making this covenant, should have spoken of the future treatment of his daughters, is a thing so natural, that there would have been something strange in the omission. And it is not less suitable to the circumstances, that he calls upon the God of Jacob, *i.e.*, Jehovah, to watch in this affair [v. 49]. And apart from the use of the name *Jehovah*, which is perfectly suitable here, there is nothing whatever to point to a different source; to say nothing of the fact that the critics themselves cannot agree as to the nature of the source supposed" (K-D, 300, n.).

Stones were used for different purposes in ancient times. (1) Large stones were set up as memorials, that is, to commemorate some especially significant event (Gen. 28:18, 31:45, 35:14; Josh. 4:9; 1 Sam 7:12). Such stones were usually consecrated by anointing with oil (Gen. 28:18). A similar practice existed in heathen countries, and "by a singular coincidence these stones were described in Phoenicia by a name very similar to Beth-el, viz., *baetylia*. The only point of resemblance between the two consists in the custom of anointing" (UBD, 1047). (2) Heaps of stones were piled up on various occasions; *e.g.*, the making of a treaty (Gen. 31:46), or over the grave of a notorious offender (Josh. 7:26, 8:29; 2 Sam. 18:17); such heaps often attained a great size from the custom of each passer-by's adding a stone. (3) "That the worship of stones prevailed among the heathen nations surrounding Palestine, and was from them borrowed by apostate Israelites, appears from Isa. 57:6 (comp. Lev. 26:1). 'The smooth stones of the stream' are those which the stream has washed smooth with time, and rounded into a pleasing shape. 'In Carthage such stones were called *abbadires*; and among the ancient Arabs the *asnam*, or idols, consisted

for the most part of rude blocks of stone of this description. . . . Stone worship of this kind had been practiced by the Israelites before the Captivity, and their heathenish practices had been transmitted to the exiles in Babylon' (Delitzsch, *Com. in loc.*)'" (UBD, 1047). The notion expressed above that the pillar (*matzeba*) was *per se* naively thought to "oversee" the covenant (v. 52) in Gilead is surely proved erroneous by the fact that the true God and other ancestral gods were immediately invoked to do this witnessing (v. 53). We can see no reason for assuming animism or personification in this incident.

Hurrian evidences. We have already made note of different details of the transactions between Jacob and Laban which reflect details of Hurrian law. There are many instances of such correspondences. The following is a summary of many of these. "Hurrian customs are particularly in evidence in the record of Jacob.—29:18-19, gaining a wife in return for service: in Nuzu a man became a slave to gain a slave wife, though Jacob was no slave, v. 15—31:15, Laban's daughters objected to being 'reckoned as foreign women,' for native women had a higher standing.—31:38—cf. how in Nuzu shepherds were tried for illegally slaughtering the sheep. Particularly, Jacob's whole relation to Laban suggests a Hurrian 'adoption' contract: 29:18, Jacob got daughters in return for work, becoming a 'son'; 31:50, he was to marry no other wives, as in Nuzu adoptions; 31:43, Laban had a claim over Jacob's children, though God intervened to abrogate the custom, v. 24; 31:1, Laban's sons were worried about heirship, while v. 31, Jacob claimed his wages were changed, perhaps a problem of heirs born after Jacob's adoption, who were supposed to receive their percentage; and 31:15, Rachel stole the teraphim (household idols, 31:30, cf. 1 Sam. 19:13, Zech. 10:2, though she served God too, 30:24, and Jacob knew nothing of them, 31:32, and opposed

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idolatry, 35:2), which in Nuzu meant a legal claim on the property and which Laban was justified in demanding back for his own sons, 31:30. Knowledge of such Hurrian parallels is valuable to explain (though not necessarily excuse) the patriarchal actions, and to confirm the accuracy of the Biblical records" (OHH, 45).

Here the first phase of Jacob's return to the land of his father comes to an end. Early in the morning of the day which followed the establishing of the Covenant in Gilead, Laban, after kissing his daughters' sons and the daughters themselves, and blessing them (cf. 24:60, 28:1), set out on his journey "unto his place," that is, his home, Paddan-aram (cf. 18:33, 30:25), and Jacob with his household went on his way to his home, Beersheba. (It is interesting to note that apparently Laban did not kiss Jacob on taking final leave of him as he did on first meeting him, cf. 29:13).

2. *Jacob's Reconciliation with Esau: The Biblical Account (32:1—33:17)*

1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2 And Jacob said when he saw them, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the field of Edom. 4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau: Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now: 5 and I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and men-servants, and maid-servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in thy sight. 6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. 7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and was distressed: and he divided the

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people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies; 8 and he said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the company which is left shall escape. 9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, O Jehovah, who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will do thee good: 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. 11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children. 12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

13 And he lodged there that night, and took of that which he had with him a present for Esau his brother: 14 two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals. 16 And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. 17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? 18 then thou shalt say, They are thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, he also is behind us. 19 And he commanded also the second, and the third, and all that followed the drives, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him; 20 and ye shall say, Moreover, behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and

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afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept me. 21 So the present passed over before him: and he himself lodged that night in the company.

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok. 23 And he took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had. 24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31 And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel, and he limped upon his thigh. 32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. 2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. 3 And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to

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the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. 5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant. 6 Then the handmaids came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. 7 And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. 8 and he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, To find favor in the sight of my lord. 9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which thou hast be thine. 10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; forasmuch as I have seen thy face as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me, 11 Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. 12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. 13 And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and that the flocks and herds with me have their young: and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on gently, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come unto my lord unto Seir. 15 And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find favor in the sight of my lord. 16 So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

(1) *Jacob's experience at Mahanaim*, 32:1-2. As Jacob went on his way from Gilead and Mizpah in a southerly direction, the *angels of God*, literally, *messengers of Elohim* (not chance travelers who informed him of Esau's presence in the vicinity, but angels) met him (cf. Heb. 1:7, 14; Psa. 104:4), not necessarily coming in an opposite direction, but simply falling in with him as he journeyed. "Whether this was a waking vision or a midnight dream is uncertain, though the two former visions enjoyed by Jacob were at night (28:12, 31:10)" (PCG, 389). "The elevated state and feeling of Jacob, after the departure of Laban, reveals itself in the vision of the hosts of God. Heaven is not merely connected with the saints on the earth (through the ladder); its hosts are warlike hosts, who invisibly guard the saints and defend them, even while upon the earth. Here is the very germ and source of the designation of God as the God of hosts, Zabaoth" (Lange, 545). (Cf. Isa. 1:9, Rom. 9:29). "The appearance of the invisible host may have been designed to celebrate Jacob's triumph over Laban, as after Christ's victory over Satan in the wilderness angels came and ministered unto him (Matt. 4:11), or to remind him that he owed his deliverance to Divine interposition, but was probably intended to assure him of protection in his approaching interview with Esau, and perhaps also to give him welcome in returning home again to Canaan, if not in addition to suggest that his descendants would require to fight for their inheritance" (PCG, 389). "*Met him*, lit., came, drew near to him, not precisely that they came from an opposite direction. This vision does not relate primarily to the approaching meeting with Esau (Peniel relates to this), but to the dangerous meeting with Laban. As the Angel of God had disclosed to him in vision the divine assistance against his unjust sufferings in Mesopotamia, so now he enjoys a revelation of the protection which God had prepared for

him upon Mount Gilead, through his angels (cf. 2 Ki. 6:17). In this sense he well calls the angels 'God's host,' and the place in which they met him, *double camp*. By the side of the visible camp, which he, with Laban and his retainers, had made, God had prepared another, an invisible camp, for his protection. It served also to encourage him, in a general way, for the approaching meeting with Esau" (Lange, 544).

"Jacob was now receiving divine encouragement to meet the new dangers of the land he was entering. His eyes were opened to see a troop of angels, 'the host of God' sent for his protection, and forming a second camp beside his own; and he called the name of the place *Mahanaim* (*the two camps or hosts*)" (OTH, 102). "How often we meet this mention of angels in the story of Jacob's life! Angels on the ladder in the vision at Bethel; the dream of an angel that told him to leave the country of Laban; angels now before him on his way; the memory of an angel at the last when he laid his hands upon the sons of Joseph, and said, 'The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads' (48:16). There had been much earthliness and evil in Jacob, and certainly it was too bold a phrase to say that he had been redeemed from all of it. But the striking fact is the repeated association of angels with the name of this imperfect man. The one great characteristic which gradually refined him was his desire—which from the beginning he possessed—for nearer knowledge of God. May it be therefore that the angels of God come, even though in invisible presence, to every man who has that saving eagerness? Not only in the case of Jacob, but in that of many another, those who look at the man's life and what is happening in it and around it may be able to say that as he went on his way the angels of God met him" (IBG, 719).

"It is not said whether this angelic manifestation was made in a vision by day, or a dream by night. It was most probably the former—an internal occurrence, a mental spectacle, analogous, as in many similar cases (cf. 15:1, 5, 12; 21:12, 13, 17; 22:2, 3), to the dream which he had on his journey to Mesopotamia. For there is an evident allusion to the appearance upon the ladder (28:12); and this occurring to Jacob in his return to Canaan, was an encouraging pledge of the continued presence and protection of God: Psa. 34:7, Heb. 1:14" (Jamieson, 213). *Mahanaim*, that is, "*two hosts or camps.*" "Two myriads is the number usually employed to denote an indefinite number; but here it must have reference to the two hosts, God's host of angels and Jacob's own camp. The place was situated between Mount Gilead and the Jabbok, near the banks of that brook. A town afterwards rose upon the spot, on the border of the tribal territories of Gad and Manasseh, supposed by *Porter* to be identified in a ruin called *Mahneh*" (Jamieson, *ibid.*). "When Laban had taken his departure peaceably, Jacob pursued his journey to Canaan. He was then met by some angels of God; and he called the place where they appeared *Mahanaim*, i.e., double camp or double host, because the host of God joined his host as a safeguard. This appearance of angels necessarily reminded him of the vision of the ladder, on his flight from Canaan. Just as the angels ascending and descending had then represented to him the divine protection and assistance during his journey and sojourn in a foreign land, so now the angelic host was a signal of the help of God for the approaching conflict with Esau of which he was in fear, and a fresh pledge of the promise (ch. 28:15), 'I will bring thee back to the land,' etc. Jacob saw it during his journey; in a waking condition, therefore, not internally, but out of or above himself: but whether with the eyes of the body or of the mind (cf. 2 Ki. 6:17), cannot be de-

terminated. *Mahanaim* was afterwards a distinguished city, which is frequently mentioned, situated to the north of the Jabbok; and the name and remains are still preserved in the place called Mahnēh (*Robinson*, Pal. Appendix, p. 166), the site of which, however, has not yet been minutely examined" (K-D, 301). For other references to Mahanaim, see Josh. 13:26, 30; Josh. 21:38, 1 Chron. 6:80; 2 Sam. 2:8, 12; 2 Sam. 4:5-8; 2 Sam. 17:24, 27; 1 Ki. 2:8, 4:14). Leupold writes: "Though Mahanaim is repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, we cannot be sure of its exact location. It must have lain somewhere east of Jordan near the confluence of the Jordan and the Jabbok. The present site *Machneb* often mentioned in this connection seems too far to the north" (EG, 862).

(2) *Preparations for meeting Esau*, vv. 3-23. Having achieved reconciliation with Laban, Jacob now finds his old fears returning—those fears that sent him away from home in the first place. "This long passage is a vivid picture of a man who could not get away from the consequences of an old wrong. Many years before, Jacob had defrauded Esau. He had got away to a safe distance and he had stayed there a long time. Doubtless he had tried to forget about Esau, or at any rate to act as if Esau's oath to be avenged could be forgotten. While in Laban's country he could feel comfortable. But the time had come when he wanted to go back home; and though the thought of it drew him, it appalled him too. There was the nostalgia of early memories, but there was the nightmare of the later one, and it overshadowed all the rest. Esau was there; and what would Esau do? As a matter of fact, Esau would not do anything. If he had not forgotten what Jacob had done to him, he had stopped bothering about it. Hot-tempered and terrifying though he could be, he was too casual to carry a grudge. As ch. 33 tells, he would meet Jacob presently with the

bluff generosity of the big man who lets bygones be bygones. But not only did Jacob not know that; what he supposed he knew was the exact opposite. Esau would confront him as a deadly threat" (Bowie, IBG, 719). "Thus conscience doth makes cowards of us all" (Hamlet's Soliloquy). "Jacob had passed through a humiliating process. He had been thoroughly afraid, and this was the more galling because he thought of himself as somebody who ought not to have had to be afraid. In his possessions he was a person of consequence. He had tried to suggest that to Esau in his first messages. But none of his possessions fortified him when his conscience let him down. Even when Esau met him with such magnanimity, Jacob was not yet at ease. He still kept on his guard, with unhappy apprehension lest Esau might change his mind (see 33:12-17). Knowing that he had not deserved Esau's brotherliness, he could not believe that he could trust it. The barrier in the way of forgiveness may lie not in the unreadiness of the wronged to give, but in the inability of the one who has done wrong to receive. Jacob had to be humbled and chastened before he could be made clean. The wrestling by the Jabbok would be the beginning of that. He had to admit down deep that he did not deserve anything, and he had to get rid of the pride that thought he could work out his peace by his own wits. Only so could he ever feel that the relationship with Esau had really been restored. More importantly, it is only so that men can believe in and accept the forgiveness of the love of God" (IBG, *ibid.*) (The expository matter in IBG is superb in the delineation of human character, its foibles, its strengths and its weaknesses. Although the exegesis of this set of books follows closely the speculations of the critics, nevertheless the set is well worth having in one's library for the expository treatment which deals graphically with what might be termed the "human interest" narratives of the Bible. From this point

of view, the content of the book of Genesis is superbly presented.—C.C.),

In this connection, we have some information of great value from Jewish sources, as follows: Laban has departed—now Jacob can breathe freely. But he is far from happy contemplating Esau's natural and justifiable desire for vengeance. He now realizes the enormity of the wrong he has done his brother. That was twenty years ago: maybe Esau's anger had cooled a bit. He did not fear the angel, but he feared his brother because he had done him a great wrong. Why expect Esau to act differently? He, Jacob, had countered Laban's deceit with deceit of his own. Why would not Esau do the same? Jacob was getting some of his own medicine. As the rabbis say: "Before a man sins, everyone fears him; after he sins, he fears everyone." In prosperity we forget God. But when distress and danger confront us we turn to God. All earthly help seems futile. "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). So Jacob prayed. But instead of relying on God to whom he prayed, he resorted to his old tricks, cunning plans for his defense. He trusted God only half way. "If God will save me from this peril, well and good; but if not, I must spare no effort to save myself." Halfway faith is no faith at all. Then followed an anxious night. Redoubled preparations were made to meet Esau the next morning. Jacob sent his wives and children across the stream hoping their helplessness might touch Esau's heart. Jacob remained on this side of the stream. He would cross only at the last moment; possibly he would turn back and flee, without sheep and cattle, wives and children, to hinder his escape. But there was no place for him to go. Such was Jacob's guilt-laden mind (Morgenstern, JIBG). "This episode is narrated to illustrate how God saved his servant and redeemed him from an enemy stronger than himself, by sending His angel and delivering

him. We also learn that Jacob did not rely upon his righteousness, but took all measures to meet the situation. It contains the further lesson that whatever happened to the patriarchs happens to their offspring, and we should follow his example by making a threefold preparation in our fight against Esau's descendants, viz., prayer, gifts (appeasement) and war (Nachmanides)" (SC, 195).

The matter of the next few verses occasions some differences of view on the part of Jewish commentators. As Isaac lived in the southern part of Canaan, Jacob had to pass through or by Edom. Realizing that he was now approaching Esau's domain, *the land of Seir, the field of Edom*, he took certain precautionary measures for protection. (The land of Seir was the region originally occupied by the Horites [Gen. 14:6, 36:21-30; Ezek. 35:2ff.], which was taken over later by Esau and his descendants [Deut. 2:1-29; Num. 20:14-21; Gen. 32:3, 36:8, 36:20ff.; Num. 20:14-21; Josh. 24:4; 2 Chron. 20:10, etc.], and then became known as Edom. This was the mountainous region lying south and east of the Dead Sea. "The statement that Esau was already in the land of Seir [v. 4], or, as it is afterwards called, the field of Edom, is not at variance with chapter 36:6, and may be very naturally explained on the supposition, that with the increase of his family and possessions, he severed himself more and more from his father's house, becoming increasingly convinced, as time went on, that he could hope for no change in the blessings pronounced by his father upon Jacob and himself, which excluded him from the inheritance of the promise, viz. the future possession of Canaan. Now, even if his malicious feelings toward Jacob had gradually softened down, he had probably never said anything to his parents on the subject, so that Rebekah had been unable to fulfil her promise [27:45])" (K-D, 302). And what about Jacob? Rebekah had not communicated with him either, as she had promised to do as

soon as his brother's anger had subsided. He had no indication that Esau's intentions were anything but hostile. What was he to do but make an effort to placate this brother whom he had not heard from for more than twenty years? Obviously, some sort of a delegation was in order, a delegation acknowledging Esau as one entitled to receive reports about one who is about to enter the land: such a delegation might produce a kindlier feeling on the part of the man thus honored. Jacob's first objective was to conciliate Esau, if possible. To this end he sent messengers ahead to make contact with him and to make known his return, in such a style of humility ("my Lord Esau," "thy servant Jacob") as was adapted to conciliate his brother. As a matter of fact Jacob's language was really that of great servility, dictated of course by his fear of his brother's vengeance. He makes no secret where he has been; he had been with Laban. He indicates further that his stay in the land of the east had been temporary: that he had stayed there only as a stranger or pilgrim; that indeed he had only *sojourned* with Laban (v. 4) and was now on his way back home. Nor, he made it clear, should Esau get the impression that Jacob was an impecunious beggar dependent on Esau's charity coming back as a suppliant: on the contrary, he was coming with oxen, and asses, and flocks, and men-servants and maid-servants, etc. No wonder he was thrown into the greatest alarm and anxiety when the messengers returned to tell him that Esau was coming to meet him with a force of four hundred men. Note v. 6, the report of the messengers: "We came to thy brother Esau"—according to Rashi, "to him whom you regard as a *brother*, but he is *Esau*; he is advancing to attack you" (SC, 196). "Sforno agrees with Rashi's preceding comment: he is coming with four hundred men to attack you. Rashbam interprets: you have found favor in his sight, and in your honour he is coming to meet you with a large retinue"

JACOB: RETURN TO CANAAN 32:3-23

(SC, 196). The obvious reason for Esau's "army" seems to have been, rather, that *he was just then engaged in subjugating the Horite people in Seir*, a fact which would fully explain Gen. 36:6, and thus refute the critical assumption of different source materials. "The simplest explanation of the fact that Esau should have had so many men about him as a standing army, is that given by *Delitzsch*; namely, that he had to subjugate the Horite population in Seir, for which purpose he might easily have formed such an army, partly from the Canaanitish and Ishmaelitish relatives of his wives, and partly from his own servants. His reason for going to meet Jacob with such a company may have been, either to show how mighty a prince he was, or with the intention of making his brother sensible of his superior power, and assuming a hostile attitude if the circumstances favored it, even though the lapse of years had so far mitigated his anger, that he no longer thought of executing the vengeance he had threatened twenty years before. For we are warranted in regarding Jacob's fear as no vain, subjective fancy, but as having an objective foundation, by the fact that God endowed him with courage and strength for his meeting with Esau, through the medium of the angelic host and the wrestling at the Jabbok; whilst, on the other hand, the brotherly affection and openness with which Esau met him, are to be attributed partly to Jacob's humble demeanor, and still more to the fact, that by the influence of God, the still remaining malice had been rooted out from his heart" (K-D, 302). "Here again, in the interest of tracing down sources more or less out of harmony with one another, critics assert that these verses (3-5) assume Isaac's death and Esau's occupation of the land which he in reality only took in hand somewhat later, according to 36:6, which is ascribed to P. Isaac, with his non-aggressive temperament, may have allowed the far more active Esau to take the disposition of matters in hand. So Jacob may

well have been justified in dealing with Esau as 'master.'³ This is all quite plausible even if Isaac had not died. Furthermore, in speaking of 'the land of Seir, the region of Edom,' Jacob may only imply that Esau had begun to take possession of the land which was afterward to become his and of whose definite and final occupation 36:6 speaks. In any case, 'master,' used in reference to Esau, only describes Jacob's conception of their new relation. Jacob did not enter into negotiations with Isaac, his father, in approaching the land. His welcome was assured at his father's hand. But the previous misunderstanding called for an adjustment with Esau. At the same time our explanation accounts for Esau's 400 men: they are an army that he has gathered while engaged upon his task of subduing Seir, the old domain of the Horites (cf. 14:6). Skinner's further objection: 'how he was ready to strike so far north of his territory is a difficulty,' is thus also disposed of" (Leupold, EG, 863-864).

A number of questions obtrude themselves at this point. E.g., Why was Esau in that territory in the first place? And why was he there in such force, if he was not engaged in dispossessing the occupants? Why would he be that far north, if conquest was not his design? How would he know that he would be meeting up with Jacob? Did Jacob expect to find him there, or somewhere back in the vicinity of Canaan? Had the angelic host (v. 2) informed him of Esau's nearness? Is there any evidence from any quarter that Jacob had received any news from home during the entire twenty years he had been in Paddan-aram? What did the messengers mean when they returned and said to Jacob, "We came to thy brother Esau?" Did they not mean that they had *come upon* Esau and his contingent unexpectedly, that is, sooner than they had thought to do so? "Esau seems to have been about as uncertain in his own mind as to his plans and purposes as Jacob was in reference to these same plans

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and purposes? Certainly Esau must have been surprised when Jacob's messengers met him? And certainly the very *uncertainties* implicit in the report of Jacob's messengers made it all the more alarming to Jacob. In substance, the message which Jacob's emissaries took to Esau was "nothing but an announcement of his arrival and his great wealth (33:12ff.). The shepherd, with all his success, is at the mercy of the fierce marauder who was to 'live by his sword,' 27:40" (ICCG, 406). At the news brought back by his messengers *fear* overwhelmed Jacob, even though every crisis in the past had terminated in his advantage. But now he was at the point of no return, facing the most critical experience of all in the fact that the word brought back about Esau and his force of 400 men indicated the worst. Dividing all his possessions at the River Jabbok, so that if Esau should attack one part, the other might have a chance to get away, Jacob made ready for the anticipated confrontation in a threefold manner, first by prayer, then by gifts, and finally by actual combat if necessary.

The Prayer, vv. 9-12. "Jacob was naturally timid; but his conscience told him that there was much ground for apprehension; and his distress was all the more aggravated that he had to provide for the safety of a large and helpless family. In this great emergency *he had recourse to prayer*" (CECG, 213). "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." (Unfortunately a great many people can pray like a bishop in a thunderstorm, who never think of God at any other time: in the lines of the well-known bit of satirical humor:

God and the doctor we alike adore,
Just on the brink of danger, not before;
The danger past, both are unrequited—
God is forgotten, and the doctor slighted.)

Nevertheless, Jacob did the only thing he could do under the circumstances—he prayed, to the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac, the living and true God. (Not even the slightest smack of idolatry or polytheism in this prayer!) “This is the first recorded example of prayer in the Bible. It is short, earnest and bearing directly on the occasion. The appeal is made to God, as standing in a covenant relation to his family, just as we ought to put our hopes of acceptance with God in Christ; for Jacob uses here the name *Jehovah*, along with other titles, in the invocation, as he invokes it singly elsewhere (cf. 49:18). He pleads the special promise made to himself of a safe return; and after a most humble and affecting confession of unworthiness, breathes an earnest desire for deliverance from the impending danger. It was the prayer of a kind husband, an affectionate father, a firm believer in the promises” (Jamieson, CECG, 213-214). “This prayer strikes a religious note surprising in this purely factual context” (JB, 53). “Jacob’s prayer, consisting of an invocation (10), thanksgiving (11), petition (12), and appeal to the divine faithfulness (13) is a classical model of OT devotion” (Skinner, ICCG, 406). Skinner adds: “though the element of confession, so prominent in later supplications, is significantly absent.” (Leupold discusses this last assertion as follows: “It is hard to understand how men can claim that ‘the element of confession is significantly absent’ in Jacob’s prayer. True, a specific confession of sin is not made in these words. But what does, ‘I am unworthy,’ imply? Why is he unworthy? There is only one thing that renders us unworthy of God’s mercies and that is our sin. Must this simple piece of insight be denied Jacob? It is so elementary in itself as to be among the rudiments of spiritual insight. Let men also remember that lengthy confessions of sin may be made where there is no sense of repentance whatsoever. And again, men may be most sincerely penitent and yet may

say little about their sin. If ever a prayer implied a deep sense of guilt it is Jacob's. Behind the critics' claim that 'confession is absent' from this prayer lies the purpose to thrust an evolutionistic development into religious experiences, a development which is 'significantly absent.' It was not first 'in later supplications' that this element became 'so prominent.' It was just that in this earlier age the experience of sin and guilt particularly impressed God's saints as rendering them unworthy of God's mercies (cf. also 18:27 in Abraham's case)" (EG, 867). One might well compare also the case of the publican (Luke 18:13-14) or that of the prodigal son (Luke 15:18-24). Did not Jesus commend both of these 'supplications'? We see no reason for assuming that God must hear us "call the roll" of our sins, specifying each in its proper order, to have mercy on us? Cf. Jas. 2:10—Sin is lawlessness, and a single instance of sin makes one guilty of it (cf. 1 John 3:4). (Cf. John 1:29—note the singular here, "sin."). *Surely the very profession of unworthiness is confession of sin.* Human authority has established the custom of enumerating specific sins—in the priestly confessional, of course: whether such an enumeration ever gets as high as the Throne of Grace is indeed a moot question. "Jacob's humble prayer in a crisis of his life, his own comparison of his former status with the present, harmonizes the inner religious theme of the story with the other theme of his experience. This man who understood the consequences of his actions (flight from his father's house, danger of dependence, trouble with his children), is still a man whom the grace of God had found. So tradition dwells on his many trials of faith, while describing him as a man to whom the election of God came without full merit on his part" (Cornfeld, AtD, 89. Note especially v. 10, "*this Jordan.*" Is the Jordan here, instead of the Jabbok, v. 22, "a later elaboration"? (as JB would have it, p. 53). "The Jabbok was situated near,

indeed is a tributary of the Jordan" (PCG, 390). The mention of the Jordan here certainly had reference to Jacob's *first* crossing, that is, on his way to Paddan-aram: at that time he had only his staff; now he has abundant wealth in the form of sheep, goats, camels, and cows and bulls (vv. 14, 15). "The measure of these gracious gifts at God's hands is best illustrated by the contrast between what Jacob was when he first crossed the Jordan and what he now has upon his return to Jordan" (EG, 867). Naturally he would think of the Jordan as the dividing line between his homeland and the country to which he had journeyed; on the first trek he was all alone, with nothing but his staff. "With this staff," means, as Luther translates, "with only this *staff*" (cf. EG, *ibid.*).

Note that Jacob closed his petition with a specific request that the God of his fathers deliver him, as the "mother with the children," from Esau's vengeance, "a proverbial expression for unsparing cruelty, or complete extirpation, taken from the idea of destroying a bird while sitting upon its young" (cf. Deut. 22:6, Hos. 10:14). He then pleads the Divine promises at Bethel (28:13-15) and at Haran (31:3), as an argument why Jehovah should now extend to him protection against Esau. Or, "by killing the mother he will smite me, even if I personally escape" (SC, 197). Some (e.g., Tuch) have criticized this aspect of the prayer as "somewhat inaptly reminding God of His commands and promises, and calling upon Him to keep His word." But is not this precisely what God expects His people to do? (Cf. Isa. 43:26). "According to Scripture the Divine promise is always the petitioner's best warrant" (PCG, 391). (Cf. "thy seed as the sand of the sea" with "the dust of the earth," 13:16, "the stars of heaven," 15:5, and as "the sand upon the sea-shore," 22:17, "which cannot be numbered for multitude"). "Thus Jacob changes the imagery of the Abrahamic Promise, ch. 22:17. Such a destructive attack as now

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threatens him, would oppose and defeat the divine promise. Faith clings to the promise, and is thus developed" (Lange, 549). "The objection that it is unbecoming in Jacob to remind God of His promise, shows an utter misconception of true prayer, which presupposes the promise of God just as truly as it implies the consciousness of wants. Faith, which is the life of prayer, clings to the divine promises, and pleads them" (Gosman, *ibid.*, 549). "Jacob, fearing the worst, divided his people and flocks into two camps, that if Esau smote the one, the other might escape. He then turned to the Great Helper in every time of need, and with an earnest prayer besought the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, who had directed him to return, that, on the ground of the abundant mercies and truth (cf. 24:27) He had shown him thus far, He would deliver him out of the hand of his brother, and from the threatening destruction, and so fulfil His promises" (K-D, 303). "Jacob's prayer for deliverance was graciously answered. God granted His favor to an undeserving sinner who cast himself wholly upon His mercy. Notice, that Jacob acted in accord with the proposition that often we should work as though we had never prayed" (HSB, 53). Hence the gifts (for appeasement) that followed, and preparations for conflict, if that should occur.

The Gifts, vv. 14-22. Although hoping for safety and aid from the Lord alone, Jacob neglected no means of doing what might serve to appease his brother. Having taken up his quarters for the night in the place where he received the news of Esau's approach, he selected from his flocks—of that which he had acquired—a very respectable present of 550 head of cattle, and sent them in different detachments to meet Esau, as a present unto "my lord Esau" from "thy servant Jacob," who was coming behind. The cattle were selected according to the proportions of male and female which were adopted from experience among the ancients (Varro, *de re rustica* 2, 3).

"V. 15—200 she-goats and twenty he-goats. Similarly, in the case of the other animals he sent as many males as were needed for the females (Rashi)" (SC, 197). "The selection was in harmony with the general possessions of nomads" (cf. Job 1:3, 42:12). The division of this gift into separate droves which followed one another at certain intervals, "was to serve the purpose of gradually mitigating the wrath of Esau" (K-D), to appease the countenance, to raise anyone's countenance, *i.e.*, to receive him in a friendly manner. "Jacob designs this gift to be the means of propitiating his brother before he appears in his presence. After dispatching this present, he himself remained the same night, the one referred to in v. 13, in the camp. Then and there one of the most fascinatingly and mysteriously sublime incidents recorded in the Old Testament occurred. (*Preparations to meet anticipated violence: see infra*). (Recall that Jacob's threefold preparation consisted of prayer, gifts, and probability of war.)

(3) *Jacob's Wrestling with the Celestial Visitant*, vv. 22-32. "The Jabbok is the present Wady es Zerka (*i.e.*, the blue, which flows from the east towards the Jordan, and with its deep rocky valley formed at that time the boundary between the kingdoms of Sihon at Heshbon and Og of Bashan. . . . The ford by which Jacob crossed was hardly the one which he took on his outward journey, upon the Syrian caravan-road . . . but one much farther to the west . . . where there are still traces of walls and buildings to be seen, and other marks of civilization" (K-D, 304). The same night (as indicated in v. 13) Jacob transported his family with all his possessions across the ford of the Jabbok, but he himself remained behind. The whole course of the Jabbok, "counting its windings, is over sixty miles. It is shallow and always fordable, except where it breaks between steep rocks. Its valley is fertile, has always been a frontier and a line of traffic" (UBD, s.v.) "The deep Jabbok Valley

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supplied an impressive locale for Jacob's wrestling with an angel and for his reunion with the estranged Esau (Gen. 32:22ff.). The Jabbok is always shallow enough to ford (Gen. 32:23). Portions of its slopes are wooded, and dotted with patches of orchard, vineyard, and vegetable cultivation. Wheat is cultivated in its upper reaches. Flocks are usually within sight of travelers" (HBD, s.v.). The Jabbok flows into the Jordan about 25 miles north of the Dead Sea.

What was Jacob's purpose in this maneuver, especially his remaining on the north side of the Jabbok? There are differences of opinion about this. "To prayer he adds prudence, and sends forward present after present that their reiteration might win his brother's heart. This done, he rested for the night: but rising up before the day, he sent forward his wives and children across the ford of the Jabbok, remaining for a while in solitude to prepare his mind for the trial of the day" (OTH, 103). "*He rose up . . . and took*", etc. "Unable to sleep, he waded the ford in the night-time by himself; and having ascertained its safety, he returned to the north bank, and sent over his family and attendants—remaining behind, to seek anew, in solitary prayer, the Divine blessing on the means he had set in motion" (Jamieson, CECG, 215). Another view, as we have noted above, is that "Jacob sent his wives and children across the stream hoping their helplessness might touch Esau's heart; Jacob himself remained on this side of the stream; he would cross only at the last moment; possibly he would turn back and flee, without sheep and cattle, wives and children, to hinder his escape" (Morgenstern). *The present writer finds it difficult to think of Jacob as being so cowardly as to be willing to sacrifice his household and possessions to save his own hide.* "Jacob himself remained on the north side [of the stream] (Delitzsch, Keil, Kurtz, Murphy, Gerlach, Wordsworth, Alford), although, having once crossed the stream (v.

22), it is not perfectly apparent that he recrossed, which has led some to argue that the wrestling occurred on the south of the river (Knobel, Rosenmuller, Lange Kalisch)" (PCG, 392). Rashbam would have it that "*he rose up that night*, intending to flee by another way; for that reason he passed over the ford of the Jabbok." As for his household (v. 22), and his possessions "that which he had" (v. 23), according to Nachmanides, "he led them all to the edge of the brook, then crossed over himself to see if the place was suitable, then returned and led them across all at the same time." Rashi would have it that having sent on all the others, Jacob himself after crossing, returned, "because he had forgotten some small items" (SC, 199).

Thus Jacob was left alone, and *there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day*, v. 24. "The natural thing for the master of the establishment to do is to stay behind to check whether all have crossed or whether some stragglers of this great host still need directions. In the solitude of the night as Jacob is 'left alone,' his thoughts naturally turn to prayer again, for he is a godly man. However, here the unusual statement of the case describes his prayer thus: 'a man wrestled with him until dawn arose.' Rightly Luther says: 'Every man holds that this text is one of the most obscure in the Old Testament.' There is no commentator who can so expound this experience as to clear up perfectly every difficulty involved. This much, however, is relatively clear: Jacob was praying; the terms used to describe the prayer make us aware of the fact that the prayer described involved a struggle of the entire man, body and soul; the struggle was not imaginary; Jacob must have sensed from the outset that his opponent was none other than God; this conviction became firmly established before his opponent finally departed. . . . The Biblical commentary on the passage is Hosea 12:4: '*Yea, he had power over the angel, and pre-*

vailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him.' . . . Again, by way of commentary, 'wrestling' is defined as 'he wept and made supplication unto Him.' That certainly is a description of agonizing prayer. However, when v. 3 of Hosea 12 is compared, we learn that this struggle in Jacob's manhood was the culmination of the tendency displayed before birth, when by seizing his brother's heel he displayed how eager he was to obtain the spiritual blessings God was ready to bestow. This experience and this trend in Jacob's character is held up before his descendants of a later day that they may seek to emulate it" (Leupold, EG, 875). "*There wrestled a man with him:* to prevent him from fleeing, so that he might see how God kept the promise that he would not be harmed (Rashbam). Undoubtedly the angel was acting on God's command, and thereby intimated that Jacob and his seed would be saved and blessed, this being the outcome of the wrestling (Sforno). *He prevailed not*, v. 26. Because Jacob cleaved so firmly to God in thought and speech (Sforno). Because an angel can do only what he has been commissioned and permitted to do; this one was permitted only to strain his thigh (Nachmanides)" (SC, 199).

As Leupold states the case clearly, "certain modern interpretations of this experience of Jacob's [are] instances of how far explanations may veer from the truth and become entirely misleading. It has been described as a 'nightmare' (Roscher). Some have thought that Jacob engaged in conflict with the tutelary deity of the stream which Jacob was endeavoring to cross (Frazer), and so this might be regarded as a symbolical portrayal of the difficulties of the crossing. [e.g., "In the most ancient form of the story, the angel of Jacob may have reflected a folk tale about a night river-demon who must disappear with the morning light. When Israel made this legend its own, it transformed the demon into a angel, a messenger of God" (AtD, 88).] But the stream had already been

crossed by this time. One interpreter considers the wrestling as a symbol of 'the victory of the invading Israelites over the inhabitants of North Gilead,' (Steuernagel), but that is a misconstruction of history: the conquest began much later. Some call the experience a dream; others, an allegory. The most common device of our day is to regard it as a legend, 'originating,' as some say, 'on a low level of religion.' All such approaches are a slap in the face for the inspired word of Hosea who treats it as a historical event recording the highest development of Jacob's faith-life. For there can be no doubt about it that the motivating power behind Jacob's struggle is faith and the desire to receive God's justifying grace; and the means employed is earnest prayer. Why it pleases the Lord to appear in human guise to elicit the most earnest endeavors on Jacob's part, that we cannot answer" (EG, 876). (Cf. Gen. 18:1. See my *Genesis*, Vol. III, p. 297ff. See also our discussion of "The Angel of Jehovah," my *Genesis* III, 216-220, 496-500. See also Hosea 12:2-6: This is another proof of the hermeneutic principle that any Scripture passage must be interpreted in the light of the teaching of the entire Bible [see my *Genesis*, Vol. I, pp. 97-100] in order to get at truth).

When Jacob was left alone on the northern side of the Jabbok, after sending all the rest across, "*there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*" V. 26—"And when He [the unknown] saw that He did not overcome him, He touched his hip-socket; and his hip-socket was put out of joint, as He wrestled with Him." Still Jacob would not let Him go until He blessed him. He then said to Jacob, '*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel*' [God's fighter]; *for thou hast fought with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*' When Jacob asked Him His name, He declined giving any definite answer, and '*blessed him there.*' He did not tell him His name: not merely, as the angel stated to Manoah in reply

to a similar question (Judg. 13:18), because it was incomprehensible to mortal man, but still more to fill Jacob's soul with awe at the mysterious character of the whole event, and to lead him to take it to heart. What Jacob wanted to know, with regard to the person of the wonderful Wrestler, and the meaning and intention of the struggle, he must already have suspected, when he would not let Him go until He blessed him; and it was put before him still more plainly in the new name that was given to him with this explanation, '*Thou hast fought with Elohim and with men, and hast conquered.*' God had met him in the form of a man: God in the angel, according to Hosea 12:4-5, *i.e.*, not in a created angel, but in the Angel of Jehovah, the visible manifestation of the invisible God. Our history does not speak of Jehovah, or the Angel of Jehovah, but of *Elohim*, for the purpose of bringing out the contrast between God and the creature" (K-D, 304).

We are now ready to inquire: *Who was this Wonderful Wrestler?* Several identifications have been proposed; this writer, however, holds that there is one view, and one only, that is in accord with the teaching of the Bible as a whole (as we shall see *infra*). In the meantime, let us examine some of the proposed interpretations, some of which are far-fetched, to say the least. "This story, the antiquity of which is obvious, is probably the basic legend in the O.T. Jacob prevailed over his supernatural opponent; cf. Hosea 12:3-4. . . . A point to be noted is the superhuman strength ascribed to Jacob; with this may be compared the implications of 28:18, according to which Jacob himself set up the pillar at Bethel, and of 29:10, where he alone and unaided moved a stone which normally could be moved only through the combined efforts of a number of men (cf. 29:8-10). All three passages seem to echo the representation of Jacob as a giant" (IBG, 724). Concerning v. 26—*Let me go, for the dawn is breaking*, Skinner writes: "It is a survival of the wide-

spread belief in spirits of the night which must vanish at dawn (cf. *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 1), and as such, a proof of the extreme antiquity of the legend." This commentator goes on to say, with respect to the blessing "imparted in the form of a new name conferred on Jacob in memory of this crowning struggle of his life": "Such a name [Israel] is a true 'blessing' as a pledge of victory and success to the nation which bears it. . . . This can hardly refer merely to the contests with Laban and Esau; it points rather to the existence of a fuller body of legend, in which Jacob figured as the hero of many combats, culminating in this successful struggle with deity." Again: "In its fundamental conception the struggle at Peniel is not a dream or vision like that which came to Jacob at Bethel; nor is it an allegory of the spiritual life, symbolising the inward travail of a soul helpless before some overhanging crisis of its destiny. It is a real physical encounter which is described, in which Jacob measures his strength and skill against a divine antagonist, and 'prevails' though at the cost of a bodily injury. No more boldly anthropomorphic narrative is found in Genesis; and unless we shut our eyes to some of its salient features, we must resign the attempt to translate it wholly into terms of religious experience. We have to do with a legend, originating at a low level of religion, in process of accommodation to the purer ideas of revealed religion. . . . In the present passage the god was probably not Yahwe originally, but a local deity, a night-spirit who fears the dawn and refuses to disclose his name. Dr. Frazer has pointed out that such stories as this are associated with water-spirits, and cites many primitive customs which seem to rest on the belief that a river resents being crossed, and drowns many who attempt it. He hazards the conjecture that the original deity of this passage was the spirit of the Jabbok. . . . Like many patriarchal theophanies, the narrative accounts for the foundation of a sanctuary—that of Peniel. . . . By J. and

E the story was incorporated in the national epos as part of the history of Jacob. The God who wrestles with the patriarch is Yahwe; and how far the wrestling was understood as a literal fact remains uncertain. To these writers the main interest lies in the origin of the name Israel, and the blessing bestowed on the nation in the person of its ancestor. A still more refined interpretation is found, it seems to me, in Hosea 12:4-5: 'In the womb he overreached his brother, and in his prime he strove with God. He strove with the Angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication to him.' The substitution of the Angel of Yahwe for the divine Being Himself shows increasing sensitiveness to anthropomorphism; and the last line appears to mark an advance in the spiritualising of the incident, the subject being not the Angel (as Gunkel and others hold) but Jacob, whose 'prevailing' thus becomes that of importunate prayer. We may note in a word Steuernagel's ethnological interpretation. He considers the wrestling to symbolize a victory of the invading Israelites over the inhabitants of N. Gilead. The change of name reflects the fact that a new nation (Israel) arose from the fusion of the Jacob and Rachel tribes" (ICCG, 411-412).

A somewhat modified view of the incident under consideration here is that of JB (53, n.): "This enigmatic story, probably 'Yahwistic,' speaks of a physical struggle, a wrestling with God from which Jacob seems to emerge victor. Jacob recognizes the supernatural character of his adversary and extorts a blessing from him. The text, however, avoids using the name of Yahweh and the unknown antagonist will not give his name. The author has made use of an old story as a means of explaining the name 'Peniel' ('face of God') and the origin of the name 'Israel.' At the same time he gives the story a religious significance; the patriarch holds fast to God and forces from him a blessing; henceforth all who bear Israel's name will have a claim on God. It is not surprising that this

dramatic scene later served as an image of the spiritual combat and of the value of persevering prayer (St. Jerome, Origen)."

It should be noted, in this connection, that the assumptions which form the basis of the views presented in the foregoing excerpts are completely without benefit of any external (historical) evidence whatsoever. They simply echo the general conclusions which originated largely in the thinking of Sir James Frazer (1854-1941), the Scottish anthropologist, as set forth in his monumental work, *The Golden Bough*. (Incidentally, many of these conclusions have been quite generally abandoned). As a matter of fact, the general theory under consideration had its first beginnings in the early twentieth-century effort to apply the "evolution" yardstick to every phase of human history and life. On this view religion is "explained" as a progressive refinement of human thinking about the various aspects of the mystery of being, especially those of death and life, originating with primitive *animism* according to which practically everything—and especially every *living* thing—was supposed to have its own particular tutelary spirit (either benevolent or demonic); then advancing to *polytheism*, in which the numerous gods and goddesses became personifications of natural forces; then to *benotheism*, in which a particular deity emerged as the sovereign of the particular pantheon; this leading naturally, it was said, to *monotheism*. But, according to this view, monotheism (such as that of the Bible) is yet not the end product. That end is, and will be, *pantheism*, in which God becomes one with the totality of being, the sum total of all intelligences constituting the mind of God and the sum total of all material things becoming the body of God, so to speak. This, we are assured, the so-called "religion of the intellectual," is bound to prevail universally. We are reminded of the man who once said that if he were a pantheist his first act of devotion on awakening each

morning would be that of turning over and reverently kissing his pillow. It should be clearly seen that these various speculations as to the purpose of this account of Jacob's wrestling, and as to the identity of the mysterious Wrestler himself, ignore completely the claim which the Bible makes for itself on almost every page, viz., that of bearing the *imprimatur* of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (John 15:26-27, 16:13-15). Generally speaking, anthropologists and sociologists are in the same class with those disciples of John whom the Apostle Paul found at Ephesus (Acts 19:3) who declared that they did not even know that there is a Holy Spirit.

Of course, the identity of the Mysterious (Wonderful) Wrestler is inseparably linked with the divine purpose implicit in the whole incident. On this latter subject, Dr. Speiser writes as follows: "On several occasions, Abraham was favored with an insight into the divine purpose: the Covenant [ch. 15], the Cities of the Plain [ch. 18], the Ordeal of Isaac [ch. 22]. The wonder is greater in the case of Jacob, who would not appear offhand to be marked as an agent of destiny. Yet Jacob is afforded a glimpse of a higher role through the medium of his vision at Bethel, on the eve of his long sojourn with Laban. Now that he is about to return to Canaan, he is given a forewarning at Mahanaim, and is later subjected to the supreme test at Penuel. The general purpose of the Penuel episode should be thus sufficiently clear. In the light of the instance just cited, such manifestations either serve as forecasts or as tests. Abraham's greatest trial came at Moriah (ch. 22). That the meaning of Mahanaim was similar in kind, though clearly not in degree, is indicated by the [Hebrew text]. The real test, however, was reserved for Penuel—a desperate nocturnal struggle with a nameless adversary whose true nature did not dawn on Jacob until the physical darkness had begun to lift. The reader, of course, should not try to spell out details that the author

himself glimpsed as if through a haze. But there can surely be no doubt as to the far-reaching implications of the encounter. Its outcome is ascribed to the opponent's lack of decisive superiority. Yet this explanation should not be pressed unduly. For one thing, Jacob's injury was grave enough to cost him the contest, if such a result had been desired. And for another thing, the description now embodies three distinct aetiologies: (1) The basis for the name Israel; the change of names is itself significant of an impending change in status (as with Abraham and Sarah: see 17:5, 15); (2) the origin of the name Penuel, for which a basis is laid in vss. 21-22 by their fivefold use of the stem *pny* (von Rad); (3) the dietary taboo about the sciatic muscle. Any one of these motifs would suffice to color the whole account. One may conclude, accordingly, that the encounter at Penuel was understood as a test of Jacob's fitness for the larger tasks that lay ahead. The results were encouraging. Though he was left alone to wrestle through the night with a mysterious assailant, Jacob did not falter. The effort left its mark—a permanent injury to remind Jacob of what had taken place, and to serve perhaps as a portent of things to come. Significantly enough, Jacob is henceforth a changed person. The man who could be a party to a cruel hoax that was played on his father and brother, and who fought Laban's treachery with crafty schemes of his own, will soon condemn the vengeful deed by Simeon and Levi (ch. 34) by invoking a higher concept of morality" (ABG, 256).

The Heavenly Visitant: "an unknown person," writes Jamieson, "appeared suddenly to oppose his [Jacob's] entrance into Canaan. Jacob engaged in the encounter with all the mental energy, and grasped his opponent with all the physical tenacity he could exert; till the stranger, unable to shake him off or to vanquish him, touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh—the socket of the femoral joint—

which was followed by an instant and total inability to continue the contest. This mysterious person is called an angel by Jacob himself (48:15, 16) and God (v. 28, 30; Hos. 12:3, 4); and the opinion that is most supported . . . is, that he was 'the angel of the covenant,' who, in a visible form, preluding the incarnation, as was frequently done, appeared to animate the mind, and sympathize with the distress, of his pious servant" (CECG, 215). It should be noted here, as pointed out *infra* by "C.H.M." (Mackintosh), that "it was not Jacob wrestling with a man, but a man wrestling with Jacob." The Mysterious Wrestler sought to accomplish some special end in and for Jacob, not *vice versa*. Mackintosh continues: "in Jacob's case, the divine object was to bring him to see what a poor, feeble, worthless creature he was," etc. We must not lose sight of this most important aspect of the whole incident. Jacob simply had to get away from (crucify) self, in order to "steadily and happily walk with God." (Just as Christians—indeed the saints of all ages—must take up the yoke of self-crucifixion before they can truly company with Christ: cf. Matt. 11:29, 30; Gal. 6:14).

Who was the "man" who wrestled with Jacob? Lange writes: "Some have absurdly held that he was an assassin sent by Esau. Origen: The night-wrestler was an evil spirit (Eph. 6:12). Other fathers hold that he was a good angel. The correct view is that he was the constant revealer of God, the Angel of the Lord. Delitzsch holds 'that it was a manifestation of God, who through the angel was represented and visible as a man.' The well-known refuge from the reception of the Angel of the Incarnation! In his view, earlier explained and refuted, Jacob could not be called the captain, prince of God, but merely the captain, prince of the Angel. 'No one writer in the Pentateuch,' Knobel says, 'so represents God under the human form of things as this one.' Jacob surely,

with his prayers and tears, has brought God, or the Angel of the Lord, more completely into the human form and likeness than had ever occurred before. The man with whom he wrestles is obviously not only the angel, but the type also of the future incarnation of God. As the angel of his face, however, he marks the development of the form of the angel of revelation which is taken up and carried on in Exodus. The angel and type of the incarnation is at the same time an angel and type of atonement. When Kurtz says 'that God here meets Jacob as an enemy, that he makes an hostile attack,' the expressions are too strong. There is an obvious distinction between a wrestler and one who attacks an enemy, leaving out of view the fact, that there is nothing said here as to which party made the assault. After the revelations which Jacob received at Bethel, Haran, and Mahanaim, a peculiar hostile relation to God is out of the question. So much, certainly, is true, that Jacob, to whom no mortal sins are imputed for which he must overcome the wrath of God (Kurtz, the divine wrath is not overcome, but atoned), must now be brought to feel that in all his sins against men he has striven and sinned against God, and that he must first of all be reconciled to him, for all the hitherto unrecognized sins of his life. The wrestling of Jacob has many points of resemblance to the restoration of Peter (John 21). As this history of Peter does not treat of the reconstituting of his general relation to Jesus, but rather of the perfecting of that relation, and with this of the restitution of his apostolic calling and office, so here the struggle of Jacob does not concern so much the question of his fundamental reconciliation with Jehovah, but the completion of that reconciliation and the assurance of his faith in his patriarchal calling. And if Christ then spake to Peter, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, etc., in order that he might know that henceforth an entire reliance upon the leading and protection of God

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must take the place of his sinful feeling of his own strength and his attachment to his own way, so, doubtless, the lameness of Jacob's thigh has the same significance, with this difference, that as Peter must be cured of the self-will of his rash, fiery temperament, so Jacob from his selfish prudence, tending to more cunning. A like relation holds between their old and new names. The name Simon, in the narrative of Peter's restoration, points to his old nature, just as here the name Jacob to the old nature of Israel" (CDHCG, 554-555).

Let the following excerpt give "the conclusion of the whole matter," the only conclusion that is in harmony with Biblical teaching as a whole: "Vv. 24-28. The Son of God in human form appeared to Jacob as if he intended to cast him down; but Jacob, enabled of God with bodily, and chiefly spiritual strength, in fervent prayer prevailed over what opposition Christ gave him. To render him sensible of his weakness, Christ disjoined his thigh, 2 Cor. 12:7; but after encouraging his supplications, he changed his name as a token of bettering his condition. Hence, when the church is represented as infirm, she is called *Jacob*, Amos 7:2, 5, 8; Isa. 41:14; but when her valor and excellency are signified, she is called *Israel*, Gal. 6:16. Thus God gave Jacob strength to overcome, and also the reward and praise of the victory" (SIBG, 266). (On "The Angel of Jehovah," see again my *Genesis*, Vol. III, pp. 216-220, 375-377, 496-500).

(4) *The Change of Name*, vv. 26-29. V. 26—The Mysterious Wrestler said to Jacob, *Let me go*, that is to say, literally, *send me away*; meaning that he yielded the victory to Jacob, assigning as his reason, *for the day breaks*, that is, *the dawn is ascending*; meaning, *it is time for you to proceed to your other duties*. Or, perhaps the heavenly Visitant was not willing that the vision which was meant for Jacob only should be seen by others, or perhaps that His own glory should be seen by Jacob.

And Jacob replied, *I will not let you go, except you bless me.* And the Heavenly Wrestler said, *What is your name?* (not as if demanding to be informed, but to direct attention to it in view of the change about to be made in it). And the patriarch replied, *Jacob.* Said the Other, *Your name shall be called no more, Jacob,* that is, Heel-catcher or Supplanter (cf. 25:26), *but Israel,* "prince of God," or perhaps "wrestler with God." "Instead of a supplanter, he has now become the holy wrestler with God, hence his name is no longer Jacob, but Israel. There is no trace in his after-history of the application of his wisdom to mere selfish and cunning purposes. But the new name confirms to him in a word the theocratic promise, as the name Abraham confirmed it to Abram (35:10)" (Lange). *And hast prevailed:* having overcome in his wrestling with God, he need have no fears concerning his approaching meeting with Esau. "The question about Jacob's name is rhetorical. The object is to contrast the old name with the new and thereby mark the change in Jacob's status" (Speiser). "The name [Israel] is best explained etymologically as 'May El persevere.' But both Jacob and Israel are treated here symbolically, to indicate the transformation of a man once devious (Jacob) into a forthright and resolute fighter" (Speiser, 255). "Just as God changed Abram's name to Abraham, He now changes Jacob's name to Israel, by which the Hebrews are henceforth to be known. It is a name for the people and for an individual. The normative use of *Israel* in the Bible denotes the people just as *American* denotes a citizen of the United States (HSB, 54, n.). "It shall no more be said that you attained the blessings by 'supplanting' (root *akab*), but through 'superiority' (root *sar*). God will appear to you at Bethel, change your name and bless you; I will be there too and admit your right to the blessings (Rashi)" (SC, 200). "In Scripture the name indicates the nature of the office; here the change of a

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name denoted the exaltation of person and of dignity. Jacob was raised to be a prince, and a prince with God! A royal priesthood was conferred upon him; the privilege of admission into the Divine presence, and the right of presenting petitions, and of having them granted. And all this was granted to him, not as an individual merely, but as a public personage—the head and representative of those who in after-times should possess like faith and a similar spirit of prayer. Nothing could be more dissimilar than Israel's real dignity and his outward condition—an exile and a suppliant, scarcely escaped from the hands of Laban, and seemingly about to perish by the revenge of his brother—yet possessing an invisible power that secured the success of his undertakings. By prayer he could prevail with God; and through Him who overrules all the thoughts of the heart, he could prevail with men also, though they are harder to be entreated than the King of kings. . . . The word *men* is in the plural, as indicating that he had not only prevailed over Isaac and over Laban, who presented obstacles to the fulfilment of the Divine promise, but that he would prevail in overcoming the wrath of his vindictive brother, and giving him a pledge that, wherever he might go, he would be an object of the Divine care and protection" (Jamieson, 216). "Man is a child of two worlds, Gen. 2:7. His body is of the dust, but his spirit is the Breath of God, inbreathed by God Himself. For twenty years these two natures had striven with each other [in Jacob]. This struggle is typical. There is no assurance that good will triumph of itself; it must be supported by strength of will and determination for the right, which endure for all time and under all circumstances. Men become changed, blessed by the very evil powers with which they have striven. No longer the old Jacob, but now the new Israel. Yet man never remains unscathed. Victory over evil is never gained in the darkness of the night. So with the dawn Jacob became a new man, with

an appropriate new name, 'Champion of God.' Then he crossed the river" (Morgenstern).

A like relation holds, writes Lange, between the old and new names of Jacob and Peter. "The name Simon, in the narrative of Peter's restoration (John 21), points to his old nature, just as here the name Jacob to the old nature of Israel. Simon's nature, however, was not purely evil, but tainted with evil. This is true also of Jacob. He must be purified and freed from his sinful cunning, but not from his prudence and constant perseverance. Into these latter features of his character he was consecrated as Israel. The name Abram passes over into the name Abraham, and is ever included in it; the name Isaac has in itself a two-fold significance, which intimates the laughter of doubt, and that of a joyful faith; but the name Jacob goes along with that of Israel, not merely because the latter was preeminently the name of the people, nor because in the new-birth the old life continues side by side, and only gradually disappears, but also because it designates an element of lasting worth, and still further, because Israel must be continually reminded of the contrast between its merely natural and its sacred destination. The sacred and honored name of the Israelitish people, descends from this night-wrestling of Israel, just as the name Christian comes from the birth and name of Christ. The peculiar destination of the Old-Testament children of the covenant is that they should be warriors, princes of God, men of prayer, who carry on the conflicts of faith to victory. Hence the name Israelites attains completeness in that of Christians, those who are divinely blessed, the anointed of God. The name Jews, in its derivation from Judah, in their Messianic destination, forms the transition between these names. They are those who are praised, who are a praise and glory to God. But the contrast between the cunning, running into deceit, which characterized the old nature of Jacob, and the persevering

struggle of faith and prayer of Israel, pervades the whole history of the Jewish people, and hence Hosea (ch. 12:1ff.) applies it to the Jewish people. . . . The force of this contrast lies in this, that in the true Israelite there is no guile, since he is purified from guile (John 1:47), and that Christ, the king of Israel (v. 44), is without guile, while the deceit of the Jacob nature reaches its most terrible and atrocious perfection in the kiss of Judas" (CDHCG, 555).

V. 29—Jacob now requests the Mysterious Wrestler to reveal *His* name. The actual meaning of this request was obviously equivalent to asking the latter to *reveal His identity*. "The reply is in part the same as that of the Angel who was asked the same question by Manoah (Judg. 13:18), only here the continuation of the answer is omitted—'seeing it is wonderful.' Several reasons for the somewhat evasive reply may be discerned. The one that presents itself first is that the question in reply practically means: 'Why ask to know My identity, seeing you already know it?' Add to this the fact that, as Luther indicates, the failure to reply leaves the name as well as the whole experience shrouded in mystery, and mysteries invite further reflection. In spiritual experiences there is and must be the challenge of the mysterious. In spiritual experiences there is and must be the challenge of the mysterious. A spiritual experience so lucid that a man sees through and is able to analyze every part of it must be rather shallow. And lastly, the blessing about to be imparted is a further revelation of His name and being, that carries Jacob as far as he needs to be brought. . . . The blessing spoken of is an added blessing. The substance of this added blessing we do not know. Luther's supposition is as much to the point as any when he remarks that it may have been the great patriarchal blessing concerning the coming Messiah through whom as Jacob's 'seed' all the families of the earth were to be blessed" (EG, 280-281).

(5) *Peniel*, v. 30. The remembrance of the mysterious struggle with the celestial Wrestler Jacob now perpetuated in the name which he gave to the place where it had occurred. He named the place *Peniel*: "for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." The significance of this statement is the fact that he had seen God face to face, and yet lived (cf. Exo. 33:11, Deut. 34:10, Isa. 6:5); cf. especially Exo. 33:20. *Peniel*, also called *Penuel*, meant "face of God." This was one of the two towns east of the Jordan which was destroyed by Gideon because it had refused to aid him in his pursuit of the Midianites (Judg. 8:8ff., esp. v. 17, also 1 Ki. 12:25). "The common belief in ancient Israel was that no mortal could see God's face and live, Exo. 33:20" (Morgenstern).

The reason for the name is assigned in the sentence, *I have seen God face to face*, etc. "Divine manifestations deserve to be commemorated in every possible way. Jacob marks this one for himself and for his descendants by giving a distinctive name to the place where it occurred. Though 'Peniel' like 'Mahanaim' has not been definitely located, it may still be a used ford of the Jabbok near Jordan and is mentioned in Judg. 8 and 1 Kings 12:25. This name should not be said to be 'derived from an incidental feature of the experience.' That would be the equivalent of saying: Jacob was unhappy in his choice of a name for this memorable spot. Of course, his experience was a purifying one that was to break self-trust and cast him wholly upon God's mercy. But this experience centered in a personal encounter with God, a direct meeting of God, a seeing of Him, though not with the eye of the body. Does not the whole experience, then, sum itself up as a seeing of God and living to tell of it, though sinful nature should perish at so holy a contact? The name touches upon the essence of Jacob's experience. For *Peniel* means 'face of God.' The explanation really says more than 'my life, or soul, was spared.' For *natsal* means 'delivered' or 'pre-

served.' God did more than let no harm come to Jacob; He again restored him who otherwise would surely have perished. . . . With an adequate and historically accurate account of the origin of the name 'Peniel' before us, we may well wonder at those who under such circumstances go far afield and try to account for its origin by comparing the Phoenician promontory of which Strabo speaks, which was called *theou prosopon* ('face of God'). Those who have lost their respect for God's Word no longer hear what it says and make fools of themselves in their wisdom by inventing fanciful explanations for that which has been supplied with an authentic explanation" (EG, 881-882). (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14, 1:18-30).

"*Peniel*—the face of God. The reason of this name is assigned in the sentence, *I have seen God face to face*. He is at first called a man. Hosea terms him *the angel* (12:4, 5 (3, 4)). And here Jacob names him God. Hence some men, deeply penetrated with the ineffable grandeur of the divine nature, are disposed to resolve the first act at least into an impression on the imagination. We do not pretend to define with undue nicety the mode of this wrestling. And we are far from saying that every sentence of Scripture is to be understood in a literal sense. But until some cogent reason be assigned, we do not feel at liberty to depart from the literal sense in this instance. The whole theory of a revelation from God to man is founded upon the principle that God can adapt himself to the apprehension of the being whom he has made in his own image. This principle we accept, and we dare not limit its application further than the demonstrative laws of reason and conscience demand. If God walk in the garden with Adam, expostulate with Cain, give a specification of the ark to Noah, partake of the hospitality of Abraham, take Lot by the hand to deliver him from Sodom, we cannot affirm that he may not, for a worthy end, enter into a bodily conflict with Jacob. These various mani-

festations of God to man differ only in degree. If we admit any one, we are bound by parity of reason to accept all the others" (Murphy, MG, 414).

Vv. 31, 32: *The sun rose upon Jacob as he passed over Penuel, and he limped upon his thigh.* The sun rose upon him: "there was sunshine within and sunshine without. When Judas went forth on his dark design, we read, 'It was night,' John 13:30." He halted on his thigh: "thus carrying with him a memorial of his conflict, as Paul afterwards bore about with him a stake in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7)" "A new day of light and of hope was dawning for Jacob after the night of gloom and despair." Note the phrases, "*the hollow of Jacob's thigh*" and "*in the sinew of the hip*." "With the rising of the sun after the night of his conflict, the night of anguish and fear also passed away from Jacob's mind, so that he was able to leave Penuel in comfort, and go forward on his journey. The dislocation of the thigh alone remained. For this reason the children of Israel are accustomed to avoid eating the *nervus ischiadicus*, the principal nerve in the neighborhood of the hip, which is easily injured by any violent strain in wrestling. '*Upon this day*': the remark is applicable still" (K-D, 307). "There is no mention of this ancient food-law elsewhere in the Bible" (JB, 55). "God did not demand this ritual observance in the Mosaic law, but the descendants of Israel of their own accord instituted the practice because they recognized how extremely important this experience of Jacob was for him and for themselves. Some interpret this *gidh hannasbeh* to be the sciatic nerve. Delitzsch tells us that Jewish practice defines it as the inner vein on the hindquarter together with the outer vein plus the ramifications of both" (EG, 883). "The author explains the custom of the Israelites, in not eating of the sinew of the thigh, by a reference to this touch of the hip of their ancestor by God. Through this divine touch, this sinew, like the

blood (ch. 9:4) was consecrated and sanctified to God. This custom is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament; the Talmudists, however (Tract. Cholin, Mischna, 7), regard it as a law, whose transgression was to be punished with several stripes (Knobel)" (Lange, 550).

"Hebrew, *nervus ischiaticus*, the nerve or tendon that extends from the top of the thigh down the whole leg to the ankles. . . . Josephus (*Antiquities*, Bk. I, ch. 20, sec. 2) renders it more correctly *the broad sinew*. 'Jacob himself,' continues that historian, abstained from eating that sinew ever afterwards; and for his sake it is still not eaten by us.' The practice of the Jews in abstaining from eating this in the flesh of animals is not founded on the law of Moses, but is merely a traditional usage. The sinew is carefully extracted; and where there are no persons skilled enough for that operation, they do not make use of the hind legs at all. Abstinence from this particular article of animal food is universally practised by the Jews, and is so peculiar a custom in their daily observance, that as the readers of 'The Jews in China' will remember, the worship of that people is designated by the name of the *Teaou-kin-keaou*, or 'Pluck-sinew-religion.' This remarkable incident formed a turning-point in the life of Jacob—a point at which he was raised above the deceit and the worldliness of his past life into higher and more spiritual relations with God. Those who regard it as a vision, an ecstasy during which all the powers of his nature were intensely excited, so that, in fact, he was above and out of himself, consider the impression made upon his limb as the effect of 'a mental struggle, involving a strain so severe, not on the moral only, but also on the physical being of the terrified man, that the muscles of his body bore the mark ever after. Such results of wild emotion are not of infrequent occurrence in persons of enthusiastic temperament, as is exemplified by the proceedings of the dancing dervishes of our own time.' But that it was not

merely a vision or internal agony of the soul—that it was a real transaction—appears not only from a new designation given to Jacob himself, which was always in memory of some remarkable event, and from the significant name which he bestowed upon the scene of this occurrence, but from the fact of the wound he received being in a part of his body so situated that Jacob must have been assured no mere man could have so *touched* it as to effect a dislocation. No objection can be urged against the appearance of the Divine Being on this occasion in the form of humanity that will not equally militate against the reality of similar manifestations already regarded as being made in the experience of the patriarchs. There was a special propriety in the appearance of 'the angel of the Lord' as a man on this occasion, and in his assuming the attitude of a foe, to convince Jacob that, in order to overcome his formidable brother, he must first overcome God, not by the carnal weapons with which he had heretofore obtained his advantages over men, but by the spiritual influence of faith and prayer. Hence, when the contest was at first carried on as between man and man, Jacob appeared more athletic and powerful. But his antagonist having wounded him in such a manner as could only have been done by a being of a superior nature, his eyes were opened: he found himself unconsciously striving with God, and his self-confidence utterly failed, so that forthwith he desisted from the struggle, and had recourse to supplication and tears (Hos. 12:4). In short, this wrestling was a symbolic act, designed to show Jacob that he had no hope of conquering his powerful foe by stratagem, reliance on his own strength—as his lameness indeed proved—or by any other means than a firm, unwavering trust in the word of that covenant God who had promised (ch. 28:13-15), and would establish him in, the possession of Canaan as an inheritance to his posterity. 'Hosea clearly teaches that Jacob merely completed, by his wrestling with God,

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what he had already been engaged in from his mother's womb—viz., his striving for the birthright; in other words, for the possession of the covenant promise and the covenant blessing" (Delitzsch) " (Jamieson, CECG, 216, 217).

(6) *Reconciliation with Esau* (33:1-17). All preparations as recorded in chapter 32 having been completed, at daybreak Jacob had just crossed the stream when he looked ahead "*and behold, Esau was coming,*" and one glance was sufficient to show that the brother was accompanied by his contingent of four hundred men. Jacob then took certain other precautionary measures. He arranged his wives and his children "in climactic order" so that the most beloved came last and hence were in the proper position to be spared if none else were. The maids with their children were in the front, Leah with hers were in the middle, and Rachel with Joseph were at the rear of the procession. Jacob then put himself in the forefront, thus to be first in the way of danger should any develop. As he proceeded toward his brother *he bowed himself seven times.* "The manner of doing this is by looking towards a superior and bowing with the upper part of the body brought parallel to the ground, then advancing a few steps and bowing again, and repeating this obeisance till, at the seventh time, the suppliant stands in the immediate presence of his superior." "This seems to mean that Jacob, on approaching his brother, stopped at intervals and bowed, and then advanced and bowed again, until the seventh bow brought him near to his brother. This was a mark of profound respect, nor need we suppose there was any simulation of humility in it, for it was, and is, customary for elder brothers to be treated by the younger with great respect in the East" (SIBG, 267). "The sevenfold prostration is a widespread custom attested also in the Amarna letters and those of Ugarit" (AtD, 91). Jacob "approaches his brother with the reverence befitting a sovereign; the sevenfold prostration

is a favorite formula of homage in the Tel Amarna tablets: 'At the feet of my Lord, my Sun, I fall down seven and seven times.' It does not follow, however, that Jacob acknowledged himself Esau's vassal" (ICCG, 413). Other commentators differ somewhat: e.g., "By this manifestation of deep reverence (not complete prostration, but a deep Oriental bow, in which the head approaches the ground, but does not touch it), Jacob hoped to win his brother's heart. He humbled himself before him as the elder, with the feeling that he had formerly sinned against him. Esau, on the other hand, 'had a comparatively better, but not so tender a conscience.' At the sight of Jacob he was carried away by the natural feelings of brotherly affection, and running up to him, embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they both wept. . . . Even if there was still some malice in Esau's heart, it was overcome by the humility with which his brother met him, so that he allowed free course to the generous emotions of his heart; all the more, because the 'roving life' which suited his nature had procured him such wealth and power, that he was quite equal to his brother in earthly possessions" (K-D, 307, 308). Commentators differ in their interpretation of the emotions of the two brothers in this confrontation. "It is difficult to characterize," writes Skinner, "the spirit in which the main incident is conceived. Was Esau's purpose friendly from the first, or was he turned from thoughts of vengeance by Jacob's submissive and flattering demeanor? Does the writer regard the reconciliation as equally honorable to both parties, or does he only admire the skill and knowledge of human nature with which Jacob tames his brother's ferocity? The truth probably lies between two extremes. That Esau's intention was hostile, and that Jacob gained a diplomatic victory over him, cannot reasonably be doubted. On the other hand, the narrator must be acquitted of a desire to humiliate Esau. If he was

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vanquished by generosity, the noblest qualities of manhood were released in him; and he displays a chivalrous magnanimity which no appreciative audience could ever have held in contempt. So far as any national feeling is reflected, it is one of genuine respect and goodwill towards the Edomites" (ICCG, 412). "Only God working in the heart of Esau explains the change in him as he greets Jacob in a friendly, not in a hostile, manner" (HSB, 55). Speiser seems to present the most sensible view: "The meeting between the two brothers turned out to be an affectionate reunion. Jacob's apprehensions had proved unfounded and his elaborate precautions altogether unnecessary. While the intervening twenty years could not erase Jacob's sense of guilt, Esau's resentment had long since vanished" (ABG, 260). "*Esau ran . . . fell on his neck and kissed him.*" What a sudden and surprising change! Whether the sight of the princely present and the profound homage of Jacob had produced this effect, or it had proceeded from the impulsive character of Esau, the cherished enmity of twenty years in a moment disappeared; the weapons of war were laid aside, and the warmest tokens of mutual affection reciprocated between the brothers. But doubtless the efficient cause was the secret, subduing influence of grace (Prov. 21:1) which converted Esau from an enemy into a friend. This is an exact description of a meeting between relatives in the East, especially to a member of the family who has returned home after a long absence. They place their hands on his neck, kiss each cheek, and then lean their heads for some seconds, during their fond embrace, on each other's shoulders. It is their customary mode of testifying affection, and though it might not have been expected from Esau to Jacob, his receiving his brother with such a cordial greeting was in accordance with the natural kindness and generosity of his character" (Jamieson, 217). (Cf. Luke 15:20). "So it comes about that in this

chapter, as in some of the earlier ones, Esau seems at first the better of the two brothers. Jacob is full of inhibitions; Esau has none, and lets himself go wherever the flood of his emotion turns. Jacob makes his elaborate plans to placate what he thinks will be Esau's long-cherished wrath. Esau has dismissed that long ago, and the instinct uppermost in him is just the old one of kinship. So he ran to meet Jacob, *and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* He is unconcerned with all the presents Jacob tries to urge upon him; he does not want them. And note the difference in the way each of the two speaks to the other. Jacob, fearful and anxious, says of the presents he is offering, *These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.* But Esau waves them aside, because he has enough, and because Jacob is *my brother.* How strange are the mingled elements in human characters! Esau was to be reckoned as the 'profane' man; and in the end, of the two he was the failure. Yet in immediate ways he seemed often so much more attractive: for he was vigorous, warmhearted, and too essentially good-natured to carry a grudge. One can see men like him in every generation—impulsive, friendly men who seem to like everybody, and whom it is easy for everybody to like. Yet their fatal weakness may be, as with Esau, that they are too easygoing to care greatly about the values of life that matter most. Consider, on the other hand, Jacob. Even yet he was not finished with the consequences of old wrongs. He is distrustful of Esau because he knows that he has not deserved kindness at his hands. That is always one of the possible penalties of wrongdoing. A man projects into the imagined feelings of others the condemnation he inwardly visits upon himself. He dares not assume their good will, or even take the risk of believing in it when it is made plain. So Jacob not only tried anxiously to buy Esau's favor, but when Esau showed that he had it without any price, Jacob

was still incredulous; and the one thing he wanted to do was to separate from Esau as soon as he plausibly could (vss. 12-15). And yet, and yet—this Jacob is the one who at Peniel had ‘prevailed,’ had ‘seen God face to face,’ and who would prevail. The reason was in the fact which the earlier chapters already had prefigured, that this man in spite of his faults never lost the consciousness that his life must try to relate itself to God” (IBG, 730, 731). We must conclude that in this closing scene in the lives of these two brothers, *Esau was still being Esau*. After all, the only charge against him is that he was *profane*: he lived his life outside the temple of God, *out in this present evil world*. And Jacob, in spite of the fact of his growth in his spiritual life, was still, to some extent, Jacob. And as Jacob he would before much time had elapsed suffer the loss of his beloved Rachel and in his later years experience a more terrible deception, one that would involve profound tragedy leading to what was equivalent to exile from the Land of Promise and subsequent galling bondage for his posterity.

Vv. 5-7: We read that Esau’s eyes fell on the women and children who were following Jacob, and naturally he inquired as to who they were. Jacob replied, “The children with whom Elohim has graciously favored me.” Whereupon the mothers and their children approached in order, also making reverential obeisance. Vv. 8-11: Esau then inquired about the *company* (A.V., *drove*) that had met him, that is, the presents of cattle that were sent to meet him, and, assuring Jacob that he had enough of this world’s goods, at first refused to accept this gift; on Jacob’s insistence however, he was finally persuaded to do so. Note v. 10 especially: “The thought is this: In thy countenance I have been met with divine (heavenly) friendliness (cf. 1 Sam. 29:9, 2 Sam. 14:17). Jacob might say this without cringing, since he ‘must have discerned the work of God in the unexpected change in his brother’s disposition

toward him, and in his brother's friendliness a reflection of the divine.' " V. 11—"I have enough," literally, "all." Not all kinds of things; but viz., as the heir of the Divine Promise.

Vv. 12-15. Esau proposes to accompany Jacob on his way. The latter, however, declines. Some commentators persist in thinking that Jacob was still suspicious of Esau's intentions. This hardly seems possible. We prefer the explanation which Jacob himself made: it has the ring of truth. "Lastly, Esau proposed to accompany Jacob on his journey. But Jacob politely declined not only his own company, but also the escort, which Esau afterwards offered him, of a portion of his attendants; the latter as being unnecessary, the former as likely to be injurious to his flocks. This did not spring from any feeling of distrust; and the ground assigned was no mere pretext." He needed no military guard, "for he knew he was defended by the hosts of God"; his refusal was dictated by the exigencies of his household and his animals: a caravan, with small children and "cattle" that required care, could not possibly keep pace with Esau and his horsemen, without suffering harm. And Jacob could hardly expect his brother to accommodate himself to the pace at which he was traveling. For this reason he wished Esau to go on first, explaining that he would drive gently behind, "according to the pace at which the cattle and the children could go" (Luther). V. 14—*until I come unto my lord unto Seir.* "These words are not to be understood as meaning that he, Jacob, intended to go direct to Seir; consequently they were not a wilful deception for the purpose of getting rid of Esau. Jacob's destination was Canaan, and in Canaan probably Hebron, where his father Isaac still lived. From thence he may have thought of paying a visit to Esau in Seir. Whether he carried out this intention or not, we cannot tell; for we have not a record of all that Jacob did, but only of the principal

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events of his life. We afterwards find them both meeting together as friends at their father's funeral (35:29). Again, the attitude of inferiority which Jacob assumed in his conversation with Esau, addressing him as lord, and speaking of himself as servant, was simply an act of courtesy suited to the circumstances, in which he paid to Esau the respect due to the head of a powerful band; since he could not conscientiously have maintained the attitude of a brother, when inwardly and spiritually, in spite of Esau's friendly meeting, they were so completely separated, the one from the other" (K-D, 308-309). (We cannot agree that there was any fawning, any cringing demeanor, on Jacob's part, in these various exchanges with Esau; that in fact there was anything more involved than the conventional courtesies which have always been given such strict observance among the heads of different clans or tribes of the Near East.)

Here, in chapter 33, the long and fascinating story of the relationship of Esau and Jacob comes to its end. Esau, we are told, sets out "on his way unto Seir" (not the prospective Mount Seir or the Edom which was the equivalent of Mount Seir, which Esau and his people occupied after Isaac's death, 35:27-29, 36:1-8, but the Land of Seir, the Field of Edom, south and east of Beer-sheba, over which Esau first extended his occupancy, 32:3). And Jacob and his retinue pushed on to Shechem (33:18) and finally to Hebron (35:27).

Jacob journeyed first to Succoth, v. 17 (that is, "booths"). Succoth is now usually identified with *Tell Deir-Alla*, a short distance east of the Jordan and north of the Jabbok, *i.e.*, near the point of confluence of the two rivers. The fact that he built a house indicates a residence there of several years, as also does the fact that when Dinah came to Shechem (ch. 34) she was already mature. "Jacob erected at this stage his (moveable) house or tent for his family while the booths were for his cattle,

The flocks in the East being generally allowed to remain in the open fields by night and day during winter and summer, and seldom put under cover, the erection of booths by Jacob is recorded as an unusual circumstance; and perhaps the almost tropical climate of the Jordan valley may have rendered some shelter necessary. Succoth, which is mentioned here by a prolepsis, was the name given to the first station at which Jacob halted on his arrival in Canaan. His posterity, when dwelling in houses of stone, built a city there and called it Succoth, to commemorate the fact of their ancestor having made it a halting-place" (Jamieson, 218). The town itself stood, if its position is rightly indicated on the maps, south of the Jabbok, in the angle formed by this stream and the Jordan, and almost equidistant from both. The name *Succoth* was derived from the peculiar type of hut or booth built for sheltering cattle. These booths, reported by travelers as being still occupied by Bedouins of the Jordan valley, are described as "rude huts of reeds, sometimes covered with long grass, and sometimes with a piece of tent" (Whitelaw, PCG, 401). Evidently Succoth was the other town east of the Jordan that was destroyed by Gideon (Judg., ch. 8). The reference to the name and its meaning, "booths," seems to indicate that this was a singular circumstance. Jacob's motive here "does not appear, but it was, and is, unusual in the East to put the flocks and herds under cover. They remain night and day, winter and summer, in the open air" (SIBG, 267).

Some commentators hold that Jacob was still distrustful of Esau, even at the time of their parting, it would seem, amicably. E.g., the following comment on v. 14—"Jacob was still distrustful of Esau. He had himself practised cunning and deception, and now he was harassed by the fear of others, when in reality there was no cause. His words to Esau must have left the impression that he would follow him to Seir at such a pace

as the cattle and children could bear; but the moment Esau and his formidable escort set out southward, Jacob turned westward and crossed the Jordan" (SIBG, 267). How long Jacob remained in Succoth we cannot determine from the text. "We may conclude that he stayed there some years, from the circumstance, that by erecting a house and huts he prepared for a lengthened stay. The motives which induced him to remain there are also unknown to us. But when Knobel adduces the fact, that Jacob came to Canaan for the purpose of visiting Isaac (31:18), as a reason why it is improbable that he continued long at Succoth, he forgets that Jacob could visit his father from Succoth just as well as from Shechem, and that, with the number of people and cattle that he had about him, it was impossible that he should join and subordinate himself to Isaac's household, after having attained through his past life and the promises of God a position of patriarchal independence" (K-D, 310). (According to Josh. 13:27, Succoth was in the Jordan valley and was allotted to the tribe of Gad as a part of the district of the Jordan, 'on the other side of Jordan eastward,' and this is confirmed in Judg. 8:4-5.)

(Parenthetically, we call attention to the word 'cattle' as it is used in the translation of these patriarchal narratives. The student may find the word confusing, because it is used with varying degrees of ambiguity. When the children of Israel arrived in Egypt, they were assigned to the land of Goshen, with its pastoral facilities, where they became herdsmen and shepherds to Pharaoh. The Egyptian economy was that of a feudal system: the land was owned by the Pharaoh.) In the Old Testament, the word *mikneb*, translated *cattle*, signifies *possessions*. The specific words for animals of the bovine species, and for sheep and goats, are occasionally rendered *cattle*, as is also the word *behemah*, which means *beast* in general. Cattle, therefore, in the Old Testament, include varieties

of oxen, bullocks, heifers, goats, sheep, and even asses, camels, and horses. (Cf. Gen. 13:2, Exo. 34:19, Lev. 1:2, Num. 32:1-5, 1 Ki. 1:19, Psa. 50:10, etc.).

3. Jacob at Shechem, vv. 18-20

18 And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram; and encamped before the city. 19 And he bought the parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money. 20 And he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

From Succoth, after an indeterminable length of time, Jacob crossed a ford of the Jordan and *came in peace* "to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan." He came in peace: "lit. 'whole' in body, having been healed of his limping; whole financially and in his learning, having forgotten nothing of it in Laban's house (Rashi)" (SC, 204). What Jacob had asked for in his vow at Bethel (28:21), prior to his departure from Canaan, was now fulfilled. He had returned in safety "to the land of Canaan." "Succoth, therefore, did not belong to the land of Canaan, but must have been on the eastern side of the Jordan" (K-D, 311).

Jacob came to *the city of Shechem*: "so called from Shechem, the son of the Hivite prince Hamor, v. 19, 34:2ff" (K-D). "But most writers, following the Septuagint, take Shalem as a proper name—a city of (prince) Shechem (cf. ch. 34, Judg. 9:28)" (Jamieson). (Cf. marginal rendering, A.S.V., *to Shalem, a city*). There seems very good reason, however, for the view that the original word was adjectival (not a proper name meaning *to Shalem*) signifying, *safe, peaceful*, hence enforcing the twofold reference to Jacob's return *in peace* (v. 18. cf. 28:21). Gen. 12:6 seems to indicate that the city of

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Shechem was not known in Abraham's time; we may conclude that Hamor founded it and called it by the name of his son. In the allocation of the land to the twelve tribes, Shechem fell to Ephraim (Josh. 20:7), but was assigned to the Levites and became a city of refuge (Josh. 21:20-21). It was the scene of the promulgation of the law, when its blessings were announced from Gerizim and its curses from Ebal (Deut. 27:11 ff., Josh. 8:33-35). It was here that Joshua assembled the people just before his death and delivered his "farewell address" (Josh. 24:1-25). The later history of the site is closely associated with the Samaritans and their sacred mount, Gerizim. The memory of Jacob's abode there is preserved by "Jacob's Well" at Sychar (John 4:1-26): the ruins of Shechem itself have been unearthed by archeologists, at the east end of the pass between Ebal and Gerizim. Sychar is called "Shechem" in the old Syriac Gospels. (See UBD, HBD).

Jacob pitched his tent before the town, that is, to the east of it. The population of Canaan apparently had risen greatly in numbers, as in the social scale, from the time Abraham had fed his flocks on the free, unoccupied pasture land (or "place of Shechem," 12:6). In Jacob's day a city had been built on the spot, and the adjoining grounds was private property, a segment of which he had to purchase for the site of his encampment. He bought this piece of ground from the sons of Hamor for 100 *Kesita*—a coin stamped with the figure of a lamb; it has been supposed from 23:15, 16, that the kesitah was equivalent to four shekels. It is uncertain, however, whether this was its actual value in Canaan in Jacob's time. (The transliteration here is *kesitah*; the translation is "piece of money"; cf. Job 42:11). In all likelihood it was "an ingot of precious metal of recognized value. The LXX of Gen. 33:19 renders it 'lamb'. In the ancient Middle East precious metals carved in animal shapes were used

in various sizes for standard weights and as currency" (HBD, s.v.). The circulation of coined money, however, is another proof of the early progress of the Canaanites in social and cultural advancement. This purchase undoubtedly shows us that Jacob, relying on God's promise, regarded Canaan as his own home and as the home of his seed. Was it not in this field that he afterward sank a well (cf. John 4:6)? "This piece of field, which fell to the lot of the sons of Joseph, and where Joseph's bones were buried (Josh. 24:32), was, according to tradition, the plain which stretches out at the southeastern opening of the valley of Shechem, where Jacob's well is still pointed out (John 4:6), also Joseph's grave, a Mahometan wely (grave) two or three hundred paces to the north" (K-D, 311). (It is interesting to note the over-all correspondence between Abraham's purchase of a field and cave from "the children of Heth" and Jacob's purchase of a field from "the children of Hamor": Gen. 23:16, 33:19). (The student will find the echoes of this narrative of Jacob at Shechem in Gen. 49:5-7, especially with respect to the deeds of Simeon and Levi, as reported in ch. 34). (Note also the reference in this story to Hamor as a *Hivite*; cf. Gen. 10:17. "Probably, however, we should read with the Greek 'Horite,' one of an enclave of non-semitic, uncircumcised groups from the north, Deut. 2:12ff." (JB, 55). These names, Horites, Philistines, Amorites, Arameans, Canaanites, etc., are used with considerable license throughout the Pentateuch.)

Finally, we read that Jacob *erected there* (i.e., on his field in the vicinity of Shechem) an *altar* (as Abraham had done previously after his entrance into Canaan 12:7), and called it *El-Elohe-Israel* (*God, the mighty, is the God of Israel*). That is, he named it with this name or he dedicated it to *El-Elohe-Israel*. "Delitzsch views this title as a kind of superscription. But Jacob's conse-

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cration means more than that his God is not a mere imaginary deity; it means, further, that he has proved himself actually to be God (God is the God of Israel); God in the clear, definite form *El, the Mighty, is the God of Israel, the wrestler with God.* Israel had experienced both, in the almighty protection which his God had shown him from Bethel throughout his journeyings, and in the wrestlings with him, and learned his might. In the Mosaic period the expression, Jehovah, the God of Israel, takes its place (Exo. 34:23). ‘The chosen name of God in the book of Joshua’ (Delitzsch)” (Lange, 560). “The name of the altar embraces, and stamps upon the memory of the world, the result of the past of Jacob’s life, and the experiences through which Jacob had become Israel” (Gosman, in Lange, 560).

The purchase of the ground is referred to in Joshua 24:32 in the story of Joseph’s burial. “It is significant that Israel’s claim to the grave of Joseph is based on purchase, just as its right to that of Abraham, ch. 23,” writes Skinner (ICCG, 416): in this statement, of course, *Israel* is used as the name of the nation. This tendency on the part of the earlier critics to identify these names of the patriarchs as being in reality the names of the various peoples or tribes which the patriarchs sired, has been pretty generally exploded by present-day archaeological discoveries; the same is true of the critical presupposition that in all cases in which an altar is said to have been erected by one of the patriarchs, it was in reality a stone pillar (*matstsebah*) that was set up and regarded as the abode of a tutelary deity. The fact is that the patriarchal altars were preeminently places of sacrifice, hence used for the worship of the living and true God of Hebrew revelation (12:8, 13:18, 22:9, etc.) The patriarchal altar was the place of communion with God who, in the sacrifice, was approached with a gift. These altars in several

instances took on the nature of memorials. Though probably made of earth originally, the law of Moses allowed, as an alternative, the use of unhewn stone (Exo. 20:24-25).

"*El-elohe-Israel.* This does not mean that the altar was called 'the God of Israel,' but that he gave it a name which commemorated the fact that the miracles were wrought for him by Israel's (Jacob's) God. Similarly, we find Moses calling an altar *Adonai-nissi* ('the Lord is my banner,' Exod. 17:15), which likewise does not mean that the altar bore that name, but it testified that 'the Lord is my (Moses') banner,' in praise of Him (Rashi). Nachmanides cites Rashi with approval, and draws attention to such names as Zuriel, Zurishaddai, which also honor God, as they signify, 'God is my Rock,' 'The Almighty is my Rock.' Sforno explains that, in his prayer, Jacob called Him *His* God, employing his changed name, *Israel*" (SC, 204).

"After the example of Abraham (12:8) as he entered the land, Jacob also builds an altar unto the Lord. The name of the altar embodies the sum of Jacob's spiritual experience, which he sought to transfer to coming generations. So he gives the altar a name which is in itself a statement to the effect that 'the God of Israel' is an '*el*, i.e., 'a Strong One,' i.e., 'a mighty God.' Jacob is remembering God's promise, and God has in an outstanding way proved Himself a God well able to keep His promises. The common name for God, '*el*', covers this thought. By the use of his own name, 'Israel,' Jacob indicates that the restored, new man within him was the one that understood this newly acquired truth concerning God. We believe those to be in the wrong who assume that while Jacob was in Paddan-aram he lapsed into the idolatrous ways of men like Laban and so practically forsook the God of his fathers. Nothing points in that direction.

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The meager evidence available rather points to a fidelity on Jacob's part, which, though it was not of the strong ethical fibre as was that of Abraham, yet kept him from apostasy. Since it stood in need also of some measure of purification, God took Jacob in hand, especially at Peniel, and raised his faith-life to a higher level" (Leupold, EG, 895).

"Abraham had, on his landing on the same spot in Canaan, erected an altar; and now Jacob, on his arrival from Paddan-aram, imitates the example of his grandfather from special reasons of his own (cf. 27:21, last clause, with 22:28, 29). Whether, on its erection, it was dedicated with the formal bestowment of a name which, according to patriarchal usage, would perpetuate the purpose of the monument, or it was furnished with an inscription, we are not informed. The Septuagint omits the name. But it was a beautiful proof of his personal piety, a most suitable conclusion to his journey, and a lasting memorial of a distinguished favour, to raise an altar to 'God, the God of Israel.' *Wherever we pitch a tent, 'God should have an altar'*" (Jamieson, CECG, 219; italics mine—CC).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

Jacob's Wrestlings

The following comments by Morgenstern (JIBG) are excellent: "Then follows an anxious night. Redoubled preparations were made to meet Esau in the morning. Jacob sent his wives and children across the stream hoping their helplessness might touch Esau's heart. Jacob remained on this side of the stream. He would cross only at the last moment. Possibly he would turn back and flee, without sheep and cattle, wives and children, to hinder his escape. But there was no place for him to go. Such was Jacob's guilt-laden mind. . . . Someone wrestled with him all night long. The Bible calls it a *màn*. Tradition has come to call it an angel (Hosea 12:5). . . . Was it Jacob's other self: his wicked, selfish earthly nature, with which he strove all night long? . . . Man is still a child of two worlds, Gen. 2:7. His body is of dust, but his spirit is the Breath of God, inbreathed by God Himself. For twenty years these two natures had striven with each other. This struggle is typical. . . . There is no assurance that good will triumph of itself. It must be supported by strength of will and determination for the right, which endure

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for all time and under all circumstances. Men become changed, blessed by the very evil powers with which they have striven. No longer the old Jacob, but now the new Israel. Yet man never remains unscathed. . . . Victory over evil is never gained in the darkness of the night. So with the dawn Jacob became a new man, with an appropriate new name, 'The Champion of God.' Then he crossed the river."

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"To prayer he [Jacob] adds prudence, and sends forward present after present that their reiteration might win his brother's heart. This done, he rested for the night; but rising up before the day, he sent forward his wives and children across the ford of the Jabbok, remaining for a while in solitude to prepare his mind for the trial of the day. It was then that 'a man' appeared and wrestled with him till the morning rose. This 'man' was the 'Angel Jehovah,' and the conflict was a repetition in act of the prayer which we have already seen Jacob offering in words. This is clearly stated by the prophet Hosea: '*By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him*' (Hosea 12:3-4). Though taught his own weakness by the dislocation of his thigh at the angel's touch, he gained the victory by his importunity—'I will not let thee go except thou bless me'—and he received the new name of ISRAEL (*he who strives with God, and prevails*), as a sign that 'he had prevailed with God, and should therefore prevail with man' (Gen. 32:28). Well knowing with whom he had dealt he called the place Peniel (*the face of God*). '*for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*' The memory of his lameness, which he seems to have carried with him to his grave (Gen. 32:31), was preserved by the custom of the Israelites not to eat of the sinew in the hollow of the thigh. Its moral significance is beautifully expressed by Wesley:

'Contented now, upon my thigh
I halt till life's short journey end;
All helplessness, all weaknesses, I
On Thee alone for strength depend;
Nor have I power from Thee to move,
Thy nature and thy name is Love.'

(OTH, 103).

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"Dividing all his possessions at the River Jabbok in preparation for meeting Esau, he [Jacob] turned to God in prayer. He humbly acknowledged that he was unworthy of all the blessings that God had bestowed upon him. But in the face of danger he pleaded for deliverance. During the loneliness of the night he wrestled with a man. In this strange experience, which he recognized as a divine encounter, his name was changed from 'Jacob' to 'Israel.' Thereafter Jacob was not the deceiver; instead he was subjected to deception and grief by his own sons" (OTS, 37).

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"This remarkable occurrence is not to be regarded as a dream or an internal vision, but fell within the sphere of sensuous perception. At the same time, it was not a natural or corporeal wrestling, but a 'real conflict of both mind and body, a work of the spirit with intense effort of the body' (Delitzsch), in which Jacob was lifted

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up into a highly elevated condition of body and mind resembling that of ecstasy, through the medium of the manifestation of God. In a merely outward conflict, it is impossible to conquer through prayer and tears. As the idea of a dream or vision has no point of contact in the history; so the notion, that the outward conflict of bodily wrestling, and the spiritual conflict with prayer and tears, are two features opposed to one another and spiritually distinct, is evidently at variance with the meaning of the narrative and the interpretation of the prophet Hosea. Since Jacob still continued his resistance, even after his hip had been put out of joint, and would not let Him go till He had blessed him, it cannot be said that it was not till all hope of maintaining the conflict by bodily strength was taken from him, that he had recourse to the weapon of prayer. And when Hosea (12:4, 5) points his contemporaries to their wrestling forefather as an example for their imitation, in these words, 'He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his human strength he fought with God; and he fought with the Angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto Him,' the turn by which the explanatory periphrasis of Jacob's words, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me,' is linked on to the previous clause . . . without a copula or *vav consec.*, is a proof that the prophet did not regard the weeping and supplication as occurring after the wrestling, or as only a second element, which was subsequently added to the corporeal struggle. Hosea evidently looked upon the weeping and supplication as the distinguishing feature in the conflict, without thereby excluding the corporeal wrestling. At the same time, by connecting this event with what took place at the birth of the twins (25:26), the prophet teaches that Jacob merely completed, by his wrestling with God, what he had already been engaged in even from his mother's womb, viz. his striving for the birthright; in other words, for the possession of the covenant promise and the covenant blessing. This meaning is also indicated by the circumstances under which the event took place. Jacob had wrested the blessing of the birthright from his brother Esau; but it was by cunning and deceit, and he had been obliged to flee from his wrath in consequence. And now that he desired to return to the land of promise and his father's house, and to enter upon the inheritance promised him in his father's blessing, Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men which filled him with great alarm. As he felt too weak to enter upon a conflict with him, he prayed to the covenant God for deliverance from the hand of his brother, and the fulfilment of the covenant promises. The answer of God to this prayer was the present wrestling with God, in which he was victorious indeed, but not without carrying the marks of it all his life long in the dislocation of his thigh. Jacob's great fear of Esau's wrath and vengeance, which he could not suppress notwithstanding the divine revelations at Bethel and Mahanaim, had its foundation in his willful and treacherous appropriation of a blessing of the firstborn. To save him from the hand of his brother, it was necessary that God should first meet him as an enemy, and show him that his real opponent was God Himself, and that he must first of all overcome Him before he could hope to overcome his brother. And Jacob overcame God; not with power of the flesh however, with which he had hitherto wrestled for God against man (God convinced him of that by touching his hip, so that it was put out of joint), but by the power of faith and prayer, reaching by firm hold of God even to the point of being

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blessed, by which he proved himself to be a true wrestler of God, who fought with God and with men, *i.e.*, who by his wrestling with God overcame men as well. And whilst by the dislocation of his hip the carnal nature of his previous wrestling was declared to be powerless and wrong, he received in the new name of *Israel* the prize of victory, and at the same time directions from God how he was henceforth to strive for the cause of the Lord.—By his wrestling with God, Jacob entered upon a new stage in his life. As a sign of this, he received a new name, which indicated, as the result of this conflict, the nature of his new relation to God. But whilst Abram and Sarai, from the time when God changed their names (17:5 and 15), are always called by their new names; in the history of Jacob we find the old name used interchangeably with the new. 'For the former two names denoted a change into a new and permanent position, effected and intended by the will and promise of God; consequently the old names were entirely abolished. But the name *Israel* denoted a spiritual state determined by faith; and in Jacob's life the natural state, determined by flesh and blood, still continued to stand side by side with this. Jacob's new name was transmitted to his descendants, however, who were called *Israel* as the covenant nation. For as the blessing of their forefather's conflict came down to them as a spiritual inheritance, so did they also enter upon the duty of preserving this inheritance by continuing in a similar conflict.

Ver. 31. The remembrance of this wonderful conflict Jacob perpetuated in the name which he gave to the place where it had occurred, viz. *Pniel* or *Pnuel* . . . because there he had seen Elohim face to face, and his soul had been delivered (from death, 16:13).—Vers. 32, 33. With the rising of the sun after the night of his conflict, the night of anguish and fear also passed away from Jacob's mind, so that he was able to leave Pnuel in comfort, and go forward on his journey. The dislocation of the thigh alone remained. For this reason the children of Israel are accustomed to avoid eating the *nervus ischiadicus*, the principal nerve in the neighborhood of the hip, which is easily injured by any violent strain in wrestling. 'Unto this day': the remark is applicable still" (K-D, 305-307).

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"Jacob seems to have gone through the principles or foundations of faith in God and repentance towards him, which gave a character to the history of his grandfather and father, and to have entered upon the stage of spontaneous action. He had that inward feeling of spiritual power which prompted the apostle to say, 'I can do all things.' Hence we find him dealing with Esau for the birthright, plotting with his mother for the blessing, erecting a pillar and vowing a vow at Bethel, overcoming Laban with his own weapons, and even now taking the most prudent measures for securing a welcome from Esau on his return. He relied indeed on God, as was demonstrated in many of his words and deeds; but the prominent feature of his character was a strong and firm reliance on himself. But this practical selfreliance, though naturally springing up in the new man and highly commendable in itself, was not yet in Jacob duly subordinated to that absolute reliance which ought to be placed in the Author of our being and our salvation. Hence he had been betrayed into instrusive, dubious, and even sinister courses, which in the retributive providence of God had brought, and were yet to bring him, into many troubles and

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preplexities. The hazard of his present situation arose chiefly from his former unjustifiable practices towards his brother. He is now to learn the lesson of unreserved reliance on God.

"A man appeared to him in his loneliness; one having the bodily form and substance of a man. *Wrestled with him*,—encountered him in the very point in which he was strong. He had been a taker by the heel from his very birth (25:26), and his subsequent life had been a constant and successful struggle with adversaries. *And when he*, the stranger, *saw that he prevailed not over him*: Jacob, true to his character, struggles while life remains, with this new combatant. *He touched the socket of his thigh*, so that it was wrenched out of joint. The thigh is the pillar of a man's strength, and its joint with the hip the seat of physical force for the wrestler. Let the thigh bone be thrown out of joint, and the man is utterly disabled. Jacob now finds that this mysterious wrestler has wrested from him, by one touch, all his might, and he can no longer stand alone. Without any support whatever from himself, he hangs upon the conqueror, and in that condition learns by experience the practice of sole reliance on one mightier than himself. This is the turning-point in this strange drama. Henceforth Jacob now feels himself strong, not in himself, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might. What follows is merely the explication and the consequence of this bodily conflict.

"*And he*, the Mighty Stranger, *said*, *Let me go, for the dawn ariseth*. The time for other avocations is come: let me go. He does not shake off the clinging grasp of the now disabled Jacob, but only calls upon him to relax his grasp. *And he*, Jacob, *said*, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*. Despairing now of his own strength, he is Jacob still: he declares his determination to cling on until his conqueror bless him. He now knows he is in the hand of a higher power, who can disable and again enable, who can curse and also bless. He knows himself also to be now utterly helpless without the healing, quickening, protecting power of his victor, and, though he die in the effort, he will not let him go without receiving this blessing. Jacob's sense of his total debility and utter defeat is now the secret of his power with his friendly vanquisher. He can overthrow all the prowess of the self-reliant, but he cannot resist the earnest entreaty of the helpless.

"28-30. *What is thy name?* He reminds him of his former self, Jacob, the supplanter, the self-reliant, self-seeking. But now he is disabled, dependent on another, and seeking a blessing from another, and for all others as well as himself. No more Jacob shall thy name be called, but Israel,—a prince of God, in God, with God. In a personal conflict, depending on thyself, thou wert no match for God. But in prayer, depending on another, thou hast prevailed with God and with men. The new name is indicative of the new nature which has now come to its perfection of development in Jacob. Unlike Abraham, who received his new name once for all, and was never afterwards called by the former one, Jacob will hence be called now by the one and now by the other, as the occasion may serve. For he was called from the womb (25:28), and both names have a spiritual significance for two different aspects of the child of God, according to the apostle's paradox, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12, 13). *Tell now thy name*. Disclose to me thy nature. This mysterious Being intimates by his reply

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that Jacob was to learn his nature, so far as he yet required to know it, from the event that had just occurred; and he was well acquainted with his name. *And he blessed him there.* He had the power of disabling the self-sufficient creature, of upholding that creature when unable to stand, of answering prayer, of conferring a new name, with a new phase of spiritual life, and of blessing with a bodily renovation, and with spiritual capacity for being a blessing to mankind. After all this, Jacob could not any longer doubt who he was. There are, then, three acts in this dramatic scene: *first*, Jacob wrestling with the Omnipresent in the form of a man, in which he is signally defeated; *second*, Jacob importunately supplicating Jehovah, in which he prevails as a prince of God; *third*, Jacob receiving the blessing of a new name, a new development of spiritual life, and a new capacity for bodily action.

"We have also already noted the divine method of dealing with man. He proceeds from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex, from the material to the spiritual, from the sensible to the super-sensible. So must he do, until he have to deal with a world of philosophers. And even then, and only then, will his method of teaching and dealing with men be clearly and fully understood. The more we advance in the philosophy of spiritual things, the more delight will we feel in discerning the marvellous analogy and intimate nearness of the outward to the inward, and the material to the spiritual world. We have only to bear in mind that in man there is a spirit as well as a body; and in this outward wrestling of man with man we have a token of the inward wrestling of spirit with spirit, and therefore an experimental instance of that great conflict of the Infinite Being with the finite self, which grace has introduced into our fallen world, recorded here for the spiritual edification of the church on earth.

"My life is preserved. The feeling of conscience is, that no sinner can see the infinitely holy God and live. *And he halted upon his thigh.* The wrenching of the tendons and muscles was mercifully healed, yet so as to leave a permanent monument, in Jacob's halting gait, that God had overcome his self-will" (Murphy, MG, 412-415).

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"24-25. The Struggle in the Dark.—Who was the antagonist coming out of the darkness to seize Jacob for a struggle that would last until the breaking of the day? Not Esau, as in the first fearful moment of surprise Jacob might have imagined. Not any human foe, however terrible. Not a river-god. No; but the Almighty God of Righteousness, forcing him to make his reckoning. The O.T. story is dramatizing here the consequence that comes to every soul that has tried too long to evade the truth about itself. Thus far Jacob's life had seemed successful. By one stratagem and another he had outwitted Esau, Isaac, and Laban. Coming home prosperous, all the outward circumstances might have made him boastful. But his conscience saw something else. He saw his world shadowed by his guilt. Old memories awakened, old fears rose up from the past in which he had tried to bury them. He had to face these memories and submit to their bruising recollection. Now that he was to meet Esau, he knew that he was not the masterful person he had liked to imagine he was. He had made his smooth way ahead among people who had not known him;

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now he had to encounter people who had known him, and would remember him as a liar and a coward. He was brought up short to a reckoning with himself, which was a reckoning with God. He could ignore the prospect of that in the busy daytime, but now it was night, and he was alone; and when a man is alone, then least of all can he get away from God. When the mysterious antagonist touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, it was a symbol of the fact that Jacob was in the grip of a power which his self-assurance could not match. Jacob knew that henceforth he could never walk in lofty arrogance again.

"V. 26, *Holding On*.—Another strange mingling of elements is in the picture here. The exclamation of the unnamed wrestler, *Let me go, for the day breaketh* seems to have its origin in the dim old belief that spirits could walk the earth only during the darkness, and that when the day began to break they had to go back to the place of shadows from which they had come. But the timeless meaning is in the words of Jacob, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*. In the good and evil that made up Jacob there were two factors of nobility that saved him. The first was his awareness that life has a divine meaning above its material fact—the awareness that made him seek the birthright and made possible his vision at Bethel. The second quality, revealed here in his wrestling, was his determination. He had struggled all night until he was lame and agonized; but when his antagonist wished to separate himself, Jacob desperately held on. When a man is forced to wrestle with moral reality and its consequences, he may try to get rid of them as quickly as he can. But Jacob's quality was otherwise. Caught in the grip of judgment, his prevailing desire was not for escape. He would hold on until something decisive happened. In punishment and in prosperity, he would not let the experience go until he had wrung a blessing from it. The shallow man may ignore his sins; the cowardly man may try to evade their consequences; but Jacob now was neither one. Hurt and humiliated though he was, and needing to repent, he still dared believe that his great desire could prevail. In Charles Wesley's hymn one can hear his cry:

'Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair;
Speak to my heart, in blessing speak;
Be conquered by my instant prayer.'

Frederick W. Robertson has given a further interpretation to Jacob's answer to the demand of his antagonist, *Let me go*: 'Jacob held Him more convulsively fast, as if aware that the daylight was likely to rob him of his anticipated blessing: in which there seems concealed a very deep truth. God is approached more nearly in that which is indefinite than in that which is definite and distinct. He is felt in awe, and wonder and worship, rather than in clear conceptions. There is a sense in which darkness has more of God than light has. . . . In sorrow, haunted by uncertain presentiments, we feel the infinite around us. The gloom disperses, the world's joy comes again, and it seems as if God were gone—the Being who had touched us with a withering hand, and wrestled with us, yet whose presence, even when most terrible, was more blessed than His absence. . . . Yes, in solitary, silent, vague darkness, the Awful One is near' (Bowie, IBG, 723-724). (The

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quotation is from Robertson, *Sermons on Bible Subjects*, 17, 18). (Recall in this connection Gen. 28:16-17).

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When the messengers brought back to Jacob the news that Esau was approaching with a force of four hundred men, "Jacob's first thought was, as always, *a plan*, and in this we have a true picture of the poor human heart. True, he turns to God after he makes his plan, and cries to Him for deliverance; but no sooner does he cease praying than he resumes the planning. Now, praying and planning will never do together. If I plan, I am leaning more or less on my plan; but when I pray, I should lean exclusively upon God. Hence, the two things are perfectly incompatible—they virtually destroy each other. When my eye is filled with my own management of things, I am not prepared to see God acting for me; and, in that case, prayer is not the utterance of my need, but the mere superstitious performance of something which I think ought to be done, or it may be, asking God to sanctify my plans. This will never do. It is not asking God to sanctify and bless my means, but it is asking Him to do it all Himself. (No doubt, when faith allows God to act, He will use His own agency; but this is a totally different thing from His owning and blessing the plans and arrangements of unbelief and impatience. This distinction is not sufficiently understood.)

"Though Jacob asked God to deliver him from his brother Esau, he evidently was not satisfied with that, and therefore he tried to 'appease him with a present.' Thus his confidence was in the 'present,' and not entirely in God. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' It is often hard to detect what is the real ground of the heart's confidence. We imagine, or would fain persuade ourselves, that we are leaning upon God, when we are, in reality, leaning upon some scheme of our own devising. Who, after hearkening to Jacob's prayer, wherein he says, 'Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother—from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children,' could imagine him saying, 'I will appease him with a present.' Had he forgotten his prayer? Was he making a god of this present? Did he place more confidence in a few cattle than in Jehovah, to whom he had just been committing himself? These are questions which naturally arise out of Jacob's actions in reference to Esau, and we can readily answer them by looking into the glass of our own hearts. There we learn, as well as on the page of Jacob's history, how much more apt we are to lean on our own management than on God; but it will not do; we must be brought to see the end of our management, that it is perfect folly, and that the true path of wisdom is to repose in full confidence upon God.

"Nor will it do to make our prayers part of our management. We often feel very well satisfied with ourselves when we add prayer to our arrangement, or when we have used all lawful means, and called upon God to bless them. When this is the case, our prayers are worth about as much as our plans, inasmuch as we are leaning upon them instead of upon God. We must really be brought to the end of everything with which self has aught to do; for until then, God cannot show Himself. But we can never get to the end of our plans until we have been brought to the end of ourselves. We must see that 'all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof

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is as the flower of the field' (Isa. 40:6). [Cf. also Psa. 90:5, 6; Jas. 1:9-11].

"Thus it is in this interesting chapter: when Jacob had made all his prudent arrangements, we read, 'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.' This is the turning-point in the history of this very remarkable man. To be left alone with God is the only true way of arriving at a just knowledge of ourselves and our ways. We can never get a true estimate of nature and all its actings until we have weighed them in the balance of the sanctuary, and there we ascertain their real worth. No matter what we may think about ourselves, nor yet what men may think about us; the great question is, What does God think about us? and the answer to this question can only be heard when we are 'left alone.' Away from the world; away from self; away from all the thoughts, reasonings, imaginations, and emotions of mere nature, and 'alone' with God; thus, and thus alone, can we get a correct judgment about ourselves.

"Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him.' *Mark, it was not Jacob wrestling with a man, but a man wrestling with Jacob.* This scene is very commonly referred to as an instance of Jacob's power in prayer. That it is not this is evident from the simple wording of the passage. My wrestling with a man, and a man wrestling with me, present two totally different ideas to the mind. In the former case, I want to gain some object from him; in the latter, he wants to gain some object from me. Now, in Jacob's case, the divine object was to bring him to see what a poor, feeble, worthless creature he was; and when Jacob pertinaciously held out against the divine dealing with him, 'He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him.' The sentence of death must be written on the flesh—the power of the cross must be entered into before we can steadily and happily walk with God. We have followed Jacob so far, amid all the windings and workings of his extraordinary character—we have seen him planning and managing during his twenty years' sojourning with Laban; but not until he 'was left alone' did he get a true idea of what a perfectly helpless thing he was in himself. Then, the seat of his strength being touched, he learnt to say, 'I will not let Thee go.'

'Other refuge have I none;
Clings my helpless soul to Thee.'

This was a new era in the history of the supplanting, planning Jacob. Up to this point he had held fast to his own ways and means; but now he is brought to say, 'I will not let Thee go.' Now, let my reader remark, that Jacob did not express himself thus 'until the hollow of his thigh was touched.' This simple fact is quite sufficient to settle the true interpretation of the whole scene. God was wrestling with Jacob to bring him to this point. We have already seen that, as to Jacob's power in prayer, he had no sooner uttered a few words to God than he let out the real secret of his soul's dependence, by saying, 'I will appease him (Esau) with a present'. Would he have said this if he had really entered into the meaning of prayer, or true dependence on God? Assuredly not. If he had been looking to God alone to appease Esau, could he have said, 'I will appease him with a present'? Impossible. God and the creature must be kept distinct, and will be kept so in every soul that knows much of the sacred reality of a life of faith.

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"But, alas! here is where we fail (if one may speak for another). Under the plausible and apparently pious formula of using means, we really cloke the positive infidelity of our poor deceitful hearts; we think we are looking to God to bless our means, while, in reality, we are shutting Him out by leaning on the means instead of leaning on Him. Oh! may our hearts be taught the evil of thus acting. May we learn to cling more simply to God alone, that so our history may be more characterized by that holy elevation above the circumstances through which we are passing. It is not, by any means, any easy matter so to get to the end of the creature, in every shape and form, so as to be able to say, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' To say this from the heart, and to abide in the power of it, is the secret of all true strength. Jacob said it when the power of his thigh was touched; but not till then. He struggled long, ere he gave way, because his confidence in the flesh was strong. But God can bring down to the dust the stoutest character. He knows how to touch the spring of nature's strength, and write the sentence of death thoroughly upon it; and until this is done, there can be no real 'power' with God or man. We must be 'weak' ere we can be 'strong.' 'The power of Christ' can only 'rest on us' in connection with the knowledge of our infirmities. Christ cannot put the seal of His approval upon nature's strength, its wisdom, or its glory: all these must sink that He may rise. Nature can never form, in any one way, a pedestal on which to display the grace or power of Christ; for if it could, then might flesh glory in His presence; but this, we know, can never be.

"And inasmuch as the display of God's glory and God's name or character is connected with the entire setting aside of nature, so, until this latter is set aside, the soul can never enjoy the disclosure of the former. Hence, though Jacob is called to tell out his name—to own that his name is 'Jacob,' or a 'supplanter,' he yet receives no revelation of the name of Him who had been wrestling with him, and bringing him down into the dust. He received for himself the name of 'Israel,' or 'prince,' which was a great step in advance; but when he says, 'Tell me, I pray, Thy name,' he received the reply, 'Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?' The Lord refuses to tell His name, though He had elicited from Jacob the truth as to himself, and He blesses him accordingly. How often is this the case in the annals of God's family! There is the disclosure of self in all its moral deformity; but we fail to get hold practically of what God is, though He has come so very close to us, and blessed us, too, in connection with the discovery of ourselves. Jacob received the new name of 'Israel' when the hollow of his thigh had been touched—he became a mighty 'prince' when he had been brought to know himself as a weak man; but still the Lord had to say, 'Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?' There is no disclosure of the name of Him who, nevertheless, had brought the real name and condition of Jacob.

"From all this we learn that it is one thing to be blessed by the Lord, and quite another thing to have the revelation of His character, by the Spirit, to our hearts. 'He blessed him there,' but He did not tell His name. There is blessing in being brought, in any measure, to know ourselves; for therein we are lead into a path in which we are able more clearly to discern what God is to us in detail. Thus it was with Jacob. When the hollow of his thigh was touched, *he found himself in a condition in which it*

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was either God or nothing. A poor halting man could do little, it therefore behooved him to cling to one who was almighty.

"I would remark . . . that the book of Job is, in a certain sense, a detailed commentary on this scene in Jacob's history. Throughout the first thirty-one chapters, Job grapples with his friends, and maintains his point against all their arguments; but in chapter 32, God, by the instrumentality of Elihu, begins to wrestle with him; and in chapter 38, He comes down upon him directly with all the majesty of His power, overwhelms him by the display of His greatness and glory, and elicits from him the well-known words, 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (ch. 42:5, 6). This was really touching the hollow of his thigh. And mark the expression, 'Mine eye seeth Thee.' He does not say, 'I see myself' merely; no; but 'Thee.' Nothing but a view of what God is can really lead to repentance and self-loathing. Thus it will be with the people of Israel, whose history is very analogous with that of Job. When they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, they will mourn, and then there will be full restoration and blessing. Their latter end, like Job's, will be better than their beginning. They will learn the full meaning of that word, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help'" (Hosea 13:9)" ("C.H.M.", NG, 297-304).

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"We must not pass from these scenes in Jacob's history without noticing the admirable tact with which he appeased his justly-offended brother. He sends an embassy to him from a long distance. This itself was a compliment, and, no doubt, the ambassadors were the most respectable he could command. Then the terms of the message were the best possible to flatter and conciliate an Oriental. He calls Esau his *lord*, himself his servant—or *slave*, as it might be rendered; and he thus tacitly, and without alluding to the old trick by which he cheated him of his birthright, acknowledges him to be the elder brother, and his superior. At the same time, by the large presents, and the exhibition of great wealth, Esau is led to infer that he is not returning a needy adventurer to claim a double portion of the paternal estate; and it would not be unoriental if there was intended to be conveyed by all this a sly intimation that Jacob was neither to be despised nor lightly meddled with. There was subtle flattery mingled with profound humility, but backed all the while by the quiet allusion to the substantial position of one whom *God had greatly blessed and prospered*. All this, however, failed, and the enraged brother set out to meet him with an army. Jacob was terribly alarmed; but, with his usual skill and presence of mind, he made another effort to appease Esau. The presents were well selected, admirably arranged, and sent forward one after another; and the drivers were directed to address Esau in the most respectful and humble terms: 'They be thy servant Jacob's, a present unto my *lord* Esau; and be sure to say, Behold thy servant Jacob is behind us; for he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face.' Jacob did not miscalculate the influence of his princely offerings, and I verily believe there is not an emeer or sheikh in all Gilead at this day who would not be appeased by such presents; and, from my personal knowledge of Orientals, I should say that Jacob need not have been in such great terror, following in their rear. Far less will now 'make room,' as Solomon says, for any offender, however atrocious, and bring him before great men with acceptance.

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"Esau was mollified, and when near enough to see the lowly prostrations of his trembling brother, forgot everything but that he was Jacob, the son of his mother, the companion of his childhood. He ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; *and they wept*. All this is beautiful, natural, Oriental; and so is their subsequent discourse. . . . It was obviously the purpose of God to bring his chosen servant into these terrible trials, in order to work the deeper conviction of his former sin, and the more thorough repentance and reformation. And here it is that Jacob appears as a guide and model to all mankind. In his utmost distress and alarm, he holds fast his hope and trust in God, wrestles with Him in mighty supplication, and as a prince prevails: 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' And he said, 'What is thy name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' And he said, 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed' (Gen. 32:24, 27, 28)" (Thomson, LB, 371-372).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-TWO

1. What conditions prompted Jacob to take to flight from Paddan-aram?
2. What attitude did his wives take toward their father? What accusations did they bring against him?
3. Of what did Jacob's entire retinue ("household") consist?
4. What route did he take from Paddan-aram? What and where was Gilead?
5. In consulting his wives about his proposed flight, what charges did he bring against Laban?
6. What was the dream he reported to have experienced himself?
7. Would you agree with the view that this dream was the product of an "excited imagination"? Explain your answer.
8. Would you agree with the interpretation of Delitzsch, or with that of Kurtz, of Jacob's reported dream? Explain your answer.
9. Is there any Scripture support for the notion that increase of material goods is an unfailing concomitant of religious stedfastness? Explain your answer.

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10. Does God guarantee the obedient believer, in Scripture, any material good beyond "bread to eat and raiment to put on" (28:20)? Justify your answer.
11. What was (or were) the teraphim which Rachel stole on leaving her father?
12. What are some of the suggestions offered to explain why Rachel stole the teraphim? State which seems the most reasonable to you and why.
13. For what purposes were such objects used as indicated elsewhere in the Old Testament?
14. In what respect did the teraphim probably have legal significance for Laban?
15. Would you agree that Rachel "stole" the teraphim? Explain your answer.
16. Are we justified in thinking that Laban had lapsed into a more corrupt form of religion and that his daughters had not "escaped the infection"?
17. Is there any ground on which we can excuse or justify Rachel's sin?
18. What other evidence do we have that Abraham's kinsmen in the region of Haran had drifted into idolatry?
19. What information regarding such objects do we obtain from the Nuzi records?
20. Do we find intimations that Jacob himself was not immunized against this form of idolatry? Explain your answer.
21. What device did Rachel use to prevent Laban's finding the teraphim in her tent?
22. What special support did Jacob give Laban in authorizing the latter to search the tents occupied by members of his own household?
23. What evidence do we have that Jacob did not know about Rachel's theft of the teraphim?
24. What restrictions did God put upon Laban on the latter's way to catch up with Jacob?

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25. Who were the Arameans? What was their origin and what territories did they occupy in the Near East?
26. Trace briefly their relations with the Israelites as recorded in the Old Testament.
27. How did Laban address Jacob on catching up with him? Why do we pronounce his approach "hypocritical"?
28. What was the substance of Jacob's angry reply? Of what illegal practices did he accuse Laban? How long had he served Laban faithfully?
29. What hardships of his twenty years of service to Laban did Jacob recall? What attempts by Laban to defraud him of his hire did he specify?
30. In what way or ways, probably, had his wages "been changed ten times"?
31. What specific law in the Code of Hammurabi bears upon this particular case?
32. Explain what Jacob meant by "The Fear of Isaac."
33. What was Laban's reply to Jacob's outburst of anger? Did he avoid the issues? Was he merely bluffing or "trying to put on a front"? Or was he making an effort "to save face"?
34. Are we justified in saying that Laban was more concerned about the teraphim than anything else? Why should he have been so concerned about the stolen teraphim?
35. How did Hurrian law bear upon the relation between the teraphim and Jacob's status in Laban's household?
36. What did Laban mean by his proposal "to cut a covenant"?
37. What proposals did Jacob make in return?
38. Explain the "cairn of witness." What particular witness did Jacob set up? Distinguish between the pillar and the cairn.

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39. What two names were given to the memorials set up between Jacob's and Laban's territories? What was the meaning of each?
40. What were the twofold provisions of the treaty between the two? How was Hurrian law related to the stipulation against Jacob's taking other wives?
41. What fallacy is involved in the traditional churchly use of what is called "the Mizpah Benediction"?
42. By what deities did Laban and Jacob respectively swear fidelity to their covenant?
43. Explain what is meant by the statement in v. 50, "no man is with us."
44. What factors in this story indicate that Laban was a polytheist?
45. What phrase in this story indicates that Laban swore by the God of Abraham, Nahor, *and Terah*?
46. What ceremonies concluded the covenant of reconciliation between Jacob and Laban?
47. For what different special purposes were stones used in Old Testament times?
48. List the circumstances of the transactions between Jacob and Laban which reflect details of Hurrian law.
49. With what acts did Laban leave the members of Jacob's household to proceed on his journey homeward?
50. In what various incidents did angels appear in the course of Jacob's life?
51. What was Jacob's experience at Manahaim? Why the name and what did it signify? What was the location?
52. Who made up the *two camps* or *hosts* on this occasion?
53. What probably were Jacob's feelings as he approached his confrontation with Esau?

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54. What preliminary steps did Jacob take looking toward reconciliation with Esau? What information about himself and his household, etc., did he communicate to Esau through the messengers he sent forward to meet him?
55. What report about Esau did Jacob's messengers bring back to him?
56. What probably was Esau doing in Seir at that time with what was equivalent to a military force? How many men did Esau have with him? How reconcile Gen. 32:3 and 36:6-8?
57. How did Jacob acquire the information in the first place as to Esau's whereabouts?
58. What threefold preparation did Jacob resort to, for the purpose of placating his brother?
59. Explain the double phrase, *the land of Seir, the field of Edom*, v. 3.
60. Why was it the natural and proper thing to do to resort to prayer? What were the chief characteristics of Jacob's prayer?
61. Did this prayer include the element of *confession*? Explain your answer.
62. Explain the last phrase of v. 11, "*the mother with the children*."
63. Are Jacob's closing words of his prayer designed to remind God of His promises and to call on Him to keep His word? Explain your answer.
64. What was the "present" which Jacob dispatched to Esau to "propitiate" him? How, and for what purpose, were these gifts "staggered," so to speak?
65. What preparation did Jacob make for battle in case Esau should be belligerent?
66. What explanations are given for Jacob's sending his wives and children across the ford of the Jabbock while remaining himself on the north side? What do you consider the most plausible explanation?

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67. What was the stream over which the crossing was made? What is the meaning of the phrase, "this Jordan," v. 10, in relation to the final crossing?
68. What marvelously sublime event occurred to Jacob on that intervening night?
69. Where was the river Jabbok in relation to the Jordan?
70. What probably was Jacob's purpose in remaining on the north side of the Jabbok?
71. What are some of the views of his motives in so doing? With whom do you agree?
72. What are some of the fantastic theories of this event? What are our reasons for rejecting them?
73. Why do we reject the "folklorish" interpretation of Old Testament events generally?
74. Whom does the Bible itself claim to be the Source of its content? Can we, therefore, treat the Bible "like any other book"?
75. How long did Jacob's wrestling with the mysterious Visitant continue?
76. How does the text itself describe (identify) this Visitant? How does the prophet Hosea speak of Him?
77. What are some of the anthropological explanations of this incident? How does Sir James Frazer "explain" it? What are the objections to these views?
78. What is the anthropological theory of the "evolution" of religious belief and practice?
79. What significance is in the fact that this is not said to be the story of Jacob wrestling with the Other but that of the Visitant wrestling with Jacob?
80. What is the traditional Christian interpretation of the identity of this Visitant? Show how this interpretation is in harmony with Biblical teaching as a whole.

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81. Does this story have any relation to the idea of importunity in prayer?
82. What was the Visitant's purpose in asking Jacob what his name was?
83. What new name did the Visitant confer on Jacob and what did it mean?
84. Do you consider that this incident, and especially this new name, changed Jacob's life in any way? Explain.
85. What significance is in the fact that this new name became the historical name of the people who sprang from the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?
86. Explain: "In spiritual experience there is and must be the challenge of the mysterious." Distinguish between the mysterious and the mystical.
87. What name did Jacob give to the place of this Visitation, and why?
88. What physical defect did the Celestial Visitant impose on Jacob and what spiritual significance did it have?
89. What profound spiritual truths did this experience impress upon Jacob? Did it produce any change in his outlook and his life, and if so, to what extent?
90. In what order did Jacob organize his retinue for the meeting with Esau, and for what purposes?
91. Why did Jacob do obeisance to Esau *seven times* on approaching him? How was this done?
92. Was this a form of flattery or was it simply the prevailing custom or convention? Explain your answer.
93. How would you describe the emotions of each of the two brothers when they faced each other at this meeting?
94. After reading the views of the various commentators on this subject, with whom do you agree, and why?

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95. How did the brothers openly greet each other when they met?
96. Do you believe that Jacob was still distrustful of Esau? If so, on what do you base your opinion?
97. Why did Jacob reject Esau's offer to accompany him on his way? What reason did Jacob give for rejecting also the offer of an escort? Do you think he was sincere? Explain your answer.
98. Where did Jacob first stop on his journey to Canaan? What reasons have we for thinking that he stayed there for several years?
99. What did the word "Succoth" mean? How did it get this name?
100. What are the various meanings of the word "cattle" in the Old Testament?
101. Where did Jacob first settle after crossing the Jordan?
102. Show how all that Jacob asked for in his vow at Bethel was now fulfilled.
103. What was the probable location of Shechem? From whom did it get its name? What was the name of the king of Shechem at the time Jacob settled there? What was his son's name?
104. Why did Jacob purchase a "parcel of ground" near Shechem? What did he pay for it?
105. Explain the correspondence between Genesis 23:17-20 and 33:18-20.
106. What preparation for worship did Jacob make on settling on this piece of ground?
107. To whom did he dedicate this place of worship? What is the meaning of the *name* of deity whom he invoked at this time?
108. What do these acts indicate regarding Jacob's spiritual life and growth?
109. What was the relation between Shechem and the later history of the Samaritans and Mount Gerizim?

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110. Explain the relation between the story of "Jacob's well," as found in the fourth chapter of John, and the Old Testament story of Jacob's sojourn at Shechem. How does Shechem figure throughout Old Testament history?

For further research:

111. What significance is there in the fact that "Israel" and "Israeli" are the names adopted *in our day* for the new nation of the Jews and its citizens?
112. What is, to this writer, perhaps the most intriguing phase of the incident of Jacob's wrestling with the Mysterious Visitant is the fact that the latter, on being asked what His name was, ignored the question (v. 29). What reasons are we justified in assigning to this silence? Instead the Heavenly Visitant "blessed" Jacob then and there (v. 29). What may we rightly assume to have been indicated by, or included in, this divine blessing?

PART FORTY-THREE

THE STORY OF JACOB: INCIDENTS IN CANAAN

(Genesis 34:1—35:28)

The Biblical Account

1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she bare unto Jacob went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her; and he took her, and lay with her, and humbled her. 3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. 4 And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. 5 Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; and his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they came. 6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. 7 And the sons of Jacob came in from the fields when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done. 8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you, give her unto him to wife. 9 And make ye marriages with us; give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. 10 And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. 11 And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. 12 Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife. 13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with guilt, and spake, because he had defiled Dinah their sister, 14 and said unto

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them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. 15 Only on this condition will we consent unto you: if ye will be as we are, that every male of you be circumcised; 16 then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17 But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

18 And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. 19 And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was honored above all the house of his father. 20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21 These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for, behold, the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only on this condition will the men consent unto us to dwell with us, to become one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. 23 Shall not their cattle and their substance and all their beasts be ours? Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city. 25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city unawares, and slew all the males. 26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went forth. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28 They took their flocks and

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their herds and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field; 29 and all their wealth, and all their little ones and their wives, took they captive and made a prey, even all that was in the house. 30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and, I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. 31 And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?

35. 1 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. 2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments: 3 and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. 4 And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. 5 And they journeyed: and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. 6 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan (the same is Beth-el), he and all the people that were with him. 7 And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God was revealed unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. 8 And Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried below Beth-el under the oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bacuth.

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called

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any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. 11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12 and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. 13 And God went up from him in the place where he spake with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he spake with him, a pillar of stone: and he poured out a drink-offering thereon, and poured oil thereon. 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

16 And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was still some distance to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. 17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; for now thou shalt have another son. 18 And it came to pass, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. 19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem). 20 And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave: the same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. 21 And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard of it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: 23 the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun; 24 the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; 25 and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan and Naphtali; 26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid: Gad and Asher; these are the sons of Jacob, that were born to him in Paddan-aram. 27 And Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre, to

Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), where Abram and Isaac sojourned.

28 And the days of Isaac were a hundred and four-score years. 29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.

Jacob at Succoth and Shechem: the Narrative Summarized.

Esau, as we have already noted, returned to Seir and Jacob journeyed on slowly to Succoth (33:18-20). At Succoth, Jacob seems to have dwelt for some time; he then moved on to Shechem, at last *in the land of Canaan*. (*Shalem*, in the A.V., meaning "peaceful," "secure", named as a place near Jacob's well; it could be that Shalem is not a proper name. The A.R.V. renders it "Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem." The R.S.V. gives it: "Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem." Cf. John 4:5-6: Sychar used to be identified with Shechem. It is now thought to have been about half a mile north of Jacob's well, and a short distance southeast of Shechem). Near Shechem Jacob bought a field of Hamor, the prince of the region, and pitched his tent there and erected an altar. Here Dinah, his daughter by Leah, having mingled with the daughters of the land, was carried off by Shechem, the son of Hamor. The young man wished to atone for his unseemly conduct by marriage, and both he and his father endeavored to propitiate Jacob and his sons. The brethren of Dinah, *with guile*, agreed to the alliance, but demanded the circumcision of the Shechemites; and on the third day after the ceremony Simeon and Levi fell upon the city, slew all the males, including Hamor and Shechem, took Dinah from the house of the young prince, and carried off the women, children, cattle and all material possessions of the Shechemites. Jacob rebuked his children for this cruel and

treacherous act, and remembered it in his death-bed predictions regarding Simeon and Levi (33:18-20; ch. 34; also 49:5-7).

1. *The Rape of Dinah*, vv. 1-31

The immediate objective of Jacob on his return from Paddan-aram was Shechem in the hills of Palestine, just as it had been that of his grandfather Abraham (Gen. 12:6). He encamped east of the city and bought a parcel of ground from the sons of Hamor (Benei-Hamor) evidently the tribe that had established itself there. Their tribal deity seems to have been Baal-berith; this is how they are known to us in the story of the conquest of central Palestine under Joshua (cf. Josh. 8:33). (Cf. Judg. 9:46: it seems that for the Israelites later, on drifting into idolatry—in this case as generally—meant drifting into the usual "mode of cultural absorption" whereby they acquired the name El-berith, El having been to the Hebrews the short form of Elohim, God.) Jacob's purchase of a field is in a certain sense parallel to Abraham's purchase of the field and cave at Mamre (cf. 23:18 and 33:19).

The outstanding event—and the most interesting, from various points of view—of the prolonged sojourn of Jacob and his household (clan) in Shechem is the dramatic episode about the treachery of Simeon and Levi, and its backdrop, so to speak, in the rape of Dinah by the prince of Shechem. Speiser comments pointedly on these incidents as follows: "The narrative is unusual on more counts than one. For one thing, it is the only account to concern itself with Jacob's daughter Dinah, who is otherwise relegated to two statistical entries (30:21, 46:15). For another, Jacob himself has a minor part, while the spotlight rests on the next generation. For still another, there is a pronounced chronological gap between this section and the one before. There, Jacob's children were still of tender age (33:13); here, they have attained

adulthood. Most important of all, the history of Jacob has hitherto been in the main a story of individuals. This time, to be sure, personalities are still very much at the forefront of the stage; but their experiences serve to recapitulate an all but lost page dealing with remote ethnic interrelations. The account, in other words, presents personalized history, that is, history novelistically interpreted. And since we have so little evidence about the early settlement of Israelites in Canaan, the slender thread that we find here assumes that much more importance. By the same token, extra caution is needed to protect the sparse data from undue abuse" (ABG, 266). Again: "The story before us is a tale of sharp contrasts: pastoral simplicity and grim violence, love and revenge, candor and duplicity. There is also a marked difference between the generations. Hamor and Jacob are peace-loving and conciliatory; their sons are impetuous and heedless of the consequences that their acts must entail. The lovesick Shechem prevails on his father to extend to the Israelites the freedom of the land—with the requisite consent of his followers. But Dinah's brothers refuse to be that far-sighted. After tricking the Shechemites into circumcising their males, and thus stripping the place of its potential defenders, they put the inhabitants to the sword. Jacob is mournful and apprehensive. But his sons remain defiant and oblivious of the future" (*ibid.*, 268).

This may well be described as the story of a "generation gap" of the "long, long ago."

Note that Dinah is specifically mentioned as the daughter of Leah. "'Like mother, like daughter.' Of Leah it is said, *And Leah went out to meet him* (30:16), and now her daughter went out. She is described as Leah's daughter in order to draw attention to the fact that she was the full sister of Simeon and Levi who avenged her (v. 25) and *whom she had borne unto Jacob*.

is added to indicate that all the brothers were jealous for her honor" (SC, 205). Dinah, we are told, went out to see the daughters of the land, that is, she evidently went into the city (Jacob had pitched his tent outside it). And Prince Shechem saw her, and, like the pagan he was, *took her and bumbled her*. "The verb always implies the use of force. Although Shechem was a *prince of the land*, she evidently did not submit of her own free will" (SC, 205). "Though freed from foreign troubles Jacob met with a great domestic calamity in the fall of his only recorded daughter. According to Josephus she had been attending a festival; but it is highly probable that she had been often and freely mixing in the society of the place, and that being a simple, inexperienced, and vain young woman, had been flattered by the attentions of the ruler's son. There must have been time and opportunities of acquaintance to produce the strong attachment that Shechem had for her" (Jamieson, CECG, 219). It is useless to speculate as to whether she was prompted by mere idle curiosity, in this instance, or whether she went without consulting her parents, or whether she even went forth contrary to their wishes. We have no means of knowing to what extent she was at fault, if at all. "In any case, it seems she should have known that Egyptians and Canaanites (12:15, 20:2, 26:7) regarded unmarried women abroad in the land as legitimate prey and should not have gone unattended. Shechem happens to find her. The fact that he is the son of Hamor, a Hivite prince, seems to make him feel that he especially has privileges in reference to unattended girls. We are not told whether she was pleased with and encouraged his first approaches. At least the young prince was bent upon seduction. This his object was accomplished, whether she resisted or not. If 48:22 informs us that the inhabitants of Shechem were Amorites, the apparent contradiction seems to be solved by the fact that the general name for the Canaanite tribes

was Amorites" (Leupold, EG, 897). (Surely our present-day knowledge of the gross immoralities which characterized the Cult of Fertility so widespread throughout the ancient pagan world (cf. Rom. 1:18-32) would cause us to think that Shechem would have had no scruples against seizing and violating the young maiden the first time he ever saw her. We see no point in "sugar-coating" this plain case of rape, or the acts of presumption, treachery and violence which ensued as consequences of it. The Bible, it must be remembered is a very realistic book: it pictures life just as people lived it.) It should be said, however, in favor of the young prince, that he really loved the maiden: *his soul clave unto her* (v. 3). Of course Dinah would have been only one among the many others of his harem, if the marriage had been formalized. "It was in some degree an extenuation of the wickedness of Shechem that he did not cast off the victim of his violence and lust, but continued to regard her with affection . . . addressed to her such words as were agreeable to her inclinations (v. 3, *speak to the heart of the damsel*) probably expressing his affection, and offering the reparation of honorable marriage, as may be legitimately inferred from what is next recorded of his behavior" (PCG, 405).

How old was Dinah when this incident occurred? We suggest the following explanation of the chronological problem here: "Dinah was born about the end of the fourteenth year of Jacob's residence in Haran. She was thus about six years old at the settlement at Succoth. The sojourn at Succoth appears to have lasted for about two years. Jacob must have spent already several years at Shechem, since there are prominent and definite signs of a more confidential intercourse with the Shechemites. We may infer, therefore, that Dinah was now from twelve to sixteen years of age. Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sold by his brethren (37:2), and at that time Jacob

had returned to Hebron. There must have passed, therefore, about eleven years since the return from Haran, at which time Joseph was six years of age. If now we regard the residence of Jacob at Bethel and the region of Ephrata as of brief duration, and bear in mind that the residence at Shechem ceased with the rape of Dinah, it follows that Dinah must have been about fourteen or fifteen years of age when she was deflowered. In the East, too, females reach the age of puberty at twelve, and sometimes still earlier (Delitzsch). From the same circumstances it is clear that Simeon and Levi must have been about twenty" (Lange). Again: "If Dinah was born before Joseph (30:21) she was probably in her seventh year when Jacob reached Succoth (33:17); but it does not follow that she was only six or seven years of age when the incident about to be described occurred (Tuch, Bohlen). If Jacob stayed two years at Succoth and eight in Shechem (Petavius), and if, as is probable, his residence in Shechem terminated with his daughter's dishonor (Lange), and if, moreover, Joseph's sale into Egypt happened soon after (Hengstenberg), Dinah may at this time have been in her sixteenth or seventeenth year (Kurtz). Yet there is no reason why she should not have been younger, say between thirteen and fifteen (Keil, Lange, Kalisch, Murhpy, *et alii*), since in the East females attain to puberty at the age of twelve, and sometimes earlier (Delitzsch)" (PCG, 404). With reference to the statement in v. 1, Whitelaw comments: "it is not implied that this was the first occasion on which Dinah left her mother's tent to mingle with the city maidens in Shechem: the expression is equivalent to 'once upon a time she went out' (Hengstenberg)—*to see the daughters of the land*—who were gathered at a festive entertainment (Josephus, *Ant.*, I, 21, 1), a not improbable supposition (Kurtz), though the language rather indicates the paying of a friendly visit (Lange),

or the habitual practice of associating with the Shechemite women (Bush), in their social entertainment, if not in their religious festivals" (PCG, 404).

Vv. 2-4. "Shechem was captivated by Dinah, the daughter of Jacob; he fell in love with the young girl and comforted her. Accordingly Shechem said to his father Hamor, 'Get me this young girl, I want to marry her'" (JB rendering). (Cf. Samson's request, Judg. 14:2). Vv. 5-7: Jacob somehow heard of the incident, but took no steps to redress the wrong until Dinah's brothers—Jacob's sons by Leah and probably by Zilpah—came in from the fields. It is interesting to note that the brothers of the daughter had a voice in all important concerns relating to her (cf. 24:50ff.). In the meantime Hamor, Shechem's father, consulted with Jacob about the incident. When the sons came in from the field, and were told what had occurred, they *were very wroth* because Shechem *had wrought folly in Israel by his act . . . which thing ought not to be done*, etc. This idea of folly in Israel seems to have been that of Jacob's sons, though the manner of expressing it seems to have been that of the historian, as usual in his time: folly or wickedness in Israel, where God ought to be reverenced and obeyed. As we know that the Canaanites were steeped in immorality: *ought not*, etc. refers to Israel: it was repulsive to the house of Israel. (It is a matter of note that this is the first use of the new name in the Old Testament). *Folly*: "this is a standing expression for crimes which are irreconcilable with the dignity and destiny of Israel as the people of God, but especially for gross sins of the flesh (Deut. 22:21, Judg. 20:10, 2 Sam. 13:12), but also for other great crimes (Josh. 7:15)." "The sons of Jacob were enraged; they burned with anger; *it was kindled to them*" (Gosman, in Lange, 560). In this case the dishonor was a double impurity, because it was an uncircumcised person who had dishonored the maiden. Moreover, She-

chem's special wickedness consisted in dishonoring a daughter of one who was the head of the theocratic line, and therefore under peculiar obligations to live a holy life.

Vv. 8-12: Hamor, the king, now offers Jacob and his sons the full rights of citizens in his little country. The son offers to fuflil any demand of the brothers as to the bridal price and bridal gifts. The king offers them the privilege of unrestricted movement throughout his domain, with the right of establishing settlements, carrying on trade, and acquiring property. (Perhaps it should be stated here, parenthetically, that we do not know what happened to Dinah after this incident. "Dinah was in Shechem's house all this time, and although he believed that he could have her by force, being the son of the prince of the land, he spoke thus because he wanted to win her by consent. Scripture does not record what happened to her afterwards; she probably remained 'a living widow,' i.e., unmarried, descended to Egypt with the rest of the family, died there, and her body was brought back by Simeon and buried in Canaan. According to tradition, her tomb is in Arbeel. Sforno suggests that he [Shechem] offered the large dowry and gift as an atonement" (SC, 206). Hamor seems to have taken a rather "broad" view of the matter: in addition to offering to arrange this particular marriage, he proposes an amalgamation of the two ethnic peoples, thinking, apparently, that the advantage to Jacob would be adequate compensation for the offense. His son's offer, obviously, related only to his own private affair with respect to Dinah. (The Hebrew law of compensation for seduction is given in Exo. 22:15ff. . . . the price paid to the parents (Exo. 22:16-17, 1 Sam. 18:25) . . . and the gift to the bride, are virtually distinguished in Gen. 24:53).

The story of the fanatical revenge of the sons of Jacob follows, vv. 14-31. The sons of Jacob answered the king and his son with guile, i.e., with duplicity. As noted above,

they were consumed with rage: *it burned them greatly* (cf. 31:36, 1 Sam. 15:11, 2 Sam. 19:43). "Michaelis mentions an opinion still entertained in the East which explains the excessive indignation kindled in the breasts of Dinah's brothers, viz., that 'in those countries it is thought that a brother is more dishonored by the seduction of his sister than a man by the infidelity of his wife; for, say the Arabs, a man may divorce his wife, and then she is no longer his, while a sister and daughter remain always sister and daughter'" (PCG, 405). Some writers express the opinion that the refusal lay basically in the proposal itself, that is, if they had not refused they would have denied the historical and saving vocation of Israel and his seed. "The father, Israel, appears, however, to have been of a different opinion. For he doubtless knew the proposal of his sons in reply. He does not condemn their proposition, however, but the fanatical way in which they availed themselves of its consequences. Dinah could not come into her proper relations again but by Shechem's passing over to Judaism. This way of passing over to Israel was always allowable, and those who took the steps were welcomed. We must therefore reject only: (1) The extension of the proposal, according to which the Israelites were to blend themselves with the Shechemites; (2) the motives, which were external advantages. It was, on the contrary, a harsh and unsparing course in reference to Dinah, when Leah's two sons wished her back again; or, indeed, would even gratify their revenge and Israelitish pride. But their resort to subtle and fanatical conduct merits only a hearty condemnation" (Lange, 561). (Note that "Jacob had scarcely become Israel when the arts and cunning of Jacob appear in his sons, and, indeed, in a worse form, since they glory in being Israel" (*ibid.*, 560)).

Note that the duplicity of Leah's sons consisted in *their utter hypocrisy and accompanying trifling with a divine institution* (just as people in our day, and thousands

of professing church-members trifle with the institution of Christian baptism. This writer has had parents request of him what they called "infant baptism" solely for the purpose of acquiring a legitimate birth certificate for the child: a modernized hypocritical form of union of church and state.) These brothers answered "deceitfully." "The honor of their family consisted in having the sign of the covenant. Circumcision was the external rite by which persons were admitted members of the ancient Church (rather, *theocracy* or *commonwealth*: the church is first, last, and always the *ecclesia* of Christianity and was never a part of the Jewish system). But although that outward rite could not make the Shechemites true Israelites, yet it does not appear that Jacob's sons required anything more. Nothing is said of their teaching them to worship the true God, but only of their insisting on the Shechemites being circumcised; and it is evident that they did not seek to convert Shechem, but only made a show of religion—a cloak to cover their diabolical design. Hypocrisy and deceit, in all cases vicious, are infinitely more so when accompanied with a show of religion; and here the sons of Jacob, under the pretense of conscientious scruples, conceal a scheme of treachery as cruel and diabolical as was perhaps ever perpetrated" (Jamieson, 221). "The demand was made that they [Shechemite males] should circumcise themselves in the belief that they or their townspeople would not consent (Sforno). Although Shechem and Hamor spoke to Jacob and his sons, only the latter answered, Jacob remaining silent because the incident was so disgraceful that he could not speak about it. Jacob and all his sons assented to this guile, either for the reason given by Sforno, or because they thought to take advantage of the resulting weakness to get Dinah out of Shechem's house. But only Simeon and Levi contemplated the revenge which was subsequently taken (Nachmanides)" (SC, 206). (It seems to me, however,

that any person with moral standards of consequence could not possibly excuse Jacob's silence on so flimsy a ground. The fact appears to be that Israel had drifted back into the role of Jacob, despite what may be suggested as a "reason"—in reality, a pretext—for his failure to act, if for no other purpose than to protect the moral and spiritual image implicit in his theocratic pre-eminence.) "The ground on which they declined a matrimonial alliance with Shechem was good; their sin lay in advancing this simply as a pretext to enable them to wreak their unholy vengeance on Shechem and his innocent people. The treacherous character of their next proposal [vv. 15-16] is difficult to be reconciled with any claim to humanity, far less to religion, on the part of Jacob's sons; so much so, that Jacob on his death-bed can offer no palliation for the atrocious cruelty to which it led (49:6-7). . . . This proposal was sinful, since (1) they had no right to offer the sign of God's covenant to a heathen people; (2) they had less right to employ it in ratification of a merely human agreement; and (3) they had least right of all to employ it in duplicity as a mask for their treachery" (PCG, 406).

Parenthetically, the question of the extent and design of the practice of circumcision obtrudes itself at this point. It will be noted that when the proposal made by the sons of Leah was presented to the males of Shechem, the primary argument for its acceptance was the material advantage which such an alliance would inevitably secure for them. The appeal of the rulers was in the strongest manner to the self-interest of the Shechemites: Jacob's house was wealthy, and the Shechemites therefore could only gain by the connection: as stated above, a complete amalgamation of the two groups. "Hamor naturally says nothing of the personal matter, but dwells on the advantages the clan will derive from union with the Israelites. The men are already *on friendly terms* with them; the land is

spacious enough; and by adopting circumcision they will obtain a great accession to their wealth" (Skinner, 420). The ready acquiescence of the Shechemites has with some measure of validity been regarded by some authorities as a proof that they were already acquainted with circumcision as a social, if not religious rite. "Knobel notes it as remarkable that the Hivites were not circumcised, since, according to Herodotus, the rite was observed among the Phoenicians, and probably also the Canaanites, who were of the same extraction, and thinks that either the rite was not universally observed in any of these ancient nations where it was known, or that the Hivites were originally a different race from the Canaanites, and had not conformed to the customs of the land (Lange). Murphy thinks the present instance may point out one way in which the custom spread from tribe to tribe (PCG, 408). As a matter of fact "According to Herodotus, circumcision was practised by the Phoenicians, and probably also among the Canaanites, who were of the same race and are never referred to in the Old Testament as uncircumcised, as, e.g., it speaks of the unCanaanitish Philistines" (Lange, 561); cf. *uncircumcised* Philistines, 1 Sam. 14:6, 17:26, 36; 1 Sam. 31:4; 2 Sam. 1:20; 1 Chron. 10:4, etc. Some authorities think that the spread of circumcision was the consequence of the growing awareness of its value as a sanitary measure. That it did exist among the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Hebrews is well established; but not, so far as the records go, among the Greeks, Romans, and Hindoos. At the present time, we are told, it is to be found among all Moslems and most Jewish communities, throughout Africa, Australia, Polynesia, and Melanesia, and, it is said, in Eastern Mexico. "It is hardly possible to say what its original distribution was, and whether or not there was a single center of distribution. As to its origin many theories have been advanced. Its character as initiatory is not an explanation—all customs of initiation

need to have their origins explained. . . . It may be said at the outset that it must have sprung from simple physical need, not from advanced scientific or religious conceptions" (Toy, IHR, 69). The simple fact is that for the Hebrews it was specifically appointed a Divine institution, a fleshly sign, to separate God's people of olden times from the pagan world and at the same time to serve as a symbol of religious faith and moral purity. Circumcision was a divinely *appointed* sign of the old covenant, much in the same manner, it would seem that the rainbow was appointed a sign of God's promise (covenant) to Noah and all mankind that He would never bring a universal judgment on the human race in the form of a Deluge, and as the bread and fruit of the vine of the Lord's Supper were appointed memorials of the death of Christ for our sins (Gen. 8:20-22; Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-28; 1 Cor. 15:13, etc.). Surely it is not to be understood that these things came into existence just at the respective times they were appointed signs, memorials, etc. It would be unreasonable to assume that they had not existed from the beginning, that is, "from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:15, 25:34; Luke 11:50, John 17:24, Eph. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8, 17:8; Heb. 4:3, etc.). "With respect to the symbolical significance of circumcision it is said to have originated in phallus worship, but if so this would have no bearing on the Israelite view of the rite. It was practised, say some, because of its medical advantages, as the warding off of disease through ease in cleanliness, or that it served to increase the generative powers, but these can hardly be received as proper explanations, for whole nations not practicing circumcision appear as healthy and fruitful. Nor can the rite be brought into connection with the idea of sacrifice, 'the consecration of a part of the body for the whole,' or even 'as an act of emasculation in honor of the Deity, that has gradually dwindled down to the mere cutting away of the foreskin.' We must

rather look for the significance of this rite in the fact that the corruption of sin usually manifests itself with peculiar energy in the sexual life, and that the sanctification of the life was symbolized by the purifying of the organ by which life is reproduced. But, as spiritual purity was demanded of the chosen people of God, circumcision became the external token of the covenant between God and His people. It secured to the one subjected to it all the rights of the covenant, participation in all its material and spiritual benefits; while, on the other hand, he was bound to fulfill all the covenant obligations. It had not, however, a sacramental nature; it was not a vehicle through which to convey the sanctifying influences of God to His people, but was simply a token of the recognition of the covenant relation existing between Israel and God" (UBD, s.v., 206). (We must call attention to the fact, however, that the word "sacrament" derives from the Latin *sacramentum*, which was the name of the oath of obedience taken by the Roman soldier to his centurion. In this sense, circumcision was indeed a "sacrament," the oath of fidelity to the provisions of the Old Covenant by the Covenant-people. We reject the theological corruption of the term in using it to designate some mystical ["esoteric"] impartation [usually explained as a "means of grace"] from God to His New-Covenant people.) Circumcision was formally enacted as a legal institution by Moses (Lev. 12:3, John 7:22-23), and was made to apply, not only to the Jewish father's own children, but to slaves, home-born or purchased; to foreigners before they could partake of the Passover or become Jewish citizens (Cf. Gen. 17:13—*he that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with money of any foreigner not of thy seed, etc.*). In its specific meaning for the Children of Israel circumcision was a *seal*, a seal in the flesh, as the Old Covenant was a fleshly Covenant, and hence indicative of the relationship designed to obtain between God and His Old-

Covenant people, proffered by grace and accepted by the obedience of faith. See my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 250-264, 272-282).

"During the wilderness journey circumcision fell into disuse. This neglect is most satisfactorily explained as follows: The nation, while bearing the punishment of disobedience in its wanderings, was regarded as under temporary rejection by God, and was therefore prohibited from using the sign of the covenant. As the Lord had only promised his assistance on condition that the law given by Moses was faithfully observed, it became the duty of Joshua, upon entering Canaan, to perform the rite of circumcision upon the generation that had been born in the wilderness. This was done, immediately upon crossing the Jordan, at or near Gilgal (Josh. 5:2-9). From this time circumcision became the pride of Israel, they looking with contempt upon all those people not observing it (Judg. 14:3, 15:18; 1 Sam. 14:6, Isa. 52:1, etc.). It became a rite so distinctive of them that their oppressors tried to prevent their observing it, an attempt to which they refused submission (1 Macc. 1:48, 50, 60, 62). "The process of restoring a circumcised person to his natural condition by a surgical operation was sometimes undergone from a desire to assimilate themselves to the heathen around them, or that they might not be known as Jews when they appeared naked in the games. Against having recourse to this practice, from an excessive anti-Judaistic tendency, St. Paul cautions the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:18, 19). Circumcision was used as a symbol of purity of heart, in certain instances (Deut. 10:16, 30:6; cf. Lev. 26:41; Jer. 4:4, 9:25; Ezek. 44:7). Exod. 6:12—"Who am of uncircumcised lips": By this figure Moses would seem to imply that he was unskilled in public address, as the Jews were wont to consider circumcision a perfecting of one's powers. Circumcision is also figurative of a readiness to hear and obey (Jer. 6:10)" (UBG, 207).

(For Christian [spiritual] circumcision, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 282-290).

Skinner holds that the requirement of circumcision imposed by the sons of Jacob upon the Shechemites "was merely a pretext to render them incapable of self-defense" (ICCG, 419). Certainly the Scripture account of the transaction contains no hint of anything that would refute this view; if it be true, it renders their duplicity even more perfidious. And even though the rulers of Shechem and their people agreed to the proposal—even though for reasons of expediency (for them no question of morality was involved)—Jacob's sons must have rejoiced within themselves that those against whom they sought revenge were so open-minded as to accept a proposal that would render them so completely helpless against the execution of this vengeance. And so we read, that "*on the third day when they (the Shechemites) were sore*" ("when the inflammation is said, in the case of adults, to be at its height"), two of the sons of Jacob, namely, Simeon and Levi took the lead in attacking the unsuspecting city with the sword, killing the males therein, and carrying off the women and children and all material goods as spoils. In this ferocious act of revenge they slew both Hamor and Shechem "with the edge of the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house" (vv. 25-26).

Jacob's displeasure (vv. 30, 31) seems to have been occasioned by the principle of expediency rather than by considerations of morality or righteousness. The massacre "displeased Jacob, the more so since he had few supporters and he was a 'sojourner' who could ill afford enemies" (AtD, 92). "Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi, not for their treachery and cruelty, but for their recklessness in exposing the whole tribe to the vengeance of the Canaanites" (ICCG, 421). Lange is inclined to be a bit more lenient: "Jacob felt that, as the Israel of God, he was made offensive even to the moral sense of the surrounding

heathen, through the pretended holy deed of his sons; so far so that they had endangered the very foundation of the theocracy, the kingdom of God, the old-covenant church. Fanaticism always produces the same results; either to discredit Christianity in the moral estimate of the world, and imperil its very existence by its unreasonable zeal, or to expose it to the most severe persecutions" (CDHCG, 564). Whitelaw summarizes as follows: "That Jacob should have spoken to his sons only of his own danger, and not of their guilt, has been ascribed to his belief that this was the only motive which their carnal minds could understand (Keil, Gerlach); to a remembrance of his own deceitfulness, which disqualified him in a measure from being the censor of his sons (Kalisch, Wordsworth); to the lowered moral and spiritual tone of his own mind (Candlish); to the circumstance that, having indulged his children in their youth, he was now afraid to reprove them (Inglis). That Jacob afterwards attained to a proper estimate of their bloody deed his last prophetic utterance reveals (49:5-7). By some it is supposed that he even now felt the crime in all its heinousness (Kalisch), though his reproach was somewhat leniently expressed in the word 'trouble' (Lange); while others, believing Jacob's abhorrence of his sons' fanatical cruelty to have been deep and real, account for its omission by the historian on the ground that he aimed merely at showing 'the protection of God (35:5), through which Jacob escaped the evil consequences of their conduct' (Hengstenberg)" (PCG, 408). Note the sons' attempted justification: "*Should be [Shechem] deal with our sister as with a harlot?*" That is, "She is not a harlot and her wrong must be avenged; so we as her brothers had to do it" (SC, 209). *But Shechem offered Dinah honorable marriage!*

Note vv. 27-29—In "the sons of Jacob" here surely *all* the sons of Jacob are included. It is inconceivable that only two of them could have massacred all the males

of the city. They must have had the help of other males (servants, herdsmen) in Jacob's *entourage*. Simeon and Levi, however, were the ringleaders. But the other males were surely involved: the prospect of loot becomes to many the primary, rather than the secondary motivation when a mob forms. "They who seemed to have scruples or fears about taking part in the slaughter have no compunctions of conscience about taking a hand in the plundering of the city. This act of theirs again does them little credit. The thing that ranked in the bosom of all was that this was 'the city that had defiled their sister.' They are, indeed, largely correct in imputing to the city a share in the wrong done; for the city condoned the wrong and had not the slightest intentions of taking steps to right it. But only the most excessive cruelty can demand such a wholesale retribution for a personal wrong. . . . Then to show how thoroughly Jacob's sons were in the heat of their vengeance the author reports that also 'all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives' were captured, the latter, no doubt, being kept as slaves. Then to produce the impression that the sacking of the city was done with utmost thoroughness the writer adds: 'and they plundered even everything that was in the houses.' By translating thus we remove the necessity of textual changes which the critics regard as necessary" (EG, 909). (But can we truly say that the Shechemites did nothing to right the wrong done Dinah? Only if we assume, of course, that their proposal for amalgamation was motivated solely by expediency without any awareness of the moral law which had been violated. But again did they have any notion of moral law whatsoever? Of course, we have no way of obtaining conclusive answers to these questions.) Again: "It is almost unbelievable that Jacob should be reproached by commentators at this point for what he is supposed to have failed to say, namely, for not rebuking Simeon and Levi for 'their treachery and cruelty.'

Yet such a man as Jacob could not have failed to be in perfect accord with us in our estimate of this bloody deed of his sons, for Jacob was truly a spiritual man, especially in these later years. Nor was the moral issue involved in the least difficult to discern. The chief reason for the writer's not mentioning Jacob's judgment on the moral issue is that this issue is too obvious. Furthermore, that judgment is really included in the statement, 'Ye have brought trouble upon me.' Then, lastly, the author is leading up to another matter that specially calls for discussion. Since, namely, the entire Pentateuch aims to set forth how God's gracious care led to the undeserving people of His choice from grace to grace, the author is preparing to show another instance of such doing and prepares for it by mentioning how greatly Jacob was troubled by this deed. For *akhar*, which means 'disturb,' 'destroy,' here means 'bring into trouble.' In what sense he means this in particular is at once explained, 'by causing me to become odious (literally, *to stink*) to the inhabitants of the land.' That surely implies that the deed done was both obnoxious and dangerous. In comparison with the inhabitants of the land Jacob had 'but a small following,' or, says the Hebrew, 'Men of numbers,' i.e., men easily numbered. Had not God intervened, the outcome would inevitably have been as Jacob describes it: they would have gathered together and destroyed him and his family. Though without a doubt the deed of Jacob's sons gave evidence of great courage, it certainly also entailed even greater rashness. The thoughtlessness of young men who rush headlong into ill-considered projects was abundantly displayed by this massacre.... We are greatly amazed in reflecting upon the event as a whole that descendants of the worthy patriarch Abraham should almost immediately after his time already have sunk to the level upon which Jacob's sons stand in this chapter. A partial explanation is to be sought in the crafty cunning of their

father which in the sons degenerated to the extremes here witnessed. A further bit of explanation is to be sought in their environment; hardly anywhere except in their own home did they see any manifestation of godly life. Then, in the third place, we must attribute a good measure of the guilt of any improper bringing up of these young men to the irregularities of a home where bigamy ruled. All true spirit of discipline was cancelled by the presence of two wives and two handmaidens in the home—practically four wives. Lastly, the chapter as a whole furnishes a clear example as to how much the critics are divided against themselves in spite of their strong protestations of unanimity" (EG, 909-912).

Some additional pertinent comments concerning the tragedy of Shechem are in order at this point. For instance, the following: "Shechem was inhabited at the time by Hurrian elements; the text (v. 2) calls Hamor a Hivite, but the LXX identifies him as a Horite. The latter identification is supported by two independent details: (1) The Shechemites are as yet uncircumcised, a circumstance that supplies the key feature of the story; the contrary was presumably true of Semitic Canaanites. (2) Cuneiform records from the region of Central Palestine have shown that Hurrians were prominent there during the Amarna age (ca. 1400 B.C.); they must have arrived prior to that date. There is, furthermore, the fact . . . that Simeon and Levi are depicted here as headstrong and vengeful. In later sources, Simeon was a rudimentary tribe settled in the south of Judea, a long way from Shechem; and Levi has no territorial holdings whatsoever. Evidently, therefore, a pair of once vigorous tribes had suffered critical losses in their attempt to settle in Central Palestine, losses which they were never able to recoup. Standard tradition retained no memory of that remote event, except for the faint echo in the Testament of Jacob (ch. 49), where the blame is laid, significantly

enough, on the two brother tribes themselves. The period in question should thus be dated before the Exodus, and very likely prior to Amarna times" (Speiser, ABG, 267). (It should be recalled that there were four other sons of Jacob by Leah, in addition to Simeon and Levi: namely, Reuben, the eldest; then respectively Simeon and Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. There were also two (adopted) sons of Leah, by her handmaid, Zilpah, namely, Gad and Asher. Of all these Simeon and Levi undoubtedly took the lead in pressing and executing vengeance on Shechem). (It is interesting to note that among the Amarna clay tablets in Accadian cuneiform, discovered by a peasant woman in 1886 at Tell el Amarna ("mound of the city of the Horizon") about 200 miles south of present-day Cairo, there is mention of events leading to the surrender of Shechem to the Habiru. Apparently, roving bands of these Habiru ("Hebrews"?") infested the country and menaced the settled communities, adding to the general insecurity during the period when Egyptian hegemony in Palestine was on the wane. These tablets were found to contain correspondence of petty Canaanite princelings with their Egyptian overlords. They date back to about 1400 B.C. (See Chronology, xx., *supra*). The Habiru appear prominently in the letters of Abdi-Hiba, governor of Jerusalem ("Urusalim") to the Pharaoh Akhnaton asking for Egyptian troops to hold off these invaders, who could easily have been the Israelite tribes invading Canaan under Joshua. Among these hundreds of clay tablets there is a letter written by Lab'ayu, ruler of Shechem, to the Egyptian king vehemently protesting his loyalty). "The indications in the Bible may imply that the patriarchs were not ordinary nomads, whom an older school of Orientalists liked to compare with the present-day Arab nomads. Even though the latter live exotically in tents and move about, they are quite unsophisticated and detached from the current history of their time. They stand in sharp con-

trast to the Hebrew patriarchs, who had dealings with Amorites, Canaanites, Philistines (early Caphtorians), Egyptians and, of course, kinglets from all over the Near East. The patriarchs' careers seem to lie on the hub of the highly cosmopolitan Amarna Age, or very close to it.

.... Whatever its background in history may be, it is evident that the proto-Aramean strain, represented in the saga of Jacob, is the nomadic element referred to later in the Deuteronomic phrase 'a wandering Aramean was my father' and from this stock of Hebrew and 'Aramean' origin sprang the clans who formed the beginning of a Hebrew settlement in Canaan, at Shechem and Bethel, long before the sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus out of Egypt. G. E. Wright maintains that 'it has long been realized that Gen. 34 has behind it a tradition of a Hebrew relationship with Shechem which relates to early events not necessarily altered by the Sojourn and Exodus. Even during the Sojourn the city must have been under Israelite control; that is, a mixed Canaanite-Hebrew group of clans may have been united by covenant, worshipping a deity called 'Baal-berith (Lord of the Covenant)' (AtD, 94). (Cf. Deut. 26:5, 1:10, 10:22; Gen. 46:27; Judg. 8:33; 9:4, 27, 46).

It might be well to note, in this connection, the rather important role played by Shechem in the Old Testament story, as follows: "(a) A capital of the Hivites, and as such the scene of the brutal heathenish iniquity, in relation to the religious and moral dignity of Israel; (b) The birthplace of Jewish fanaticism in the sons of Jacob; (c) A chief city of Ephraim, and an Israelitish priestly city; (d) The capital of the kingdom of Israel for some time; (e) The principal seat of the Samaritan nationality and cults. The acquisition of a parcel of land at Shechem by Jacob, forms a counterpart to the purchase of Abraham at Hebron. But there is an evident progress here, since he made the purchase for his own settlement during life,

while Abraham barely gained a burial place. The memory of Canaan by Israel and the later conquest (cf. 48:22) is closely connected with this possession. In Jacob's life, too, the desire to exchange the wandering nomadic life for a more fixed abode, becomes more apparent than in the life of Isaac. [Wordsworth's remarks here, after enumerating the important events clustering around this place from Abraham to Christ, is suggestive. Thus the history of Shechem, combining so many associations, shows the uniformity of the divine plan, extending through many centuries, for the salvation of the world by the promised seed of Abraham, in whom all nations are blessed; and for the outpouring of the Spirit on the Israel of God, who are descended from the true Jacob; and for their union in the sanctuary of the Christian church, and for the union of all nations in one household in Christ, Luke 1:68 —Gosman]” (Lange, 563).

Shechem has a long history Biblically. (1) The name appears once as *Sichem* (Gen. 12:6, A.V., marginal rendering, Sychar, cf. John 4:5). The town was in Central Palestine. “The etymology of the Hebrew word *shekem* indicates that the place was situated on some mountain or hillside; and this presumption agrees with Josh. 20:7, which places it on Mount Ephraim (see also 1 Ki. 12:25), and with Judg. 9:6, which represents it as under the summit of Gerizim, which belonged to the Ephraim range” (UBD, s.v.). (2) Shechem is the first Palestinian site mentioned in Genesis. Abram, on first entering the land of promise, pitched his tent there and built an altar under the oak (or terebinth) of Moreh (Gen. 12:6). “The Canaanite was then in the land,” i.e. even at that early time; nevertheless, Yahweh revealed Himself to the patriarch there, and renewed His covenant promise (Gen. 12:7, whereupon the patriarch built an altar unto Him. (3) Abraham's grandson, Jacob, on returning from Paddan-aram, came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, and

pitched his tent (Gen. 33:18, 19; ch. 34) on a parcel of ground which he bought from Hamor, the Hivite prince of the region (Gen. 33:18, 34:2). When Shechem, the son of Hamor, defiled Dinah, Simeon and Levi led in the massacre of the men of the region (Gen. 34:25, 26) and the other sons of Jacob pillaged the town (vv. 27-29), though Jacob—then Israel—condemned the action (Gen. 34:30, 49:5-7). (4) Here Jacob buried all of his household's "strange gods" under the oak (35:1-4) and raised an altar to *El-elohe-Israel* ("God, the God of Israel"), Gen. 32:20. This "parcel of ground" which Jacob purchased he subsequently bequeathed as a special patrimony to his son Joseph (Gen. 33:19, Josh. 24:32, John 4:5); and here the Israelites buried the bones of Joseph which they had brought with them out of Egypt (Josh. 24:32, cf. Gen. 50:25). (5) Joseph as a young man in Canaan sought his brothers who were tending their flocks near the rich pasture lands around Shechem (Gen. 37:12ff.). (6) In the 15th century B.C. the town fell into the hands of the Habiru as we learn from the Tell-el-Amarna letters (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, J. B. Pritchard, 1950: pp. 477, 485-487, 489, 490). The name probably occurs earlier in the Egyptian records dating back to the 19th-18th centuries B.C. (ANET, 230, 239; see Douglas, NBD, 1173). (7) In the course of the Conquest, Joshua as the successor of Moses called for a renewal of the Covenant at Shechem: at this time the Law was again promulgated: its blessings were proclaimed from Gerizim and its curses from Ebal (Deut. 27:11, Josh. 8:33-35). Various features of the typical covenant pattern well known in the East in the centuries 1500-700 B.C., may be identified in these Scriptures. (See especially NBD, under "covenant.") (8) In the distribution of the land, Shechem fell to Ephraim (Josh. 20:7, 1 Chron. 7:28) but was assigned to the Kohathite Levites, and became a city of refuge (Josh. 21:20, 21). (9) At Shechem Joshua

assembled the people shortly before his death and delivered to them his last counsels (Josh. 24:1, 25). (10) After the death of Gideon, Abimelech, his illegitimate son by a Shechemite woman, persuaded the men of the city to make him king (Judg. 9:6; cf. 8:22, 23). In the time of the Judges, Shechem was still a center of Canaanite worship and the temple of Baal-berith ('the lord of the covenant'). Abimelech proceeded to exterminate the royal seed, but Jotham, one son who escaped the bloody purge, standing on Mount Gerizim, by means of a parable about the trees, appealed eloquently to the people of Shechem to repudiate Abimelech (Judg. 9:8-15). This they did after some three years (vv. 22, 23), but Abimelech destroyed Shechem (v. 45) and then attacked the stronghold of the temple of Baal-berith and burned it over the heads of those who sought refuge there (vv. 46-49). In a subsequent engagement at Thebez, however, Abimelech was mortally wounded by a millstone thrown down on his skull by a woman, and to save his "honor" commanded his armor-bearer to end his life (Judg., ch. 9). (11) Evidently the city was soon restored, for we are told that all Israel assembled at Shechem and that Rehoboam, Solomon's successor, went there to be inaugurated king of all Israel (1 Ki., ch. 12): at this same place, however, the ten tribes renounced the House of David and transferred their allegiance to Jeroboam (1 Ki. 12:1-20, 2 Chron. 10:1-19). Jeroboam restored Shechem and made it the capital of his kingdom (the northern kingdom, Israel) for a time (1 Ki. 12:25): later it seems, he moved his capital to Penuel, and his successors still later moved it to Tirzah (1 Ki. 12:25, 15:21, 16:6). (12) From that time on, the town declined in importance, but continued to exist long after the fall of Samaria, 722 B.C., for men from Shechem came with offerings to Jerusalem as late as 586 B.C. (Jer. 41:5). The Assyrian king, Shalmaneser (or Sargon?) on taking over Samaria carried most of the people of Shechem into

captivity and then sent colonies from Babylon to take the place of the exiles (2 Ki. 17:5-6, 17:24, 18:9ff.). Another influx of strangers came under Esarhaddon (*Ezra* 4:2). In post-exilic times Shechem became the chief city of the Samaritans who built a temple there (*Ecclesiasticus* 50:26-28; Josephus, *Ant.*, 11, 8, 6). In 128 B.C. John Hyrcanus captured the town (Josephus, *Ant.*, 13, 9, 1). In the time of the first Jewish revolt Vespasian camped near Shechem, and after the war the town was rebuilt and was named Flavia Neapolis in honor of the emperor Flavius Vespasianus: hence the modern Nablus. From the time of the origin of the Samaritans (cf. 1 Ki. 16:23-24) the history of Shechem is interwoven with that of this people (the ten tribes having lost their identity by forced amalgamation with foreign colonials) and their sacred mount, Gerizim. "It was to the Samaritans that Shechem owed the revival of its claims to be considered the religious center of the land; but this was in the interest of a narrow and exclusive sectarianism (*John* 4:5ff.)" (UBD, 1008). (For information about archaeological discoveries at Shechem, see especially BWDBA, or any reliable Bible Dictionary, e.g., UBD, NBD, HBD, etc.). Shechem is now generally identified with Tell-Balatah."

A final word is in order here concerning the tragedy of Shechem. "Jacob reproved the originators of this act most severely for their wickedness. '*Ye have brought me into trouble (conturbare), to make me stink (an abomination) among the inhabitants of the land; . . . and yet I (with my attendants) am a company that can be numbered (lit. people of number, easily numbered, a small band, Deut. 4:27, Isa. 10:19); and if they gather together against me, they will slay me,*' etc. If Jacob laid stress simply upon the consequences which this crime was likely to bring upon himself and his house, the reason was, that this was the view most adapted to make an impression upon his sons. For his last words concerning Simeon and

Levi (49:5-7) are a sufficient proof that the wickedness of their conduct was also an object of deep abhorrence. And his fear was not groundless. Only God in His mercy averted all the evil consequences from Jacob and his house (35:5-6). But his sons answered, '*Are they to treat our sister like a harlot?*' . . . Their indignation was justifiable enough; and their seeking revenge, as Absalom avenged the violation of his sister on Amnon (2 Sam. 13:22ff.), was in accordance with the habits of nomadic tribes. In this way, for example, seduction is still punished by death among the Arabs, and the punishment is generally inflicted by the brothers. . . . In addition to this, Jacob's sons looked upon the matter, not merely as a violation of their sister's chastity, but a crime against the peculiar vocation of their tribe. But for all that, the deception they practised, the abuse of the covenant sign of circumcision as a means of gratifying their revenge, and the extension of that revenge to the whole town, together with the plundering of the slain, were crimes deserving of the strongest reprobation. The crafty character of Jacob degenerated into malicious cunning in Simeon and Levi; and jealousy for the exalted vocation of their family, into actual sin. This event 'shows us in type all the errors into which the belief in the pre-eminence of Israel was sure to lead in the course of history, whenever that belief was rudely held by men of carnal minds' (*O. v Gerlach*)" (K-D, 314-315).

To sum up: The city of Shechem was overpowered, of course, but Jacob thought it prudent to avoid the revenge of the Canaanites by departing from the region of what must have been to him a great disillusionment. It seems most likely that he returned afterward and rescued 'from the Amorite with his sword and his bow' the piece of land he had previously purchased and which he left, as a special inheritance, to Joseph (Gen. 48:22, Josh. 17:14).

2. *Jacob at Bethel, 35:1-15.*

Jacob had allowed some ten years to pass since his return from Mesopotamia, without performing the vow which he had made at Bethel when in flight from Esau (28:20-22). However, he had recalled it in his own mind when he was resolving to return (31:13), and had also erected an altar in Shechem to "God, the God of Israel" (33:20). He is now divinely directed to go to Bethel and there build an altar to the God who had appeared to him on his original flight to Paddan-aram. This divine injunction evidently prompted him to perform a task which he had evidently kept putting off, namely, to put out of his house the strange gods which he apparently had tolerated, weakly enough, out of misplaced consideration for his wives, and to pay to God the vow he had made in the day of his trouble. He therefore ordered his household (vv. 2, 3), i.e., his wives and children, and *all that were with him*, i.e., his men and maid-servants, to put away all the strange gods they were harboring (and, it may be, concealing), then to purify themselves and wash their clothes. He also buried all the strange ("foreign") gods, including no doubt Rachel's teraphim (31:19), and whatever other idols there were (including, in all likelihood some that were carried off in the looting of Shechem), and along with these the earrings which were worn as amulets and charms: all these he buried *under the terebinth at Shechem*, probably the very tree under which his grandfather Abraham had once pitched *his* tent (12:8, 13:3, 28:19). Bethel was about twelve miles north of Jerusalem and thirty miles south of Shechem. From Shechem to Bethel there is a continuous ascent of over 1000 ft.

V. 1—"Because you delayed on the road you were punished by what happened to Dinah (Rashi)." *Dwell there:* "You must dwell there a little time before you set up the altar, so that your mind may be duly attuned to the service of God (Sforno, Nachmanides). The purpose

of the altar was, according to N, to cleanse himself from his contact with idols, or from the slain; according to S, as a thanksgiving for his deliverance" (SC, 209). The command to *dwell there* (at Bethel) surely signified at least one thing, namely, that the massacre of the Shechemites had rendered longer residence in that region unsafe. "The divine injunction here "contained an assurance that the same Divine arm which had shielded him against the enmity of Esau and the oppression of Laban would extend to him protection on his future way." V. 2—*Put away the foreign gods*, etc. Note that the same words were spoken by Joshua under the same tree (Josh. 24:23). These facts would "point, it would appear, to the memory of a great national renunciation of idolatry at Shechem in the early history of Israel" (Skinner, ICCG, 423). *The gods of the stranger* included "most likely the teraphim of Laban, which Rachel still retained, and other objects of idolatrous worship, either brought by Jacob's servants from Mesopotamia, or adopted in Canaan, or perhaps possessed by the captives" (PCG, 411). *Cleanse yourselves.* The word is that which is used later to describe purifications under the Law (Num. 19:11-12, Lev. 14:4, 15:3), *Change your garments:* the directions here given were similar to those subsequently given at Sinai (Exo. 19:10-15), and were designed to symbolize a moral and spiritual purification of the mind and heart (the inward man, cf. Rom. 7:22, 2 Cor. 4:16). *Let us arise and go up to Bethel:* evidently Jacob had acquainted his family with the original experience at Bethel. *I will make there an altar unto God:* "El is probably used because of its proximity to and connection with Bethel, or house of El, and the intended contrast between the El of Bethel and the strange Elohim (gods) which Jacob's household were commanded to put away" (PCG, 411). Note that the language here, v. 3, clearly looks back to his Bethel experiences (28:20, 32:9, 31:9). "It ought not to be forgotten that Jacob had now

a large band of followers—wives, children, domestics, slaves, and shepherds. His tribe, as it may be called, could scarcely have numbered fewer than from two hundred to three hundred persons, old and young. These had all come from Mesopotamia, and most of them had been trained in idolatry. So long as Jacob resided in Mesopotamia it is probable he had not the power to prevent idolatrous practices; but now, having come to another country—a country in which the power of Jehovah had been so significantly manifested to himself and his fathers—he felt that he might safely and effectually eradicate idolatry from his people" (SIBG, 270). Did he not also have a great number of captives from Shechem? (Cf. 35:29). *Note that the purgation followed Jacob's commands, evidently without protest.* The foreign gods were handed over and buried, as were also all their earrings, "those employed for purposes of idolatrous worship, which were often covered with allegorical figures and mysterious sentences, and supposed to be endowed with a talismanic virtue" (PCG, 411). Cf. Judg. 8:24, Isa. 3:20, 21; Hos. 2:13). "Tradition has it that these were the teraphim which Rached had stolen and kept until now. The verse may mean that the servants of Jacob had brought their own household gods from their homeland. Jacob compels them to give them up and accept the worship of the God of Israel. Earrings were, and still are, worn in the Orient as amulets or charms against evil. In ancient times they had ritual significance, Judg. 8:24-27" (Morgenstern). *The oak which was by Shechem:* Whether the oak (terebinth) under which Abraham once pitched his tent (12:6), the one beneath which Joshua later erected his memorial pillar (Josh. 24:26), the oak of the sorcerers (Judg. 9:37), and the oak of the pillar at Shechem (Judg. 9:6), were one and the same, we cannot determine with certainty: the probability is, however, that they were. *Change your garments:* "From this we learn that when one goes to pray in

a place dedicated to that purpose, one must be clean bodily and in raiment (Ibn Ezra). Lest you have garments dedicated to idolatry (Rashi)" (SC, 209). *What a lesson here for our generation. A lesson this is, to be commended to our present-day long-haired, female-imitating hippies and to our hip-skirted, fashion-enslaved women (both young and old), indeed to the entire unholy breed of our twentieth-century idolaters!* Let them be reminded of one thing: namely, that garishness, rather than modesty, has no place in the conduct or dress of one who presumes to come into the presence of God for divine worship. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:31, 1 Pet. 3:1-7). Truly he that sitteth in the heavens must laugh at such antics: the Lord will have all such in derision, Psa. 2:4). "The burial of the idols was followed by purification through the washing of the body, as a sign of the purification of the heart from the defilement of idolatry and by the putting on of clean and festal clothes, as a symbol of the sanctification and elevation of the heart to the Lord (Josh. 24:23)" (K-D, 316).

So Jacob and his household journeyed toward Bethel. *And a terror of God was upon the cities round about them and they did not pursue them.* Was this simply a great terror literally? Or was it a supernatural dread inspired by Elohim, or a fear of Elohim, under whose care Jacob manifestly had been taken? It seems obvious that we have here another instance of what is designated the *numinous* revelation of Elohim: that is, a manifestation, and the accompanying awareness, by human beings, of the *dreadfulness*, the *awesomeness* of God. (It will be recalled that this is the thesis of the book, *The Idea of the Holy*, by Rudolph Otto. See *infra*, pp. 140ff., 171ff., esp. 174). (Cf. Gen. 28:17, 32:30; Exo. 19:16-19, 23:27; 1 Sam. 14:15, 2 Chron. 14:13, Psa. 68:35, Heb. 10:26-31). So *Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan* (a clause obviously designed to draw special attention to the

fact that Jacob had now accomplished his return to Canaan), *the same is Bethel, he and all the people that were with him* (the members of his household and the captive Shechemites). (Luz, as we have noted, was the ancient name of Bethel, and continued to be the name by which it was known to the Canaanites (Gen. 28:19, 35:6, 48:3; cf. Judg. 1:22-26). Luz was given the name of Bethel by Jacob (28:16-19), after spending the night of his sublime dream-vision near to the city. "It was the site of Jacob's sojourn near to the city, rather than the city itself, that received the name Bethel (Josh. 16:2); but this site later became so important that the name was applied to the city as well (Josh. 18:13, Judg. 1:23)" (NBD, s.v.).

Jacob, having arrived safely at Bethel, *built an altar*; but this time he called the place *El Bethel* (the God of Bethel) in remembrance of God's manifestation of Himself to him on his flight from Esau. It will be noted that Bethel marks two significant stages in the course of Jacob's life: the first on his flight from Esau (ch. 28), and now the second on his return trip home, many years later. The name *God of the House of God* definitely connects the present experience with that of his dream-vision on the journey to Paddan-aram (28:16-22). "V. 5 —He had formerly called it *Beth-el*, i.e., the house of God. Now, to attest his experience of God's fulfillment of His promises, he calls it, *El Bethel*, i.e., the God of Bethel (SIBG, 270).

The death of Deborah, v. 8. Deborah "was the same nurse who accompanied Rebekah when she left home (24:59). She had been sent by Rebekah to fetch Jacob home in fulfilment of her promise (27:45), but she died on the way (Rashi). It is extremely unlikely that it was the same nurse, because she would have been very old by then and hardly fit for such a mission. She was probably

another nurse who had remained with Laban after Rebekah left, and then became nurse to Jacob's children. Now Jacob was taking her home with him to look after Rebekah in her old age. But why is this fact mentioned? The Rabbis asserted that we have here a veiled hint at the death of Rebekah herself, this being really the reason why the place was named *Allon-bacuth* (Nachmanides). As to why Rebekah's death is not explicitly stated, Rashi cites a Midrash that the reason was that the people might not curse her as the mother who bore Esau. Nachmanides holds that it was because very little honor could have been paid to her at the funeral, in view of Isaac's blindness which confined him to the house so that he could not attend it, and Jacob's absence" (SC, 210). A *Midrash* is an exposition of Hebrew Scripture esp. one that was made between 4th Century B.C. and the 11th century A.D.) Morgenstern suggests the following: "There could be some confusion here between this tradition of the great tree near Bethel, sacred because of its association with a certain Deborah, and the tradition recorded in Judges 4:5 of the sacred 'palm-tree of Deborah' also located near Bethel, because Deborah the prophetess was supposed to have sat beneath it while revealing the oracle to Israel" (JIBG). Lange comments: "The nurse of Rebekah had gone with her to Hebron, but how came she here? Delitzsch conjectures that Rebekah had sent her, according to the promise (27:45), or to her daughter-in-law and grandchildren, for their care; but we have ventured the suggestion that Jacob took her with him upon his return from a visit to Hebron. She found her peculiar home in Jacob's house, and with his children after the death of Rebekah. Knobel naturally prefers to find a difficulty even here. It is a well-known method of exaggerating all the blanks in the Bible into diversities and contradictions" (p. 563). Leupold writes: "Deborah must have

been very old at this time. Since Jacob may have been nearly 110 years old at this time and was born rather late in his mother's life, an age of 170 years for Deborah is not unlikely. But Isaac lived to be 180 years old (v. 28). But these unexplained and unusual features constitute no reason for questioning the historicity of the event. The confusion of our event and the person of Deborah (Judg. 4:5) does not lie in these passages but in the minds of the critics. The Deborah of a later date 'judged' and dwelt 'under a palmtree between Ramah and Bethel.' Our Deborah 'died' and was buried 'under an oak below Bethel.' More important to observe is the fact that the Scripture regards the death and burial of this menial worthy of notice; and that fact would lead us to infer, as Luther does, that 'she was a wise and godly matron, who had served and advised Jacob, had supervised the domestics of the household and had often counseled and comforted Jacob in dangers and difficulties.' So the 'Oak of Weeping' became a monument to a godly servant whose loss was deeply mourned by all" (EG, 919). This final word, in the present connection: "V. 8—There *Deborah*, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried below Bethel under an oak, which was henceforth called the 'oak of weeping' [Allon-bacuth], a mourning oak, from the grief of Jacob's house on account of her death. Deborah had either been sent by Rebekah to take care of her daughters-in-law and grandsons, or had gone of her own accord into Jacob's household after the death of her mistress. The mourning at her death, and the perpetuation of her memory, are proofs that she must have been a faithful and highly esteemed servant in Jacob's house" (K-D, 316). Skinner is right (ICCG, 425), it seems to us at this point, in saying that the chief mystery here is not concerning Deborah, but the mystery as to how the name of Rebekah got introduced in this connection at all. He adds that it

is "an unsafe argument" to say that a "nurse" could not have been conspicuous in legend, e.g., cf. the grave of the nurse of Dionysus at Scythopolis, in Pliny, *Natural History*, 5, 74).

The Renewal of the Covenant Promises at Bethel, vv. 9-15. V. 9—"The distinction between *God spoke* and *God appeared* is analogous to the distinction in the mode of revelation: cf. ch. 12, 1 and 7" (Lange, 563). Whitelaw comments: "This was a visible manifestation, in contrast to the audible one in Shechem (ver. 1), and in a state of wakefulness (ver. 13), as distinguished from the dream-vision formerly beheld at Bethel (28:12). God appeared to Jacob, *and blessed him*, that is, renewed the covenant-promise of which Jacob was the heir. Note again the mention of the *change of name* (cf. 32:28). At Peniel the name of Israel was given to Jacob; here it is sealed to him; hence, here it is definitely connected with the Messianic Promise. (Murphy suggests also that the repetition of the new name here implies a decline in Jacob's spiritual life between Peniel and Bethel). Not also that God appeared unto Jacob *again*: Now, at his return when the vow has been paid, as before in his migration, when the vow was occasioned and made (28:20-22). "After Jacob had performed his vow by erecting the altar at Bethel, God appeared to him again there ('again,' referring to ch. 28), '*on his coming out of Paddan-aram.*' as He had appeared to him 30 years before on his journey thither—though it was then in a dream, now by daylight in a visible form (cf. v. 13, '*God went up from him*'). The gloom of that day of fear had now brightened into the clear daylight of salvation. This appearance was the answer, which God gave to Jacob on his acknowledgment of Him; and its reality is thereby established, in opposition to the conjecture that it is merely a legendary repetition of the previous vision. The former theophany had promised to Jacob divine protection in a foreign land and restoration

to his home, on the ground of his call to be the bearer of the blessings of salvation. This promise God had fulfilled, and Jacob therefore performed his vow. On the strength of this, God now confirmed to him the name of Israel, which He had already given him in chap. 32:28, and with it the promise of a numerous seed and the possession of Canaan, which, so far as the form and substance are concerned, points back rather to chap. 17:6 and 8 than to chap. 28:13, 14, and for the fulfilment of which, commencing with the birth of his sons and his return to Canaan, and stretching forward to the most remote future, the name of *Israel* was to furnish him with a pledge. Jacob alluded to this second manifestation of God at Bethel towards the close of his life (chap. 48:3, 4); and Hosea (12:4) represents it as the result of his wrestling with God. The remembrance of this appearance Jacob transmitted to his descendants by erecting a memorial stone, which he not only anointed with oil like the former one in chap. 28:18, but consecrated by a drink-offering and by the renewal of the name Bethel" (K-D, 317). *Note again the name-change.* "The reason of the second investiture with the name of *Israel* seems probably to be that either Jacob himself, or his family, had refrained from using it. *Note:* Believers, like Jacob and his family, are oftentimes negligent of the use and unmindful of the privilege of the *new name*. Believers 'were by nature children of wrath, even as others,' Eph. 2:3. But, Behold what manner of love God has bestowed, that they should be called, through faith (Gal. 3:26) *the children of God*, 1 John 3:2" (SIBG, 270).

Note especially V. 11: "I am God Almighty," etc. "This self-applied title of God has the same significance here as it had in the revelation of God for Abraham (17:1); there he revealed himself as the miracle-working God, because he had promised God a son; here, however, because he promises to make from Jacob's family a com-

munity [assembly] of nations" (Lange). "The *kabal* here is significant as it refers to the ultimate complete fulfilment of the promise in true spiritual Israel" (Gosman, in Lange, p. 563). Murphy calls attention to the fact that from this time the multiplication of Israel is rapid. In twenty-five years after this time he goes down into Egypt with seventy souls, besides the wives of his married descendants, and two hundred and ten years after that Israel goes out of Egypt with numbering about one million eight hundred thousand. *A nation and a congregation of nations*, such as were then known known in the world, had at the last date come of him, and 'kings' were to follow in due time" (MG, 427). It should be noted that the *land*, as well as the *seed*, is again promised.

Note here also the repeated items of the Promise. (1) *Be fruitful and multiply*: "Abraham and Isaac had each only one son of promise; but now the time of increase has come" (MG, 427). (Cf. Gen. 1:28). (2) *A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee*: cf. 17:5, 28:3. (3) *And kings shall come out of thy loins*: cf. 17:6, 16. (4) *And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac* (cf. 12:7, 13:15, 26:3, 4), *to thee I will give it* (28:13), and *to thy seed after thee will I give the land* (the time of their actual taking possession of the land was specified to Abraham, 15:12-16).

Note also that this is the first mention of the drink-offering in the Old Testament (v. 14).

V. 14—"And Jacob set up a pillar," etc. It would seem that the former pillar (28:18) had fallen down and disappeared. This pillar of stone was to commemorate the interview, *God having gone up from him in the place where He talked with him*. This setting up of memorial pillars seems to have been a favorite practice of Jacob's. Cf. the first pillar at Bethel (28:18), the pillar on Galeed (31:45), the second pillar at Bethel (35:14), the pillar over Rachel's grave (35:20). Note that *Jacob poured a*

drink-offering on this pillar of stone, and oil also. This is the first mention of a drink-offering (sacrificial libation) in the Old Testament. "Mosaic sacrifices were often accompanied by drink offerings (cf. Exo. 29:40, Lev. 23:13. In Num. 15:3-10 the quantity is prescribed according to the types of blood sacrifice to be presented. Its use was perverted by the Jews who offered it along with their sacrificial cakes to Ashtoreth, the *queen of heaven* (Jer. 44:17). God reproved Israel for offering it to idols (Isa. 57:5, 6, and 65:11; Jer. 19:13; Ezek. 20:28). The drink offering is symbolic of the outpoured blood of Christ on Calvary (Isa. 53:12, Matt. 26:28, Heb. 9:11-14) and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon His Church (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17, 18; 10:45)" (HBD, 57). The drink offering consisted of a fourth part of a hin of wine, which was equal to about a third of a gallon (Exo. 29:40). Jacob poured oil on the memorial stone as he had done previously (28:18). The holy anointing oil of the Old Testament was always a type of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit (Lev. 8:12, Psa. 45:7, Heb. 1:9, Acts 10:38, etc.).

V. 15—God called the place *Bethel* (cf. 28:19). Do we not have a prolepsis here, that is, a referring back, by way of explanation for the sake of emphasis, to what had previously been said and done at this place on the occasion of Jacob's dream-vision (28:18-22).

Bethel (known originally as Luz, Gen. 28:19) has a long and notable history in the Biblical record. (It is usually identified as the modern Tell Beitin on the watershed route 12 miles north of Jerusalem.) Abram camped to the east of Bethel and there built an altar to Yahweh (Gen. 12:8), at the time of his entrance into Canaan. After his sojourn in Egypt, he returned to this site (Gen. 13:3). For Jacob, Bethel was the starting-point of his understanding of God, who was for him in a special sense "God of Bethel" (Gen. 31:13, 35:7). On being divinely

ordered to Bethel, on his return from Mesopotamia, he built an altar and set up a memorial pillar, renewing the name he had given the place originally (35:1-15). After the Conquest it was assigned to the Joseph tribes who captured it, especially to Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:28), and bordered the territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:13). According to excavated potsherds Bethel began to be occupied as a city in the 21st century B.C. It suffered a severe destruction in the early 14th century B.C.: this is usually referred to as a burning by the tribes of Israel at the time of the Conquest. Later excavations seem to support the view that this destruction was wrought by the Josephites, some time after Joshua's death (Judg. 1:22-26), and had nothing to do with the actual Conquest. When the Israelites took over after Joshua's death, they called it by the name Jacob had given to the place of his vision instead of calling it Luz (Judg. 1:23). When it became necessary for Israel to punish Benjamin, the people sought advice as to the conduct of the battle and worshiped at Bethel "for the ark . . . was there" (Judg. 20:18-28, 21:1-4). It was a sanctuary in the time of Samuel who visited it annually to hold court (1 Sam. 7:16, 10:3); hence it obviously was a site of one of the "schools" of the prophets which were originated under Samuel (2 Ki. 2:1-3; 1 Sam. 10:10, 19:20; 1 Ki. 20:35, etc.). The archaeological remains of this period indicate that it was a time of great insecurity: the settlement was burned twice by the Philistines. Under the early monarchy, the city seems to have begun to prosper again, becoming the center of Jeroboam's rival cultus, condemned by a man of God from Judah (2 Ki. 12:28—13:32). Abijah of Judah captured the site (2 Chron. 13:19); and Asa, his son, may have destroyed it (2 Chron., ch. 14). Elisha met a group of "sons of the prophets" from Bethel, and along with them the "mocking boys" (2 Ki. 2:3, 23). Amos condemned the pagan rites of the Israelite royal sanctuary (Am. 4:4, 5:5-6, 7:13; cf.

Hos. 10:15) and Jeremiah bespeak their futility (48:13). (*Ashtoreth* was the Canaanite mother-goddess of the Canaanites, the goddess of fertility, love and war (1 Ki. 11:5, 44:17): her counterparts were the Syrian Atargatis, the Phoenician Astarta, the Babylonian Ishtar, the Phrygian Cybele, the Egyptian Isis, etc.). The priest sent to instruct the Assyrian settlers in Samaria settled at Bethel (2 Ki. 17:28). Josiah invaded all the pagan sanctuaries of both Judah and Israel and restored the true worship of Jehovah in a mighty national reformation (2 Ki. 23:15ff.). Bethel was later occupied by the returning exiles from Babylon (Ezra 2:28, Neh. 11:31); their worship, however, was again centered in Jerusalem (Zech. 12:2, Isa. 51:22, 23). The city grew again during the Hellenistic period until it was fortified by Bacchides about 160 B.C. (1 Macc. 9, 50). Vespasian captured it in A.D. 69, and a little later it was rebuilt as a Roman "township" (a small political unit). (In this connection, cf. Beth-aven ("house of iniquity"), which was near Ai and to the east of Bethel (Josh. 7:2 and served as boundary mark for Benjamin's allotment (Josh. 18:12). In Hosea (4:15, 5:8, 10:5), "the name may be a derogatory synonym for Bethel, 'House of the (false) god'" (NBD, s.v.). Bethel continued to flourish until the time of the Arab conquest. "Bethel, specified by Eusebius and Jerome, twelve miles from Jerusalem and on the right hand of the road to Shechem, corresponds precisely to the ruins which bear the name Beitin" (UBD, 139). "The site is perhaps Burg Beitin to the southeast of Tell Beitin, the 'shoulder of Luz' (Josh. 18:13)" (NBD, 143).

3. *The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel, vv. 16-20.*

Jacob now left Bethel, evidently not in opposition to the divine command which simply directed him to go there, build an altar, and dwell there long enough at least to perform his vow. In accordance probably with his own

desire, if not also Heaven's counsel, we find him leaving Bethel and proceeding toward Mamre, no doubt to visit Isaac. (What has happened to Rebekah, in the meantime? When did she die? The Scriptures do not give us the answers. It has been conjectured that her death occurred while Jacob was absent in Paddan-aram. The place of her burial, incidentally mentioned by Jacob on his death-bed (49:31), was in the field of Machpelah. The Apostle Paul refers to Rebekah as having been acquainted with God's purposes regarding her sons even before they were born (Rom. 9:10-12, cf. Gen. 25:23). It seems obvious that Jacob never saw her after his hurried departure for Paddan-aram (27:46, 28:5). Was not this very fact a form of retribution for her deceptive manipulation of events in favor of Jacob, her favorite?)

As they proceeded on their journey southward in the direction of Hebron, Rachel was taken in labor as they entered the vicinity of Ephrath. The text tells us literally that she was suffering *hard labor* in her parturition, all the more severe no doubt because it had been some sixteen years since her first son, Joseph, was born. In the course of the labor, the midwife told her that this baby was also to be a son, fulfilling a wish expressed by her when Joseph was born (30:24). And Rachel dies during the final fulfilment of the strongest wish of her life. Note "*as her soul was departing (for she died)*." the term *nephesh* meaning "soul" or "life." That is, "departing" not to annihilation, but to another state of being (cf. Luke 16:22, John 1:18). "For she died" (Whitelaw calls this "a rather pathetic commentary on ch. 30:1"). As Rachel was dying she named the baby *Ben-oni*, "son of my pain." Jacob, however, called him *Ben-jamin*, "probably son of good fortune, according to the meaning of the word *jamin* sustained by the Arabic, to indicate that his pain at the loss of his favorite wife was compensated by the birth of this son, who now completed the number twelve" (K-D).

p. 318). "The father changes the name of ill omen to Benjamin: 'son of the right hand,' i.e., 'son of happy omen'" (JB, 57). "With her last breath Rachel names her son *Ben-oni*; but the father, to avert the omen, calls him *Bin-yamin*. The pathos of the narrative flows in sympathy with the feelings of the mother: a notice of Jacob's life-long grief for the loss of Rachel is reserved for 48:7" (ICCG, 426). "Joseph buried Rachel on the road to Ephratah, or Ephrath . . . i.e., *Bethlehem* (bread-house), by which name it is better known, though the origin of it is obscure" (K-D, 318). Jacob erected a monument (pillar) upon Rachel's grave; "*the same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day*" (v. 20). That is, unto the time of Moses; yet the site of Rachel's sepulchre was known as late as the time of Samuel (1 Sam. 10:2). "There seems no reason to question the tradition which in the fourth century has placed it within the Turkish chapel Kubbet Rachil, about half-an-hour's journey north of Bethlehem" (Whitelaw, PCG, 417; cf. Robinson, I, 322; Thompson, LB, 644; Tristram, *Land of Israel*, 404; Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, 149). Bethlehem, or House of Bread, became the birthplace of David, 1 Sam. 16:18), and of Christ (Mic. 5:2, Matt. 2:1). "This narrative is more than mere history, for the event occurred, and the record was made, to symbolize a greater sorrow that was to occur at Ephrath nearly two thousand years after, in connection with the birth at Bethlehem of that Man of Sorrows in whom every important event in Hebrew history received its final and complete significance" (Thomson, LB, 644-645). "The grave of Rachel was long marked by the pillar which Jacob erected over it; and her memory was associated with the town Bethlehem (Jer. 31:15, Matt. 2:18)" (OTH, 105). "Nachmanides remarks that the Tomb is about four parasangs from the Ramah of Benjamin, but more than two days' journey from the Ramah

of Ephraim. Hence, when Jeremiah said, *A voice is heard in Ramah . . . Rachel weeping for her children* (Jer. 31:15), it must be hyperbole: so loud is her weeping that it can be heard as far as Ramah. Jacob buried Rachel on the way and did not take her body into the nearby city of Bethlehem because he foresaw that it would belong to the tribe of Judah, and he wished her body to lie in the portion of Benjamin" (SC, 212). "Rachel's sepulchre is still a noted spot. Jews and Mohammedans unite in honoring it. It is marked by a small building surmounted by a white dome. It is on the leading road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, three miles from the former and one from the latter. The original name of Bethlehem appears to have been *Ephrath*, 'fruitful.' This gave place to *Beth-lehem*, 'house of bread'; which in modern times has given place to the Arabic *Beit-labm*, 'house of flesh'" (SIBG, 270). "Benjamin was the twelfth and last son of Jacob. He was a full brother to Joseph, being born of Rachel, the favorite wife of Jacob. Benjamin alone was born in Canaan rather than Paddan-aram, and his mother was buried on the way to Bethlehem in the region later assigned to Benjamin. He and Joseph were special objects of the affection of Jacob, because their mother was Rachel. In her dying agonies Rachel gave him the name of *Benoni*, 'son of my sorrow,' but Jacob named him Benjamin, 'son of the right hand.' The peculiar concern of Joseph for Benjamin during the Egyptian episode may be understood by the fact that they were full brothers, whose half brothers looked upon them with envy because of Jacob's special love for them" (HBD, 58). "In Jeremiah 31:15-16, the prophet refers to the exile of the ten tribes under Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and the sorrow caused by their dispersion (2 Ki. 17:20), under the symbol of Rachel, the maternal ancestor of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, bewailing the fate of her children, which lamentation

was a type or symbol of that which was fulfilled in Bethlehem when the infants were slaughtered by order of Herod (Matt. 2:16-18)" (UBD, 907).

"Rachel is a figure of great importance in the saga, as Jacob's beloved wife and as the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, who were to constitute the very core of the Israelite state. And so the narrative in Chapter 35 continues with the death of Rachel and the birth of Benjamin, for she died in childbirth. Tradition hails a cupola-topped structure on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem as the 'tomb of Rachel.' It was actually erected in the 15th century A.D. over a monolith which marks an ancient grave. It is mentioned by the 7th century pilgrim Arculf. This shrine was frequented by Jewish pilgrims in Palestine until 1948 when the Arab-Israel War of Liberation broke out" (AtD, 95). "In the time of the sixth-century [?] pilgrim Arculf, the grave was already marked by a monument of some sort, which he calls a 'pyramid.' That probably means a pyramid-topped mausoleum, for these were frequently constructed in Roman times" (Kraeling, BA, 88).

4. Reuben's Incest. vv. 21-22.

Israel went on his way toward Hebron from Ephrath, after the funeral of Rachel, and spread (*i.e.*, unfolded, cf. 12:8, 26:25) his tent beyond the tower of Eder. "He that departs from the scene of his sorrow is designated as 'Israel,' as it would seem to indicate that he bore his grief as his better, newer nature helped him to do, and so 'moved on' a chastened but a more seasoned saint of God. But for the present he did not move far. For 'Migdal-Eder,' meaning 'the tower of the flocks,' *i.e.*, a lookout tower for shepherds, was, according to Micah 4:8, (rightly interpreted), on the southeast hill of Jerusalem on old territory of the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:28, Judg. 1:21) (EG, 926). "Probably a turret, or watch-tower, erected for the convenience of shepherds in guarding their

flocks (2 Ki. 18:8, 2 Chron. 26:10, 27:4), the site of which is uncertain, but which is commonly supposed to have been a mile (Jerome) or more south of Bethlehem" (PCG, 416). "Such towers would be numerous in any pastoral country; and the place referred to here is unknown" (Skinner, 426). Here it was that Reuben, Jacob's eldest, committed incest (Lev. 18:8) with Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid and Jacob's concubine. For this crime he received the dying curse of Jacob and his birthright was taken from him (Gen. 49:4, 1 Chron. 5:1). "Need we be told the self-evident thing, that Jacob disapproved and was deeply grieved and shamed? We are merely informed that he became aware of what had happened: he 'heard of it.' This prepares us for 49:4 where his disapproval finds lasting expression for all future time" (EG, 927). "Another local story," writes Cornfeld, "attached to a place called Migdal Eder, is connected with the oldest roots of the Jacob traditions. It concerns Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, and an affair with his father's concubine, Bilhah. It is of such a scandalous nature that it is reported with characteristic Hebrew conciseness. The biblical storyteller, while not suppressing scandal and 'fauengeschichten' does not lavish time and words on sex and gossip, in line with the Bible's rigid and ascetic social code. This incident, a mere fragment of the vast Jacob saga, is necessary to the Biblical storyteller for an understanding of Jacob's last blessing to his sons, and his paternal curse on Reuben, in Gen. 49:4. But according to the oldest Jewish commentators, Reuben was not motivated by lust, but acted to protect his mother Leah [as in 30:14?] and defend her interests. Commentators assume that Jacob made Bilhah his favorite after Rachel's death, whereupon Reuben seduced her and alienated the patriarch's affection from her. There is more to this than appears in a few short sentences. This motif is part of the epic repertoire of the East Mediterranean and comes up in the Iliad (9:444-

57), where Phoenix, like Reuben, received a paternal curse and no blessing for seducing his father's concubine. He also, like Reuben, was not motivated by lust. This goes to prove that the more we study the Bible, the more we have to respect the importance of the mere details which help to piece together and interpret Biblical stories" (AtD, 95-96). But why was it necessary to try to "explain away" the content of Gen. 49:4, or also of 1 Chron. 5:1? The connection between these passages and Gen. 35:22 is very clear and meaningful. Moreover, there is no real reason for trying to prove that Reuben was too much different from young men of his time, especially in his attitude toward one who was only a 'concubine'? Imaginative reconstructions are entirely unnecessary: the Scriptures in this case, when allowed to do so, speak for themselves. This is equally true of other Jewish "interpretations." E.g., "Reuben did not actually do this, but removed her couch from his father's tent, and Scripture stigmatized his action as heinous as though he had lain with her. For during Rachel's lifetime Jacob's couch was always in her tent; on her death he removed it to Bilhah's, Rachel's handmaid. Reuben resented this, saying, 'If my mother, Leah, was subordinate to Rachel, must she also be subordinate to Rachel's handmaid?' Thereupon he removed her couch and substituted Leah's (Rashi, quoting the Talmud). Nachmanides suggests that he did this from the fear that Jacob might have another son by her, as she was still young, and so diminish his heritage" (SC, 213). We call attention to the fact that these passages (Gen. 35:22, 49:4, and 1 Chron. 5:1) all *make sense* when taken together. Why then should anyone resort to utterly uncalled-for and unnecessary flights of the imagination which serve only to create confusion and offer little or nothing that can be substantiated by external evidence. The Scriptures present the story of Reuben's incest as *fact*: the whole story forms a pattern

which authenticates itself. Why should any writer have indulged a *midrash* trying to ameliorate Reuben's sin, when as a matter of fact it could hardly be comparable in its heinousness to the massacre of the Shechemites perpetrated by Simeon's and Levi's thirst for vengeance?

5. *The Twelve Sons of Jacob*, vv. 22-26.

(1) By Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, (Cf. 29:32-35, 30:18-20, 46:8-15; Exo. 1:2, 3). (2) By Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. (Cf. 30:22-24, 35:18, 46:19). (3) By Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan, and Naphtali. (Cf. 30:4-8). (4) By Zilpah (Leah's handmaid) : Gad, and Asher. (Cf. 30:9-15). Of all these, Benjamin was the only one born in Canaan; the others were born to Jacob in Paddan-aram. We now have the genealogy of the origin of the twelve tribes who later became a *people* (a *nation*, the Children of Israel). These verses are anticipatory of the Testament of Israel (ch. 49) and of the establishment of the Theocracy, under the mediatorship of Moses, at Sinai.

6. *The Death of Isaac*, vv. 26-28.

Jacob came finally to Mamre, unto Kiriath-arba, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned, Cf. 13:18, 23:2, 19; John. 14:15, 15:13, etc. Here Isaac died, being "old and full of days," literally satisfied with days. (Cf. the statement about Abraham's death, 25:8). "This chapter closes the ninth of the pieces or documents marked off by the phrase 'these are the generations.' Its opening event was the birth of Isaac (25:19), which took place in the hundredth year of Abraham, and therefore seventy-five years before his death recorded in the seventh document. As the seventh purports to be the generations of Terah (11:27), and relates to Abraham who was his offspring, so the present document, containing the generations of Isaac, refers chiefly to the sons of Isaac, and especially to Jacob, as the heir of the promise. Isaac as a son learned obedience to his father in that great typical

event of his life, in which he was laid on the altar, and figuratively sacrificed in the ram which was his substitute. This was the great significant passage in his life, after which he retired into comparative tranquility" (MG, 429). (Murphy, by the term "document" here has reference to the sections which are introduced by the word *toledoth*, of which there are nine, not including the use of the word with reference strictly, in Gen. 2:4, to the physical or non-human phases of the Creation. Note the use of *toledoth* ("generations") to mark off the nine sections of the book as follows: "the generations of" Adam, beginning at 5:1; of Noah, beginning at 6:9; of the sons of Noah, at 10:1; of Shem, at 11:10; of Terah, at 1:27; of Ishmael, at 25:12; of Isaac, at 25:19; of Esau, at 36:1; and of Jacob at 37:2. See my *Genesis*, I, 46-47.)

Isaac did indeed live in relative tranquility throughout most of his life; as a matter of fact, his personality seems not to have been motivated at any time to works of greatness: he was more or less under the domination of his wife throughout his entire married life. Commentators write eloquently of the Saga of Abraham, the Saga of Jacob, and the Saga of Joseph, but never of the Saga of Isaac: Isaac's career never attained such note, such *epic* proportions, one might well say. The careers of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, on the other hand, *did attain epic proportions*.

It is interesting to note also the prominent role played by the women of the patriarchal narratives. For example, Abraham accepted, apparently without any protest whatsoever, the barren Sarah's proffer of a concubine as a substitute bearer of children, and thus acquiesced in her lack of faith and unwillingness to abide God's own time for the fulfilment of His promise (16:1, 2). Isaac allowed himself to be victimized by the schemes of the strong-willed Rebekah (27:5ff.). Jacob labored under the spell which his deep love for Rachel seems to have cast over him throughout her life and even after her death (as

evinced by the fact that he worked fourteen years to secure her as a wife: cf. 29:10, 11, 30; 35:16-20; 37:3; 44:20-22); it was Jacob's great love for Rachel that sparked his deep affection for Joseph and Benjamin, no doubt to the disgust of his other sons. It has always been true, and we suppose always will be that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Men are frequently made or marred, or even destroyed, by the passionate devotion they give to the women whom they truly love.

Jacob finally arrived at Hebron with his whole entourage of relatives and servants. Hebron was the third notable station occupied by his grandfather Abraham in the Land of Promise (13:18). Here also Jacob's father Isaac now sojourned. At the time of Jacob's flight Isaac, we will recall, was resident in Beer-sheba; however, as he advanced in age he seems to have moved to Mamre, probably to be near the family sepulchre. Hebron was a town in the Judean mountains, some 2800 feet above sea level, midway between Jerusalem and Beersheba, and about twenty miles from each. It was named *Kiriath-arba* (Gen. 23:2; Josh. 14:15, 15:13), also *Mamre*, after Mamre the Amorite (Gen. 13:18; 14:13, 24; 35:27; 23:17, 19). Here Abraham entertained three heavenly Visitants on occasion and was promised a son (Gen. 18:1, 10, 14). The cave of Machpelah lay "before Mamre," probably to the east of the grove of Mamre (Gen. 23:17, 19; 25:9; 49:30-32; 50:13, 26).

Isaac died at the age of 180 years (cf. Psa. 91:16). "The death of this venerable patriarch is here recorded by anticipation, for it did not take place till fifteen years after Joseph's disappearance. Feeble and blind though he was, he lived to a very advanced age; and it is a pleasing evidence of the permanent reconciliation between Esau and Jacob, that they met at Mamre, to perform the funeral rites of their common father" (Jamieson, CECG, 225). This author would have us think kindly of Isaac, even

reverently. He writes: "In the delicate simplicity and unobtrusive humility of Isaac, in the quiet, gentle, amiable purity of his life, we have an early type of Christ's perfect example. Indeed, his whole character, and the leading events of his history were a foreshadowing of those of the Savior" (*ibid.*, 225). It can be said of Isaac truthfully, whatever else might be said in criticism, that he was a *man of peace*, a man who always sought peace in preference to violence.

The last sentence in this chapter 35 reads like a benediction in itself: "Esau and Jacob his sons buried him." Esau evidently arrived from Mount Seir to pay the final service due his deceased parent, "Jacob according to him that precedence which had once belonged to him as Isaac's firstborn." "The Solemnity of Death: in vs. 29 there comes a haunting echo of an earlier passage: 25:8-9. Except for the names, the two are identical. Isaac dies, and his sons Esau and Jacob come to bury him. Abraham died, and his sons Isaac and Ishmael came and buried him. In each case there had been bitterness between the two sons. Isaac was the cherished one: Ishmael had been driven out because of Sarah's jealousy for Isaac. So in the next generation also the two sons had been divided by Jacob's crafty trick that stole the birthright and Esau's resulting furious anger. But both times the two sons meet at a father's funeral—the one thing that after a long separation could unite them. The verses are more than bare records of events. They suggest a deep instinct that runs throughout all the history of Israel—the instinct of family loyalty. Whatever might drive individuals apart, something stronger held them, and would keep them from complete estrangement. Not in word only, but in fact the people of Israel accepted the commandment, 'Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' Obedience to that commandment is one reason why the Jewish race has had such

tenacity and toughness of survival. It has honored and protected the family. It has chastened and corrected selfish irresponsibility by putting into the hearts of each generation a sense of duty to the group" (IB, 743). History proves beyond all possibility of doubt that *when family life goes to pieces the nation falls.*

This is the last mention of the living Esau in Scripture. The sentence seems to indicate that Jacob and Esau continued to be on brotherly terms' from the day of their meeting at the ford of Jabbok. Still—no mention whatever of Rebekah in her last days! Nothing—but a passing mention, by Israel himself, of her place of burial, the Cave of Machpelah (50:31).

It is interesting to note the chronology involved in the intertwined lives of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Jacob was born in the sixtieth year of Isaac's life (25:26), and was thus 120 years old when Isaac died (at the age of 180). But later when he (as Israel) was presented before Pharaoh in Egypt he was 130 years old (47:9). Of this stretch of time there were seven fruitful and two unfruitful years since Joseph's exaltation to power in Egypt (41:53, 54; 45:6), and thirteen years between the selling of Joseph and his elevation, for he was sold at the age of seventeen and made prime minister at thirty (37:2, 47:9). "Hence we must take twenty-three years from the 130 years of Jacob, to determine his age at the time Joseph was sold: which is thus 107. 'Isaac therefore shared the grief of Jacob over the loss of his son for thirteen years.' In a similar way, Abraham had witnessed and sympathized with the long unfruitful marriage of Isaac. But Isaac could see in these sorrows of Jacob the hand of God, who will not allow that anyone should anticipate him in the self-willed preference of a favorite son" (Lange, 571). Leupold presents this problem in a somewhat clearer light as follows: "From this time [of Isaac's death] onward Jacob enters into the full patriarchal heritage, having at

last attained unto a spiritual maturity which is analogous to that of the patriarch. Coincident with this is Isaac's receding into the background. Consequently Isaac's death is now reported, though it did not take place for another twelve or thirteen years. For shortly after this, when Joseph was sold into Egypt, he was seventeen years old. When he stood before Pharaoh he was thirty (41:46). Seven years later when Joseph was thirty-seven, Jacob came to Egypt at the age of 130 (47:9). Consequently Jacob must have been ninety-three at Joseph's birth and at the time of our chapter, 93, plus 15, i.e., about 108 years. But Isaac was sixty years old when Jacob was born: 108 plus 60 equals 168, Isaac's age when Jacob returned home. But in closing the life of Isaac it is proper to mention his death, though in reality this did not occur for another twelve years. Strange to say, Isaac lived to witness Jacob's grief over Joseph" (EG, 929). Whitelaw writes as follows: "At this time [of Isaac's death] Jacob was 120; but at 130 he stood before Pharaoh in Egypt, at which date Joseph had been ten years governor. He was therefore 120 when Joseph was promoted at the age of thirty, and 107 when Joseph was sold. Consequently Isaac was 167 years of age when Joseph was sold, so that he must have survived that event and sympathised with Jacob his son for a period of 13 years" (PCG, 417). "Isaac died at the age of 180, and was buried by his two sons in the Cave of Machpelah (ch. 49:31), Abraham's family grave, Esau having come from Seir to Hebron to attend the funeral of his father. But Isaac's death did not actually take place for 12 years after Jacob's return to Hebron. For as Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold by his brethren (37:2), and Jacob was then living at Hebron (37:14), it cannot have been more than 31 years after his flight from Esau when Jacob returned home (cf. ch. 34:1). Now, since according to our calculation at ch. 27:1, he was 77 years old when he fled, he must have been

108 when he returned home; and Isaac would only have reached his 168th year, as he was 60 years old when Jacob was born (25:26). Consequently, Isaac lived to witness the grief of Jacob at the loss of Joseph, and died but a short time before his promotion in Egypt, which occurred 13 years after he was sold (41:46), and only 10 years before Jacob's removal with his family to Egypt, as Jacob was 130 years old when he was presented to Pharaoh (47:9). But the historical significance of his life was at an end, when Joseph returned home with his twelve sons" (K-D, 320). *This means simply that Jacob and his household must have dwelt with, or in close proximity to that of Isaac for some twelve or thirteen years, that is, until Isaac "was gathered to his people" at the age of 180.*

We learn later, from Jacob's last words, that Isaac and Rebekah were both buried in the Cave at Machpelah (49:31). However, the Scriptures are completely silent about her life and death, following the departure of Jacob for Paddan-aram at her instigation. It seems only reasonable to conclude that after that departure she never saw her favorite son again.

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

John Peter Lange: On the Fanaticism of Leah's Sons
(CDHCG, 564)

"The collision between the sons of Jacob and Shechem the son of Hamor, is a vivid picture of the collisions between the youthful forms of political despotism and hierachal pride. Shechem acts as an insolent worldly prince, Jacob's sons as young fanatical priests, luring him to destruction.

"After Jacob became Israel, the just consciousness of his theocratic dignity appears manifestly in his sons, under the deformity of fanatical zeal. We may view this narrative as the history of the origin, and first original form

of Jewish and Christian fanaticism. We notice first that fanaticism does not originate in and for itself, but clings to religious and moral ideas as a monstrous and misshapen outgrowth, since it changes the spiritual into a carnal motive. The sons of Jacob were right in feeling that they were deeply injured in the religious and moral idea and dignity of Israel, by Shechem's deed. But still they are already wrong in their judgment of Shechem's act, since there is surely a difference between the brutal lust of Amnon, who after his sin pours his hatred upon her whom he had dishonored, and Shechem who passionately loves and would marry the dishonored maiden, and is ready to pay any sum as an atonement; a distinction which the sons of Jacob mistook, just as those of the clergy do at this day who throw all breaches of the seventh commandment into one common category and as of the same heinous dye. Then we observe that Jacob's sons justly shun a mixture with the Shechemites, although in this case they were willing to be circumcised for worldly and selfish ends. But there is a clear distinction between such a wholesale, mass conversion, from improper motives, which would have corrupted and oppressed the house of Israel, and the transition of Shechem to the sons of Israel, or the establishment of some neutral position for Dinah. But leaving this out of view, if we should prefer to maintain (what Jacob certainly did not maintain) that an example of revenge must be made, to intimidate the heathen, and to warn the future Israel against the Canaanites, still the fanatical zeal in the conduct of Jacob's sons passed over into fanaticism strictly so called, which developed itself from the root of spiritual pride, according to three world-historical characteristics. The first was cunning, the lie, and enticing deception. Thus the Huguenots were enticed into Paris on the night of St. Bartholomew. The second was the murderous attack and carnage. How often has this form shown itself in the history of fanaticism! This

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pretended sacred murder and carnage draws the third characteristic sign in its train: rapine and pillage. The possessions of the heretics, according to the laws of the Middle Ages, fell to the executioner of the pretended justice; and history of the Crusades against the heretics testifies to similar horrors and devastation. Jacob, therefore, justly declared his condemnation of the iniquity of the brothers, Simeon and Levi, not only at once, but upon his death-bed (ch. 49) and it marks the assurance of the apocryphal standpoint, when the book Judith, for the purpose of palliating the crime of Judith, glorifies in a poetical strain the like fanatical act of Simeon (ch. 9). Judith, indeed, in the trait of cunning, appears as the daughter in spirit of her ancestor Simeon. We must not fail to distinguish here in our history, in this first vivid picture of fanaticism, the nobler point of departure, the theocratic motive, from the terrible counterfeit and deformity. In this relation there seems to have been a difference between the brothers, Simeon and Levi. While the former appears to have played a chief part in the history of Joseph also (42:24), and in the division of Canaan was dispersed among his brethren, the purified Levi came afterwards to be the representative of pure zeal in Israel (Exod. 32:28, Deut. 33:8) and the administrator of the priesthood, *i.e.*, the theocratic priestly first-born, by the side of Judah the theocratic political first-born. A living faith and a faithful zeal rarely develop themselves as a matter of fact without a mixture of fanaticism; 'the flame gradually purifies itself from the smoke.' In all actual individual cases, it is a question whether the flame overcomes the smoke, or the smoke the flame. In the life of Christ, the Old-Testament covenant faithfulness and truth burns pure and bright, entirely free from smoke; in the history of the old Judaism, on the contrary, a dangerous mixture of fire and smoke steams over the land. And so in the development of individual believers we see how

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some purify themselves to the purest Christian humanity, while others, even sinking more and more into the pride, cunning, uncharitableness and injustice of fanaticism, are completely ruined. *Delitzsch*: 'The greatest aggravation of their sin was that they degraded the sacred sign of the covenant into the common means of their malice. And yet it was a noble germ which exploded so wickedly.'

"This Shechemite carnage of blind and Jewish fanaticism is reflected in a most remarkable way, as to all its several parts, in the most infamous crime of Christian fanaticism, the Parisian St. Bartholomew. [The narrative of these events at Shechem shows how impartial the sacred writer is, bringing out into prominence whatever traits of excellence there were in the characters of Shechem and Hamor, while he does not conceal the cunning, falsehood, and cruelty of the sons of Jacob. Nor should we fail to observe the connection of this narrative with the later exclusion of Simeon and Levi from the rights of the first-born, to which they would naturally have acceded after the exclusion of Reuben; and with their future location in the land of Canaan. The history furnishes one of the clearest proofs of the genuineness and unity of Genesis—Gosman"] (Lange, 564). (Cf. Gen. 29:32-35; 35:22, 49:3, 49:5-7, etc.).

Analogy: Jacob and Christ

Genesis 32:24-32; John 14:1-14

A study of the lives of the patriarchs reveals the fact that human nature has been the same in all ages. The Bible is unique and superior in that it reveals men just as they are and have always been. It does not turn aside from its faithful record to cover up a single fault, nor hide an unpleasant incident. It is essentially the Book of Life.

In the biography of Jacob, we will find some very marked weaknesses of character. On the other hand, the remarkable virtues that manifest themselves demonstrate the superiority of his character over that of Esau, his brother, who was willing to sell his birthright for a mere "mess of pottage", Gen. 25:29-34, Heb. 12:16. Hence the promise to Abraham, which looked forward to the Gospel, Gen. 12:1-3, Gal. 3:8, was repeated to Isaac, Gen. 26:4, and to Jacob, Gen. 28:14. The names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are inseparably linked together as the

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fathers of the Jewish people, Exodus 8:6, Matt. 8:11, Acts 3:18, Heb. 11:18-20.

While Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are spoken of as types of Christ, it is not to be understood that they are types in character. That would be impossible, for in this He stood alone—"great in His solitude, and solitary in His greatness in holiness and perfection". We do not desire to become too fanciful in this study, yet there are many circumstances in the lives of these men that are strongly typical. We take up now the analogies between Jacob and Christ.

1. Jacob's vision at Bethel, Gen. 28:10-22.

1. Christ's place in the world vision he announced, John 1:51. As Jacob saw in his dream the vision of angels ascending and descending the ladder, so the disciples would see in Christ the connecting link between heaven and earth. Through Christ the heavens would again be opened, and communion between heaven and earth restored, John 14:6, Heb. 8:1-2.

2. Jacob went into a far country to secure his bride, laboring as a servant to secure her, Gen. 29-30.

2. Christ came to the world as a servant, laboring to secure His Bride, the Church. John 1:1-5, Col. 1:16-17, Heb. 1:2-3, Phil. 2:5-8, John 8:58.

3. In the far country eleven sons were born, Gen. 29-30.

3. While on earth, Christ called twelve apostles, but one of them fell. Matt. 10:2-4, John 6:70-71, Matt. 27:3-5, Acts 1:25.

4. Jacob was servant of Laban. At the end of his service, they "set a three days' journey" between them. Gen. 30:36.

4. At the end of Christ's personal ministry, a three days' journey was set between Himself and the world. John 2:18-21, Matt. 16:21, 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

5. Following the return to Canaan, Benjamin was born, making the twelfth son. These twelve sons were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. Gen. 35:22, 49:28-29, Ex. 24:4, Lev. 24:5.

5. After Christ's return to Heaven, Paul was called to be an apostle, born "out of due season," of the tribe of Benjamin, Acts 9, 26:1-7, 26:16-17, Phil. 3:4-6, 1 Cor. 15:8. The apostles will occupy thrones of judgment and positions of power in the Kingdom, 1 Cor. 6:2, Luke 22:29-30, Rev. 3:21, 21:14. These twelve are now the pillars, or the foundation of the Church, Gal. 2:9, Eph. 2:20.

6. Benjamin was born amidst sorrow and grief, yet was named "The Son of the Right Hand." Gen. 35:16-20.

6. Paul was born to the Church in the period of intense sorrow and persecution, yet came to be the greatest of the apostles, Acts 8:18, 26:9-10, 2 Cor. 11:22-28. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles distinctly, Acts 26:16-18. To him was committed the task of writing a large part of the New Testament.

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7. "Thy name shall be called 7. Christ has power with God Israel," (that is, a prince of God); and with men, John 12:32, 11:41-
"As a prince thou hast power with 42, Heb. 7:25.
God and with men," Gen. 32:24-30.

It is said that Frederick the Great of Prussia once asked a minister, of whom he was an intimate friend, "What do you consider the best evidence of the claims that Jesus is the Son of God, and that the Bible is divinely inspired?" The man of God very quickly replied, "The history of the Jews." And the supposed unbeliever was silenced.

In studying God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their posterity, we are plainly shown that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." God is in history, and especially in the history of the Jews. Today they are scattered among all nations, for their rejection of Christ, "until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled." What a warning to Gentiles who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as their Christ, Rom. 11:11-12. When the world is again bathed in sorrows; we may see the light!

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-THREE

1. Name the places that figured in the journey of Jacob and state what important event (or events) took place at each.
2. What place was the immediate objective of Jacob on his return from Paddan-aram?
3. What dramatic episode took place at Shechem?
4. Who was Dinah and what apparently were her relations with the women of Shechem?
5. What indignity was perpetrated on Dinah by Shechem the prince of the place?
6. Who was the king of Shechem at this time?
7. What was the reaction of Jacob's sons to this indignity? Who were the ringleaders in the terrible revenge visited on the Shechemites?
8. What is the significance of the statement regarding Shechem's folly, "which thing ought not to be done"?
9. What restitution did the king and prince of Shechem propose for the latter's crime? To what extent did this restitution include Jacob's entire tribe or ethnic group?
10. What was the feature of Shechem's act that was to Jacob's sons a special kind of iniquity? Do we see

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- here a taint of national (or ethnic) pride and self-righteousness?
11. What can we ascertain about Dinah's life following the incident at Shechem?
 12. What fanatical revenge did the sons of Jacob perpetrate on the Shechemites?
 13. In what way did they profane the institution of circumcision in actualizing this vengeance? Did they have any right to propose circumcision to non-Hebrews? Explain your answer.
 14. Of what special kind of hypocrisy were the sons of Jacob guilty?
 15. What was the total vengeance which they imposed on the Shechemites?
 16. What was Jacob's attitude toward this tragedy?
 17. What special character did circumcision have in relation to the progeny of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? How was it related to the Abrahamic Covenant?
 18. Is there any evidence that circumcision had any other meaning to the children of Abraham than that assigned to it as a feature of the Covenant? Explain your answer.
 19. What other suggestions have been offered by anthropologists as to the design of circumcision? Do these suggestions apply to the design of circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant? Explain.
 20. What validity is there in the view that the imposition of Circumcision on the Shechemites was merely a pretext to render them incapable of self-defense? Explain your answer.
 21. What do we mean by the statement that Jacob's displeasure over the tragedy perpetrated by his sons seems to have been occasioned by expediencey? Do you consider this charge valid?
 22. Do you consider that parental weakness comes to light in the duplicity of Jacob's sons?

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23. Trace the significant role played by Shechem in the Old Testament story. Where was the place located? How is it related to events in the New Testament?
24. May the tragedy of Shechem be rightly called an example of the dangers of religious fanaticism?
25. Explain, in this connection, the origin of the Samaritans. Why were they so cordially disliked by the Jews in New Testament times? Where in the New Testament do we find this prejudice clearly revealed?
26. Why, in all likelihood, did Jacob set out immediately for Bethel after the tragedy of Shechem? What did he do with the people of Shechem?
27. What did God command Jacob to do, after the incident at Shechem?
28. What steps did Jacob take to "purify" his household? What did he do with their foreign gods? Whom may we suppose to have had these "gods"?
29. What final purification ceremonies did Jacob enforce? What lessons do we learn from this incident about the importance of cleanliness and modesty of dress when we come into the presence of Jehovah to worship Him?
30. What was the first thing Jacob did on arriving at Bethel? On this second visit, what name did he give to the place and what was the significance of it?
31. Who was Deborah? On what grounds can we account for her appearance in the narrative at this point? How had she probably figured in the life of Joseph's household? What significance is there in the name *Allon-bacuth*?
32. What happened at Bethel with reference to the change of Jacob's name?
33. In what sense did Jacob perform the vow he had uttered at Bethel on his way to Paddan-aram?
34. What is the import of the name El Shaddai ("God Almighty") as it occurs in this theophany?

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35. What were the items of the Abrahamic Promise which were repeated and renewed to Jacob at this time?
36. What memorial did Jacob set up at this time? What was the drink-offering and what was its symbolic meaning?
37. Who was the goddess known as "the queen of heaven"? Of what cult was the worship of this goddess an essential feature?
38. What names were given this goddess among various other peoples?
39. Where did the Israelites bury the bones of Joseph when they came out of Egypt?
40. What was the usual punishment for seduction among nomadic tribes?
41. On what ground was the indignation of Simeon and Levi against the rulers of Shechem justifiable?
42. What great evils were involved in the vengeance which they executed?
43. Sketch the notable history of Bethel as it is given us in the Old Testament.
44. Where was Rachel's second son born? How did Rachel's life come to an end?
45. What did she name this son? What name did Jacob bestow on him? What did each of these names mean?
46. Where was Rachel buried? What was her special importance in the patriarchal history?
47. What crime did Reuben commit? What penalty did he suffer for this crime?
48. What probably was the original name of Bethlehem and what did it mean? What does the name Bethlehem mean?
49. What "explanations" of Reuben's act do we find in Jewish "interpretations"? Is there any legitimate ground for rejecting the truthfulness of the Biblical record as indicated in Gen. 35:22, 49:4, and I Chron. 5:1?

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50. Name the twelve sons of Jacob and their respective mothers.
51. Where did Jacob's journeying finally come to an end?
52. How old was Isaac when he died? What general characteristic can we apply to Isaac's life?
53. Where were Isaac and Rebekah buried? How account for the lacuna in the Biblical record with reference to the later period of Rebekah's life?
54. Why do we say that the last statement in the 29th chapter of Genesis reads like a benediction? With what event does the story of Esau's life come to an end?
55. Why do we say that Jacob and his household spent some twelve or thirteen years with Isaac at Hebron prior to Isaac's death? Explain the chronology of this interesting fact.
56. Summarize Lange's essay on fanaticism.
57. List the analogies between the life of Joseph and that of Christ.

PART FORTY-FOUR
EDOMITE GENEALOGIES
(Genesis 36:1-43)

The Biblical Account

1 Now these are the generations of Esau (the same is Edom). 2 Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, 3 and Basemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. 4 And Adah bare to Esau Eliphaz; and Basemath bare Reuel; 5 and Oholibamah bare Jeush, and Jalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, that were born unto him in the land of Canaan. 6 And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the souls of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his possessions, which he had gathered in the land of Canaan; and went into a land away from his brother Jacob. 7 For their substance was too great for them to dwell together; and the land of their sojournings could not bear them because of their cattle. 8 And Esau dwelt in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

9 And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir: 10 these are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. 11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho and Gatam, and Kenaz. 12 And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. 13 And these are the sons of Reuel: Nabath, and Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. 14 And these were the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and Jalam, and Korah.

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15 These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the first-born of Esau: chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, 16 chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek: these are the chiefs that came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. 17 And these are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah: these are the chiefs that came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. 18 And these are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah: these are the chiefs that came of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. 19 These are the sons of Esau, and these are their chiefs: the same is Edom.

20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan and Shobal and Zibeon and Anah, 21 and Dishon and Ezer and Dishan: these are the chiefs that came of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom. 22 And the children of Lotan were Hori and Heman; and Lotan's sister was Timna. 23 And these are the children of Shobal: Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, Shepho and Onam. 24 And these are the children of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; this is Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father. 25 And these are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. 26 And these are the children of Dishon: Hemdan and Eshban and Itbran and Cheran. 27 These are the children of Ezer: Bilhan and Zaavan and Akan. 28 These are the children of Dishan: Uz and Aran. 29 These are the chiefs that came of the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, 30 chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan: these are the chiefs that came of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir.

31 And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of

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Israel. 32 And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom; and the name of his city was Dinhbabah. 33 And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. 34 And Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. 35 And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. 36 And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 37 And Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth by the River reigned in his stead. 38 And Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 39 And Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-zahab.

40 And these are the names of the chiefs that came of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth, 41 chief Obolibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, 42 chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, 43 chief Magdiel, chief Iram: these are the chiefs of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possessions. This is Esau, the father of the Edomites.

1. *The History of Esau.*

"'Esau and Jacob shook hands once more over the corpse of their father. Henceforth their paths diverged, to meet no more' (Delitzsch). As Esau had also received a divine promise (25:23), and the history of his tribe was already interwoven in the paternal blessing with that of Israel (27:29 and 40), an account is given in the book of Genesis of his growth into a nation; and a separate section is devoted to this, which, according to the invariable plan of the book, precedes the *tholedoth* of Jacob" (K-D, 320). The account subdivides into six (or perhaps 7) sections, depending on the inclusion of vv. 6-8 into the

first section which would then begin with v. 1 and conclude with v. 8, as in the pages here *infra*. Skinner suggests seven sub-divisions as follows: (1) "Esau's wives and children (vv. 1-5); (2) His migration to Mount Seir (vv. 6-8); (3) a list of Esau's descendants (vv. 9-14); (4) an enumeration of clans or clan-chiefs of Esau (vv. 15-19); (5) two Horite lists: a genealogy (vv. 20-28), a list of clans (vv. 29-30); (6) the kings of Edom (vv. 31-39); (7) a second list of clans of Esau (vv. 40-43). The lists are repeated with variations in 1 Chron. 1:35-54" (ICCG, 428). Kraeling suggests the following subsections: (1) the tribes that could claim descent from Esau; (2) the "dukes" or chiefs of the sons of Esau, "*i.e.*, probably the centers furnishing a thousand-man unit for the Edomite army"; (3) the tribes of the pre-Edomite inhabitants who are called Horites; (4) the Edomite kings who had reigned before Israel had a king. (See Kraeling, BA, 89).

"The Edomites apparently had an illustrious history. Little is known about them beyond this summary account (Gen. 36:1-43) which indicates that they had several kings even before any king reigned in Israel. In this way the Genesis narrative disposes of the collateral line before resuming the patriarchal account" (OTS, 37). "Conformably to the plan pursued in the composition of this historical book, the Tholedoth of Esau precedes the ensuing account of the family history of Jacob, as the Tholedoth of Ishmael (25:12-17) that of Isaac; the Tholedoth of Japheth and Ham (10:1-20) that of Shem; and the Tholedoth of Cain (4:18) that of Seth. *Esau, who is Edom.* The latter name was applied to him in reference to the peculiar color of his skin at birth, rendered more significant by his inordinate craving for the *red* pottage, and also by the fierce sanguinary character of his descendants (cf. Ezek. 25:12, Obad. 10). The name Edom is prominently introduced at the commencement of this

genealogical record, because it formed the national designation of Esau's posterity" (Jamieson, CECG, 226). We prefer the subdivisions suggested by Keil-Delitzsch, and repeated in *The Jerusalem Bible* as given *infra*.

2. *Esau's Wives and Children in Canaan, and Their Settlement in Seir* (vv. 1-8; cf. Chron. 1:35ff).

"Our chief difficulty (here) arises from a comparison of the names of Esau's wives as they previously appeared. In 26:34 the Canaanite wives bore the names, 'Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite,' and 'Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite,' whereas in 28:9, the Ishmaelite wife is described as 'Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael.' Apparently, then, Judith must be identified with Oholibamah, Basemath with Adah, for both are followed by the name of the same father 'Elon,' and Mahalath must be the Basemath of our list, because in each case follows the father's name, 'Ishmael.' The reason for identifying Judith with Oholibamah may be made somewhat more convincing by noting that Oholibamah is described (v. 2) as 'the daughter of Anah.' Now Anah, according to v. 24, discovered 'hot springs'; but *be'er* is the Hebrew word for spring. However, in the former list he is described as *Beeri*—'spring-man.' Such changes of names need surprise no one, for Orientals commonly go under several names, especially the women, who frequently received a new name at marriage. Men should, therefore, not speak here of a 'contradiction as to Esau's wives' and call this 'a crucial difficulty' " (EG, 934). Again: "Since the Anah of v. 2 no doubt is a man (cf. v. 25), the word *bath* ('daughter') following it cannot refer to him but must be used in the looser sense of 'granddaughter' and naturally refers here to Oholibamah. This same Anah appears here as a 'Hivite' but in 26:34 as a 'Hittite.' The difficulty resolves itself quite readily when we observe that 'Hittite' is simply a more general designation of Canaanites, which use of the term is found in Josh. 1:4, 1 Kings 10:29, 2 Kings 7:6.

For the Hittites were a very prominent group among the inhabitants of the land and so came to stand for all of them. If in v. 20, however, Anah appears as a Horite, a term meaning 'cave dweller,' why should not one, originally a Hivite, also be able to dwell in a cave and so merit the additional cognomen 'Horite'?" (*ibid.*, p. 935). ("Cave dweller," that is, a *troglodyte*: Horite may not even have been a tribal or ethnic designation). (The student is referred to Part 40 of the present text, section 3 *supra*, under the caption "Esau Takes Another Wife.") There are several standard works which deal with the technicalities that occur in this chapter (36). We suggest the following commentaries on Genesis: by Keil and Delitzsch (BCOTP), by Whitelaw (PCG), by Jamieson (CECG), by Lange (CDHCG), and especially the thoroughgoing analysis of the chapter by William Henry Green (UBG, pp. 417-429), in which the composite theory is clearly refuted. Every argument put forward by the critics is answered clearly in this great work in which the nit-picking methodology of the self-styled analytical experts, who seldom if ever agree among themselves, is exposed. We see no reason for devoting any more time or space here to this phase of our subject, C.C.C.). (For interesting comments by Jewish sources on these various women and their relatives, the student is referred to *The Soncino Chumash*, published by the Soncino Press, London.).

We now read that Esau took his wives, sons, daughters, servants, livestock, "and all his possessions" which he had accumulated in Canaan and went into a land *away from Jacob*. The separation evidently was similar to that which had occurred between Abraham and Lot in earlier times. "We are brought to the time where Esau sees the necessity of leaving the land of Canaan, which has definitely been assigned to his brother Jacob. It will be difficult to determine whether he took this step before Jacob's return from Mesopotamia or some time thereafter.

For there is the possibility that Esau's and Jacob's flocks could not subsist together even when the flocks which were potentially Jacob's were still in reality under Isaac's care. The more likely construction to put upon the case would be that Jacob with his large flocks and herds, freshly returned from Mesopotamia, made the problem a critical one. (The land could hardly support both groups). But Esau on his part was by this time resigned to his lot that he yield the preference to his brother to whom the better blessing had been given, and when a clash like that which threatened between Abraham's and Lot's herdsmen seemed imminent, Esau showed prudence in promptly yielding" (EG, 936). "This journey was undertaken after Jacob had returned from Haran and settled in Canaan, possibly after their father's death. Esau had probably settled in Seir before Jacob's return, but dwelt only in the plain, the inhabitants of the mountains not allowing him to settle higher up. Now that Jacob returned, Esau recognized that the land would be his, whereupon he made an expedition and captured the Mountain country" (SC, 215).

It seems obvious that Esau, too, had grown enormously wealthy (cf. 27:39-40). It is certainly to be doubted, however, that he had grown spiritually, that is, in the direction of putting aside his *profanity*. We recall the words of the old Catechism: "Why does God, seemingly at least, often permit the wicked to prosper while evil befalls the good?" The answer: "For two reasons: 1. Because the righteous can be confirmed in true holiness only by trials and sufferings; and 2. Because God will not allow even the little good which the wicked may do, to go unrewarded; and therefore as He cannot reward it in the next world, He takes this means of allowing it to be rewarded in this present world." (Cf. Matt. 5:45, 13:27-30; Rom. 12:19, Acts 17:31, Rom. 2:16, etc.).

It must be true that these patriarchs were at a great disadvantage for the time being. Canaan was literally only "the land of their sojournings." (Cf. v. 7). Hence, they must have been moving about, utilizing unclaimed pasturage, "and yet, no doubt, wealthier than the actual inhabitants of the land. The resulting jealousy of the native inhabitants will have made their position more difficult" (EG, 937). The text seems to indicate clearly, however, that this was a separation between the brothers. Esau simply moved to *a land away from his brother Jacob*. "Since Jacob had purchased the birthright, he was naturally Isaac's heir and became entitled to the heritage of the land of Canaan. Hence Esau sought another country (Sforno). The Midrash explains that he left on account of the decree that Abraham's children would be strangers in a foreign land before they inherited Canaan; whereupon Esau declared, 'I want neither the land nor the prior payment,' viz. to be a stranger elsewhere; hence he left. Another reason was his feeling of shame at having sold the birthright (Rashi)" (SC, 216). (Cf. Gen. 15:12-16).

"*So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir: Esau is Edom.*" This means that he chose this land south of the Dead Sea for his permanent home. "Seir"—or "Mount Seir," since it is such mountainous terrain—was the original name of the land. "Exactly how this occupation proceeded we do not know. . . . As we have suggested, a process of conquest may have been involved. As the material of this chapter suggests, intermarriage with native Seirites or Horites figured quite largely in the process. Sometimes intermarriage may have preceded, sometimes may have followed upon certain stages of the conquest, until the aboriginal inhabitants were eliminated and the Edomite stock had become the dominant factor" (EG, 937). Jamieson writes: "The design of this historical sketch of Esau and his family is to show how the promise (27:39, 40) was fulfilled. In temporal prosperity he far exceeds his brother; and it is

remarkable that, in the overruling providence of God, the vast increase of his worldly substance was the occasion of his leaving Canaan, and thus making way for the return of Jacob. *Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir.* This was divinely assigned as his possession (Josh. 24:4; Deut. 2:5). It was not a 'land of promise' to him, as Canaan was to Jacob; but as the prediction in his father's testamentary blessing pointed, so he received it as the fulfilment of his destiny, Providence paving the way for it in the natural course of events. Having become allied by marriage with the family of Seir, he removed to the mount, and settled there with his family. Upon the rapid increase of his descendants into a tribe, it became evident that both the Edomites and the Horites could not find room enough in the country, and that the one or the other must give way; the former disputed the possession, and having, by Heaven favoring his arms, proved superior in the contest, Esau destroyed the great mass of the Horites, and, incorporating the remnant with his own race, finally 'dwelt in mount Seir,' as the dominant power: (hairy, rough, rugged) Mount Seir, inhabited by the Edomites, included that mountainous region which extends from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf" (Jamieson, 227). (The earliest mention of Mount Seir is in the account of Chedorlaomer's campaign in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14:6): here it is said that the Horites were then its inhabitants. "The Horites were the Hurrians, now known so well from the cuneiform tablets from ancient Nuzu and other sites, who invaded N. Mesopotamia, between 1780 and 1600, and gradually spread over Palestine and Syria" (UBD, 991). The route of the Exodus would have been through Seir (Deut. 2:1), but as God had given this region to Esau for a possession, the Israelites were forbidden to enter it (Deut. 2:5). The mention of Esau's removal to Mount Seir follows immediately the mention of Isaac's death and burial (Gen. 35:27-29, 36:1-8; cf. 32:3). In his fare-

well address Joshua spoke of God's giving Mt. Seir to Esau (Josh. 24:4). Chieftains of the Horites were called 'the children of Seir in the land of Edom' (Gen. 36:21, 30; cf. Ezek. 35:2ff.). Esau is said to have dispossessed the Horites of Mt. Seir (Gen. 32:3; 36:20ff.; Deut. 2:1-29, Josh. 24:4). Simeonites drove out the Amalekites who had hidden in Seir (1 Chron. 4:42ff.). "The majesty of God was associated with the awesome grandeur of Mt. Seir (Deut. 33:2, Judg. 5:4)." The Chronicler relates how King Amaziah of Judah (c. 800-783 B.C.) went to the Valley of Salt and slew 10,000 men of Seir but paid homage to their gods (2 Chron. 25:11-24). Isaiah's words, 'Watchman, what of the night?' came from Seir (Isa. 21:11).

The sons of Esau that were born in Canaan were five in number: by Adah, Eliphaz; by Basemath, Reuel; by Oholibamah, Jeush, Jalam and Korah. Adah and Basemath had each one son, while Oholibamah was the mother of three sons, all of whom became heads of different tribes: but in the case of the other two wives, it was their grandsons who attained that distinction.

3. Esau's Sons and Grandsons as Fathers of Tribes (vv. 9-14; cf. 1 Chron. 1:35-37).

Esau's descendants in Seir. Through his sons and grandsons Esau became the *father of Edom*, i.e., the founder of the Edomitish nation on the mountains of Seir. This, it should be noted, is the history of Esau *in Mount Seir*. The section which preceded it was his history in the land of Canaan. Where in vv. 1-8 we have only the names of those who in the strictest sense were 'sons of Esau,' here the same expression is used in the looser sense and takes in the grandsons, at least those of Eliphaz and Reuel, and incidentally also those of Amalek.

Of all those persons mentioned in this section, *Amalek* (vv. 12, 16) is the one who must be studied especially, in connection with Old Testament history. Among the

sons of Eliphaz we find this Amalek, whose mother was Timna, the concubine of Eliphaz. (See 1 Chron. 1:36; here "Timna and Amalek" is a more concise form of saying, "and from Timna, Amalek"). "Amalek was, of course, the ancestor of the Amalekites, who attacked the Israelites at Horeb as they were coming out of Egypt under Moses (Exo. 17:8-16), and not merely of a mixed tribe of Amalekites and Edomites, belonging to the supposed original Amalekite nation. . . . The allusion to the fields of the Amalekites in ch. 14:7 does not imply that the tribe was in existence in Abraham's time, nor does the expression 'first of the nations,' in the saying of Balaam (Num. 24:20), represent Amalek as the aboriginal or oldest tribe, but simply as the first heathen tribe by which Israel was attacked. The Old Testament says nothing of any fusion of Edomites or Horites with Amalekites, nor does it mention a double Amalek. . . . If there had been an Amalek previous to Edom, with the important part which they took in opposition to Israel even in the time of Moses, the book of Genesis would not have omitted to give their pedigree in the list of the nations. At a very early period the Amalekites separated from the other tribes of Edom and formed an independent people, having their headquarters in the southern part of the mountains of Judah, as far as Kadesh (14:7; Num. 13:29, 14:43, 45), but, like the Bedouins, spreading themselves as a nomad tribe over the whole of the northern portion of Arabia Petrea, from Havilah to Shur on the border of Egypt (1 Sam. 15:3, 7; 27:8); whilst one branch penetrated into the heart of Canaan, so that a range of hills, in what was afterwards the inheritance of Ephraim, bore the name of the mountains of the Amalekites (Judg. 12:15, 5:14). Those who settled in Arabia seem also to have separated in the course of time into several branches, so that Amalekite hordes invaded the land of Israel in connection sometimes with the Midianites and the sons of the East (the Arabs, Judg.

6:3, 7:12), and at other times with the Ammonites (Judg. 3:13). After they had been defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 14:48, 15:2ff.), and frequently chastised by David (1 Sam. 27:8, 30:1ff.; 2 Sam. 8:12), the remnant of them was exterminated under Hezekiah by the Simeonites on the mountains of Seir (1 Chron. 4:42, 43)" (K-D, 323-324).

Thus it will be seen that the Amalekites were inveterate enemies of Israel. The Edomites generally were equally so (Ezek. 35:5), although God forbade His people to hate or to despoil them (Deut. 23:7; 2:4-6; 2 Chron. 20:10). As a matter of fact, "Edom became a symbol of the hardened unbelief and hostility of the world to the people of God and as such was declared by the prophets to be the object of God's wrath and conquering power in the Last Days (Isa. 11:14; 34:5-6; Obad. 1:1-4, Amos 9:12)" (HBD, 59).

The distinguished Jewish commentator, Maimonides (1135-1204), has some very important things to say about the fate of the Amalekites and the Edomites. Cf. Exo. 17:13-15, Deut. 25:17-19. He writes as follows: "There are in the Law portions which include deep wisdom, but have been misunderstood by many persons; they require, therefore, an explanation. I mean the narratives contained in the Law which many consider as being of no use whatever e.g., the list of the various families descended from Noah, with their names and territories (Gen. 10); the sons of Seir the Horite (*ibid.*, 26:20-30); the kings that reigned in Edom (*ibid.* 31. seq.), and the like. . . . Every narrative in the Law serves a certain purpose in connexion with religious teaching. It either helps to establish a principle of faith, or to regulate our actions, and to prevent wrong and injustice among men; and I will show this in each case." As a case in point, Maimonides asks: "Had Moses nothing else to write than, 'And the sister of Lotan was Timna' (Gen. 36:22)?" He continues: "The list

of the families of Seir and their genealogy is given in the Law (Gen. 36:20-30), *because of one particular commandment*. For God had distinctly commanded the Israelites concerning Amalek to blot out his name (Deut. 25:17-19). Amalek was the son of Eliphaz and Timna, the sister of Lotan (Gen. 36:12, 22). The other sons of Esau were not included in this commandment. But Esau was by marriage connected with the Seirites, as distinctly stated in Scripture; and Seirites were therefore his children; he reigned over them; his seed was mixed with the seed of Seir, and ultimately all the countries and families of Seir were called after the sons of Esau who were the predominant family, and they assumed more particularly the name Amalekites, because these were the strongest in that family. If the genealogy of these families of Seir had not been described in full they would all have been killed, contrary to the plain words of the commandment. For this reason the Seirite families are fully described, as if to say, the people that live in Seir and the kingdom of Amalek are not all Amalekites; they are the descendants of some other man, and are called Amalekites because the mother of Amalek was of their tribe. The justice of God thus prevented the destruction of an (innocent) people that lived in the midst of another people (doomed to extirpation); for the decree was pronounced only against the seed of Amalek" (GP, 380-382).

"If we note Amalek as belonging among the Edomites (v. 12), we can understand how, being the son of a concubine, he may have been discriminated against and how that may have resulted in his separation from his brethren. For according to Exod. 17:8 and Num. 13:29 and 14:25 the Amalekites must have held territory much farther to the west. According to Judg. 5:14 and 12:15 they must have once occupied territory much farther to the north. Gen. 14:7 points to the fact that Amalekites had once dwelt much farther eastward, although in this

passage the term refers to territory which later was occupied by Amalekites. All of this cannot seem strange if it be borne in mind that all these tribes may have been more or less nomadic in their day" (EG, 939).

4. *The Clan-Chiefs (Tribe-Princes) of Edom* (vv. 15-19).

That is, dukes-phylarchs, leaders, chieftains of tribes. "The term [*alluphim*], though used in the general sense of ruler by the later Hebrew writers (Jer. 13:21; Zech. 9:7, 12:5-6), is exclusively employed in the Pentateuch as a designation of the Edomite princes (see Exod. 15:15), corresponding to the title of shiekhs among the modern Bedouins. Fourteen *alluphim* are mentioned here, and each Edomite tribe took the name of its founder, or, as some conjecture from v. 40, the duke was called after the name of the tribe. From Eliphaz, the eldest son of Esau, sprang seven dukes, three of whom have obtained prominent notice in Scripture history" (Jamieson, 227): (1) Duke *Teman*, eldest son of Eliphaz, was chief of a tribe which gave its name to a province of Idumea frequently mentioned by Scripture writers (Jer. 49:7, 20; Ezek. 25:13, Amos 1:12, Obad. 9, Hab. 3:3). This tribe seems to have risen to a position of great importance, and extended over a large portion of the territory of Edom; so that duke Teman was entitled to be mentioned first, not only as the eldest son of Eliphaz, but as the *premier* duke of Edom. (2) Duke *Kenaz* was founder of the Kenezite tribes, some of whose distinguished members, as Caleb and Othniel (Josh. 14:14, Judg. 3:9) were adopted into Israel. (3) Duke *Amalek*, whose independence and widespread occupancy of Palestine and Syria, caused them to be mentioned frequently in the Old Testament records. All the other ducal sons of Eliphaz ruled over tribes in the south, as their territorial names indicate. Those of *Reuel* (v. 17) abode in the original territory of Esau, as seems evident

from the designation, "Zerah of Bozrah" (v. 33). "But they roam over a wide circuit [to this day] to the neighborhood of the Hauran, and the country between the Euphrates and the Tigris; and in the north and west of the Persian Gulf the names of Reuel's descendants are to be traced in the classical writings and in modern times" (Jamieson, *ibid.*, 228).

5. *Descendants of Seir the Horite* (vv. 20-30; cf. 1 Chron. 1:38-42).

According to Deut. 2:12, the Horites of Seir were supplanted by the descendants of Esau. In vv. 20-30 here the inhabitants of the land, or pre-Edomite population of the country. *The Horite*, that is the *Troglodyte*, the dweller in caves, which abound in the mountainous country of Edom. "The Horites, who had previously been an independent people (14:6), were partly exterminated and partly subjugated by the descendants of Esau (Deut. 2:12, 22)" (K-D, 324). "Seir, with a colony of Horites from Lebanon, settled in the mountains south of Canaan a generation before the time of Abraham, and in their new possessions continued that mode of life to which they had been accustomed in their original settlement, viz., that of dwelling in caves on account of the intense heat (Jer. 49:7-22). Hence they were called Troglodytes (in our version, Horites); and doubtless they were the excavators of those wonderful rock-habitations which abound in the ravines and the soft limestone cliffs around Petra" (Jamieson, 228). The names of the sons of Seir who became heads of tribes are listed here, as were the ducal descendants of Esau in the earlier part of the chapter. Their form of government must have been the same as that which was first adopted in Edom—that of *alluphim* or *shiekhs*—exercising independent authority over district tribes. These chiefs were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, Dishan.

6. *The Kings of Edom* (vv. 31-39; 1 Chron. 1:43-50).

"*The kings in the land of Edom*," that is, "before the children of Israel had a king" (K-D). "Before an Israelite king ruled Edom," rather than the sense understood by the Greek: "before a king ruled in Israel" (JB, 59). It is interesting to note "in connection with the eight kings mentioned here, that whilst they follow one another, that is to say, one never comes to the throne till his predecessor is dead, yet the son never succeeds the father, but they all belong to different families and places, and in the case of the last the statement that 'he died' is wanting. From this it is unquestionably obvious that the sovereignty was elective: that the kings were chosen by the phylarchs, and, as Isa. 34:12 also shows, that they lived or reigned contemporaneously with these. The contemporaneous existence of the *Alluphim* and the kings may also be inferred from Exo. 15:15 as compared with Num. 20:14ff. Whilst it was with the king of Edom that Moses treated respecting the passage through the land, in the song of Moses it is the princes who tremble with fear on account of the miraculous passage of the Red Sea (cf. Ezek. 32:29). Lastly, this is also supposed by the fact, that the account of the seats of the phylarchs (vers. 40-43) follows the list of the kings. . . . Of all the kings of Edom, not one is named elsewhere" (K-D, 326). "Of the last king, *Hadad* (v. 39; not Hadad, as it is written in 1 Chron. 1:50), the wife, the mother-in-law, and the mother are mentioned: his death is not mentioned here, but is added by the later chronicler (1 Chron. 1:51). This can be explained easily enough from the simple fact, that at the time when the table was first drawn up. Hadad was still alive and seated upon the throne. In all probability, therefore, Hadad was the king of Edom, to whom Moses applied for permission to pass through the land (Num. 20:14ff.). At any rate the list is evidently a record relating to the Edomitish

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king of a pre-Mosaic age. But if this is the case, the heading, v. 31, does not refer to the time when the monarchy was introduced into Israel under Saul, but was written with the promise in mind, that kings should come out of the loins of Jacob (35:11, cf. 17:4ff.), and merely expresses the thought, that Edom became a kingdom at an earlier period than Israel. Such a thought was by no means inappropriate to the Mosaic age. For the idea, 'that Israel was destined to grow into a kingdom with monarchs of his own family, was a hope handed down to the age of Moses, which the long residence in Egypt was well adapted to foster' (Delitzsch)" (K-D, 328). Concerning v. 31, especially the statement, *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, Jamieson interprets: that is, "previous to the time of Moses, who was virtually the first king of Israel (cf. Exod. 18:16-19 with Deut. 33:5), though the words are usually considered as pointing to the reign of Saul." Skinner writes: "This may mean either before the institution of the monarchy in Israel, or before any Israel-iteish sovereign ruled over Edom. The natural *terminus ad quem* is, of course, the overthrow of the Edomite independence by David. The document bears every mark of authenticity, and may be presumed to give a complete list of Edomite kings. Unfortunately the chronology is wanting. An average reign of 20 years for the eight kings is perhaps a reasonable allowance in early unsettled times; and the foundation of the Edomite monarchy may be dated approximately from 150 to 200 years before the time of David" (ICCG, 434). Concerning this monarchy Skinner adds: "The monarchy was obviously not hereditary, none of the kings being the son of his predecessor; that it was elective is more than we have a right to assume. Frazer finds here an illustration of his theory of female succession, the crown passing to men of other families who married the hereditary princesses; but v. 39 is fatal to this view. The fact that the kings reigned in different

cities supports an opinion that they were analogous to the Hebrew Judges, *i.e.*, local chiefs who held supreme power during their life, but were unable to establish a dynasty. A beginning of the recognition of the hereditary principle may be traced in the story of Hadad 'of the seed of royal' (1 Ki. 11:14ff.), who is regarded as heir-presumptive to the throne" (*ibid.*, 435). Suffice it here to conclude with the opinions of the Rabbis: "'*These are the kings.*' Eight are enumerated, and corresponding to this number eight descended from Jacob who overthrew Edom's independence, making it tributary. The eight are: Saul, Ishbosheth, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa and Jehoshaphat. In the reign of Joram, Jehoshaphat's son, Edom rebelled and regained its independence (2 Ki. 8:20) (Rashi). '*Before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*' Some believe that this phrase was written prophetically. Yitschaki maintained that it was written in the time of Jehoshaphat, but for expressing this opinion his book deserves to be burnt. King here refers to Moses, and the meaning is that Edom had eight kings before the time of Moses (Ibn Ezra). Sforno explains similarly" (SC, 218).

Again this word from Maimonides (GP, 382): "The kings that have reigned in the land of Edom are enumerated (Gen. 36:31ff.) on account of the law, 'Thou mayst not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother' (Deut. 17:15). For of these kings none was an Edomite; wherefore each king is described by his native land: one king from this place, another king from that place. Now I think that it was then well known how these kings that reigned in Edom conducted themselves, what they did, and how they humiliated and oppressed the sons of Esau. Thus God reminded the Israelites of the fate of the Edomites, as if saying unto them, Look unto your brothers, the sons of Esau, whose kings were so and so, and whose deeds are well known. Lear therefrom that no nation

ever chose a foreigner as king without inflicting thereby some great or small injury upon the country."

7. *More Chiefs of Edom* (vv. 40-43; cf. 1 Chron. 1:51-54).

K-D entitle this section: *Seats of the Tribe-Princes of Esau according to their Families.* It seems evident from the wording of the caption here, "*after their places, by their names,*" by way of comparison with v. 43, "*according to their habitations in the land of their possession,*" that the names that follow v. 31 are not a second list of Edomite tribal princes (that is, of those who continued the ancient regime, with its hereditary aristocracy, after the death of Hadar), but refer to the capital cities of the old phylarchs. Therefore there is nothing surprising in the fact that out of the eleven names only two correspond to those given in vv. 15-19. "This proves nothing more than that only two of the capitals received their names from the princes who captured or founded them, viz. *Timah* and *Kenaz*. Neither of these has been discovered as yet" (K-D, 328). *Abolibamah* (site unknown) probably got its name from the Horite princess (v. 25). Pinon apparently is *Phunon*, an encampment of the Israelites (Num. 33:42-43), celebrated for its mines, between Petra and Zoar, in which many Christians were condemned to hard labor under the Roman emperor, Diocletian. Some authorities hold that *Mibzar* is Petra; but this is called *Selab* (2 Ki. 14:7), we are told by way of objection. The objection, however, is not valid, because in the ASV and the RSV, this term is actually translated as "the rock," seemingly an allusion to *Petra* (cf. Judg. 1:36, 2 Chron. 25:12, Obad. 3). As far as we know, the names of the other capitals or districts in the list have not as yet been identified. The concluding sentence, *This is Esau, the father (founder) of Edom*, (that is, from him sprang the great nation of the Edomites, with its princes and kings, upon the mountains of Seir), both terminates this section and prepares the way for the

history of the later life of Jacob, and particularly for what is often designated *the Saga of Joseph*.

Much light has now been shed, we are told, on the Edomite names in these lists from inscriptions gathered in recent years, notably through the excavations of Jaußen and Savignac. So writes Kraeling. He adds: "The allusion to the Horites (Gen. 36:20ff., cf. 14:6) requires brief attention. We are told in Deut. 2:12, 22, that they were an earlier population whom the Edomites dispossessed. The name was formerly thought to mean 'cave dwellers,' but the Egyptian inscriptions provided a name *Kharu*, which was used for southern Syria, and this was found comparable to the name Horites. Since the decipherment of the Hittite inscriptions, the *Khurri* (from whom the Egyptian name was doubtless derived) have become well known as an element in Mesopotamia and Armenia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries B.C. The Mitannians belonged to this group, and a Hurrian grammar has even been written in recent years. According to the laws of the Hebrew language *Khurri* would become *Khorim-Horites*, and so the equation is perfect. That some Hurrian group got down as far as Edom and held control there for a time need not be doubted. It is easier to believe than the suggestion that Horites is an error for Hivites, in three different connections. In the period of migration, splinter groups often push very far in their desperate search for a place to settle. Such groups bring little with them that is distinctive and that could be found archaeologically" (BA, 89). The survey of Nelson Glueck in 1936-38, this author goes on to say, has shown that the early agricultural civilization in this region, as in Moab and points farther north, was wiped out about 1900-1750 B.C. This was the time of the Amorite migration, and it seems reasonable to believe that the Amorites were the agent of destruction. There is no mention of Edomite places in the Amarna letters of the fourteenth century. About 1300

B.C., however, so Glueck discovered, a new agricultural civilization arose in Edom. Its founders could have been the Horites, who then were soon succeeded by the Edomites" (BA, 89). (We do not have space here to delve into the problems associated with the respective identities of the Hurrians, Hivites, Horites, Hittites, Canaanites, etc. Dr. Speiser has some very pertinent suggestions about this problem which the student may want to investigate: see ABG, pp. 280-283). Unfortunately, most of the late modern critics seem obsessed with the notion that the names of these persons whose lives are narrated in the Patriarchal Age were not names of persons, but names of tribal groups rather than the names of their eponymic founder-ancestors. This notion must be evaluated as purely gratuitous. The same assumption has generally prevailed with respect to the "heroes" of early Greek and Roman times. However, archaeology has definitely proved that these names are not mythical, not even legendary, one might well say, but names of actual personages; and the events associated with their names have been proved to have been actual historical events. No more positive proof of this fact could be offered than the story of the Siege of Troy.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-FOUR

1. Give the subdivisions of this chapter as suggested by Keil and Delitzsch and by *The Jerusalem Bible*.
2. Explain the phrase, "Esau, who is Edom."
3. For what purpose is the line (*toledoth*) of Esau inserted at this point? How is this method in line with that of the entire content of Genesis?
4. Where and when does Esau himself disappear from the narrative?
5. What probably brought about the separation of the tribes of Esau and Jacob?

GENESIS

6. How was the divine promise of Gen. 27:39-40 fulfilled for Esau?
7. In what way does the separation of Esau and Jacob remind us of that which took place between Abraham and Lot?
8. In what respect were the patriarchs at a great disadvantage with regard to the land of Canaan?
9. Where was Mount Seir? What Biblical events are associated with this region?
10. What are the most significant references to it in the Old Testament?
11. Name Esau's wives and their sons as they were in Canaan.
12. What specific reason is assigned Scripturally for Esau's migration to Seir?
13. Which one of Esau's grandsons came to figure most prominently in Old Testament history?
14. Trace the relationship between the Israelites and the Amalekites as presented in the patriarchal records.
15. What specific command did God enjoin with respect to the Amalekites? Tell the story of Saul's disobedience to this command and the consequences thereof.
16. What is the Maimonidean explanation of the Divine purpose in inserting the various Edomite genealogies into the Old Testament record? What principle does he lay down with respect to these O.T. stories?
17. Could the fact that Amalek was the son of a concubine have affected his separation from his people? What was the general geographical distribution of the Amalekites, and what does this suggest?
18. When and by whom were the Amalekites exterminated?
19. In connection with Gen. 15:16, what does this ultimate destruction of the Amalekites teach us with respect to Divine Providence?

EDOMITE GENEALOGIES

20. What general function did the *clan-chiefs* of Edom serve? What general names are applied to them?
21. What does the name *Horite* mean? Does this have any significance in identifying this people?
22. How is this people to be associated with the topology of the country around the rock-city of Petra?
23. What are some of the possible conclusions with respect to Hadad, king of Edom?
24. What are various interpretations of the clause 31b?
25. What significance is there in the fact that the eight kings named in vv. 31-39 did not succeed one another in the royal office? State the views of Keil-Delitzsch, Skinner, Jamieson, Sir James Frazier, and the Rabbis on this subject.
26. What is the Maimonidean explanation of this listing of the kings that reigned in Edom, as these are given in vv. 31-39?
27. Explain what is meant by the phrases in v. 40, "*after their places, by their names.*"
28. Why is it generally considered that the names in section (vv. 40-43) are names of districts or their capital cities?
29. What special significance is attached to the name *Pinon*?
30. For what further development of the Biblical story does the last statement in v. 43 prepare us?
31. What archaeological discoveries by Glueck and others throw light on the history of Edom and especially on the succession of peoples that occupied this region?
32. What is the great fallacy (*a priori*) that characterizes the conclusions of modern critics with reference to the names of the patriarchs and their descendants?

PART FORTY-FIVE

THE INCIDENT OF JUDAH AND TAMAR (Genesis 38:1-30)

The Biblical Account.

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 Shua; 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 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 first-born, and her name was Tamar. 7 And Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah; and Jehovah slew him. 8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her, and raise up seed to thy brother. 9 And Onan knew that the seed would 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 she should give seed to his brother. 10 And the thing which he did was evil in the sight of Jehovah: and he slew him also. 11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown up; for he said, Lest he also die, like his brethren. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

12 And in process of time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheep-shearers to Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13 And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnah to shear his sheep. 14 And she put off from her the garments of her widowhood, and covered herself with her veil, and wrapped her-

JUDAH AND TAMAR

self, and sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she was not given unto him to wife. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot; for she had covered her face. 16 And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Come 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 of the goats 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 cord, and thy staff that is in thy hand. And he gave them to her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. 19 And she arose, and went away, and put off her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. 20 And Judah sent the kid of the goats by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. 21 Then he asked the men of her place, saying, Where is the prostitute, that was at Enaim by the wayside? And they said, There hath been no prostitute here. 22 And he returned to Judah, and said, I have not found her; and also the men of the place said, There hath been no prostitute here. 23 And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be put to shame: 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 moreover, 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 the cords, and the staff. 26 And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She is more righteous than I, forasmuch as 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 one put out a 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, behold, his brother came out: and she said, Wherefore hast thou made a breach for thyself? therefore his name was called Perez.* 30 *And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zerah.*

1. *The Unity of the Narrative.*

The subject-matter of this chapter seems to be an interruption of the continuity of the narrative ("Saga") of Joseph. "Partly on this account, and partly because the name Jehovah occurs in it (vers. 7, 10), it has been pronounced a later Jehovistic interpolation. Its design has been explained as an attempt to glorify the line of David by representing it as sprung from Judah, or to disclose the origin of the Levirate law of marriage among the Jews; but the incidents here recorded of Judah and his family are fitted to reflect dishonor instead of glory on the ancestry of David; and the custom here mentioned of raising up seed to a dead brother by marrying his widow, though the idea may have originated with Judah, is more likely to have descended from earlier times. Rightly understood, the object of the present portion of the record appears to have been not simply to prepare the way for the subsequent genealogical register (46:8-27), or to contrast the wickedness of Judah and his sons with the piety and chastity of Joseph in Egypt, or to recite the private history of one of Christ's ancestors, or to show that the pre-eminence of Judah in the patriarchal family was due exclusively to grace, *but also and chiefly to justify the Divine procedure in the subsequent deportation of*

Jacob and his sons to Egypt. The special danger to which the theocratic family was exposed was that of intermarrying with the Canaanites (24:3, 28:6). Accordingly, having carried forward his narrative to the point where, in consequence of Joseph's sale, a way begins to open up for the transference of the patriarchal house to the land of the Pharaohs, the historian makes a pause to introduce a passage from the life of Judah, with the view of proving the necessity of such removal, by showing, as in the case of Judah, the almost certainty that, if left in Canaan, the descendants of Jacob would fall before the temptation of marrying with the daughters of the land, with the result, in the first instance, of a great and rapid moral deterioration in the holy seed, and with the ultimate effect of completely obliterating the line of demarcation between them and the surrounding heathen world. How the purity of the patriarchal family was guarded till it developed into a powerful nation, first by its providential withdrawal in infancy from the sphere of temptation (46:5), then by its separate establishment in Goshen beside a people who regarded them with aversion (46:34), and latterly by its cruel enslavement under Pharaoh (Exod. 1:10), is a subject which in due course engages the attention of the writer" (PCG, 440). Italics mine—C.C.) (See again Gen. 15:12-16).

The story related in ch. 38 of the involvement of Judah with Canaanite neighbors is, according to K-D (338-339), "intended to point out the origin of the three leading families of the future princely tribe in Israel, and at the same time to show in what danger the sons of Jacob would have been of forgetting the sacred vocation of their race, through marriages with the Canaanitish women, and of perishing in the sin of Canaan, if the mercy of God had not interposed, and by leading Joseph into Egypt prepared the way for the removal of the whole house of Jacob into that land, and thus protected the family, just

as it was expanding into a nation, from the corrupting influence of the manners and customs of Canaan. This being the intention of the narrative, it is no episode or interpolation, but an integral part of the early history of Israel, which is woven here into the history of Jacob, because the events occurred subsequently to the sale of Joseph."

We must never overlook the connection between the revelation to Abraham in Genesis 15:12-16 and that part of the patriarchal story which is now beginning to unfold in the last days of Israel's life. It should be noted that, following Genesis 37:1-2, we are still dealing with the "generations" of Jacob, even though the content of most of the latter part of Genesis has to do with the experiences of Joseph. It is with the forming of the Israelite nation that we are dealing here, the nation which by galling bondage and a subsequent glorious deliverance, prepared the way for the Messianic Reign, of which the early Theocracy was in so many respects a pattern. Thus God used person, prophecy, type, and institution to point forward to, and thus to identify, in minute detail, the Messiah Himself at His appearance in the world, and to validate the institutions of the Christian System which were established by Him *per se*, and by Him also through the Apostles whom He chose and trained to act as the executors of His Last Will and Testament.

Again quoting K-D: "The disappearance of the name Jehovah, therefore, is to be explained, partly from the fact that previous revelations and acts of grace had given rise to other phrases expressive of the idea of Jehovah, which not only served as substitutes for this name of the covenant God, but in certain circumstances were much more appropriate; and partly from the fact that the sons of Jacob, including Joseph, did not so distinctly recognize in their course the saving guidance of the covenant God, as to be able to describe it as the work of *Jehovah*. This imperfect

insight, however, is intimately connected with the fact that the direct revelations of God had ceased; and that Joseph, although chosen by God to be the preserver of the house of Israel and the instrument in accomplishing His plans of salvation, was separated at a very early period from the fellowship of his father's house, and formally naturalized in Egypt, and though endowed with the supernatural power to interpret dreams, was not favored, as Daniel afterwards was in the Chaldean court, with visions or revelations of God. Consequently we cannot place Joseph on a level with the three patriarchs, nor assent to the statement, that 'as the noblest blossom of the patriarchal life is seen in Joseph, as in him the whole meaning of the patriarchal life is summed up and fulfilled, so in Christ we see the perfect blossom and sole fulfilment of the whole of the Old Covenant dispensation' (Kurtz), as being either correct or scriptural, so far as the first portion is concerned. For Joseph was not a medium of salvation in the same way as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was indeed a benefactor, not only to his brethren and the whole house of Israel, but also to the Egyptians; but salvation, *i.e.*, spiritual help and culture, he neither brought to the Gentiles nor to the house of Israel. In Jacob's blessing he is endowed with the richest inheritance of the firstborn in earthly things; but salvation is to reach the nations through Judah. We may therefore without hesitation look upon the history of Joseph as a 'type of the pathway of the Church, not of Jehovah only, but also of Christ, from lowliness to exaltation, from slavery to liberty, from suffering to glory' (Delitzsch); we may also, so far as the history of Israel is a type of the history of Christ and His Church, regard the life of Joseph, as believing commentators of all centuries have done, as a type of the life of Christ, and use these typical traits as aids to progress in the knowledge of salvation; but that we may not be seduced into typological trifling, we must not overlook the fact, that

neither Joseph nor his career is represented, either by the prophets or by Christ and His apostles, as typical of Christ—in anything like the same way, for example, as the guidance of Israel into and out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1, cf. Matt. 2:15), and other events and persons in the history of Israel" (BCOTP, 333-334). (Nevertheless, the analogies between the life of Joseph and the life of Christ are several, and very significant, as outlined *infra* in our section on material for "sermonizing"). (Cf. also Heb., chs. 8, 9, 10). Again: "The very fact that the author of Genesis, who wrote in the light of the further development and fuller revelation of the ways of the Lord with Joseph and the whole house of Jacob, represents the career of Joseph as a gracious interposition of *Jehovah* (ch. 39), and yet makes Joseph himself speak of *Elohim* as arranging the whole, is by no means an unimportant testimony to the historical fidelity and truth of the narrative; of which further proofs are to be found in the faithful and exact representation of the circumstances, manners, and customs of Egypt, as Hengstenberg has proved in his Egypt and the Books of Moses, from a comparison of these accounts of Joseph's life with ancient documents and monuments connected with this land" (K-D, *ibid.*, 333).

"The history (*tholedoth*) of Isaac commenced with the founding of his house by the birth of his sons; but Jacob was abroad when his sons were born, and had not yet entered into undisputed possession of his inheritance. Hence his *tholedoth* only commence with his return to his father's tent and his entrance upon the family possessions, and merely embrace the history of his life as patriarch of the house which he founded [cf. 37:2]. In this period of his life, indeed, his sons, especially Joseph and Judah, stand in the foreground, so that 'Joseph might be described as the moving principle of the following history.' But for all that, Jacob remains the head of the house, and the centre

around whom the whole revolves. This section is divided by the removal of Jacob to Egypt, into the period of his residence in Canaan (chs. 37-45), and the close of his life in Goshen (chs. 46-50). The first period is occupied with the events which prepared the way for, and eventually occasioned, his migration into Egypt. The way was prepared, directly by the sale of Joseph (ch. 37), indirectly by the alliance of Judah with the Canaanites (ch. 38), which endangered the divine call of Israel, inasmuch as this showed the necessity for a temporary removal of the sons of Israel from Canaan. The way was opened by the wonderful career of Joseph in Egypt, his elevation from slavery and imprisonment to be ruler over the whole of Egypt (chs. 39-41). And lastly the migration was occasioned by the famine in Canaan, which rendered it necessary for Jacob's sons to travel to Egypt to buy corn, and, whilst it led to Jacob's recovery of the son he had mourned for as dead, furnished an opportunity of Joseph to welcome his family into Egypt (chs. 42-45). The second period commences with the migration of Jacob into Egypt, and his settlement in the land of Goshen (chs. 46-47:27). It embraces the patriarch's closing years, his last instructions respecting his burial in Canaan (ch. 47:28-31), his adoption of Joseph's sons, and the blessing given to his twelve sons (ch. 49), and extends to his burial and Joseph's death (ch. 50)" (BCOTP, 329). It should be noted, in this connection, that in the various Scripture references *to the fathers of the Jewish nation—the patriarchs—three, and only three, are mentioned, and the same three in the same order, viz., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.* (Cf. Exo. 3:6, 15, 16; Exo. 4:5; Matt. 8:11-12, 22:32; Mark 12:26, Luke 20:37, Acts 3:13, 7:32). In Acts 7:8-9, the term "patriarch" is extended to include the twelve sons of Jacob, founders of the twelve tribes who were constituted a nation at Sinai.

It should be emphasized at the outset that *the story of Joseph is essentially a study in, and revelation of the ways of, Divine Providence*: hence, it lacks the kind of problems (geographical, sociological, scientific, ethical and spiritual) that have required our attention in the first thirty-six chapters of Genesis. The narrative that engages our attention in the last fourteen chapters of the book is a simple story in many respects simply told. It is from beginning to end, from every point of view, *a human interest story*.

2. *The Birth of Er and His Marriage to Tamar* (vv. 1-11).

At that time, i.e., about the time that Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, Judah "went down" from Hebron (37:14) or the mountains of Judah, toward the south, specifically to Adullam, in the lowland (Josh. 15:35), into the neighborhood of a certain Adullamite, a man named Hirah. Adullam was a town in the Hebron valley; in the period of the Conquest it was the seat of a Canaanite king (Josh. 12:15); afterward, it was celebrated for its connection with the history of David (1 Sam. 22:1, 2; 2 Sam. 23:13), and is subsequently mentioned in Scripture (2 Chron. 11:7, Neh. 11:300, Mic. 1:15). Judah, it would seem, deliberately separated himself from his brothers, and entered into an alliance, at least into friendly relations, with this Canaanite. "It would not be surprising if it turned out some day that Hirah was the name of an actual king of this Canaanite city, which lay in the Shephelah, or hill country, bordering the Philistean plain." "The name of Adullam survives to this day in an Arabicised form. . . . The Adullam of antiquity did not lie exactly at that village, but rather to the south of it on a site situated on a near-by hill, where sherds of the Middle Bronze Age confirm the existence of a city of patriarchal times. Travelers going from Hebron to Jaffa, or from Jerusalem to Gaza, would be attracted to it. King Rehoboam later found it

worth while to fortify this city (2 Chron. 11:7)" (Kraeling, BA, 90). (Incidentally this writer explains: "We hear little in the narratives preceding the Joseph-cycle concerning the various sons of Jacob. And that little is not very much to the credit of the individuals thus singled out. In Genesis 34, Simeon and Levi came in for attention in connection with the role they are held to have played in the Shechem area. In Genesis 35:21-22 there was some notice of Reuben. Genesis 38 now gives us information about Judah. The strange position of this narrative after the first installment of the Joseph stories is due to the fact that in chapter 37 [v. 26] Judah is with his brethren; hence the compiler was not able to introduce it sooner. We shall take it up first before turning to Joseph" (*ibid.*, p. 90). We follow the same procedure in the present text.

The question that arises here is surely pertinent, viz., what prompted Judah to "go away" from his brothers? That is, to set up a separate and independent establishment apart from them? "Not only immediately after Joseph was sold, but also on account of it," "in a fit of impenitent anger" (Kurtz)? in a spirit of remorse (Lange)? How can we know?—no definite information is given us as regards his motivation. However, as noted already in considering Genesis 34, such alliances between nomads and city dwellers always resulted in intermarriage, and so it was in this case. Like Esau, this son of Jacob probably cast off the restraints of religion and married into a Canaanite family, "and it is not surprising that the family which sprung from such an unsuitable connection should be infamous for bold and unblushing wickedness" (Jamieson). At any rate, Judah married the daughter of Shuah, a Canaanite, and had three sons by her, respectively, Er, Onan, and Shelah. It strikes the present writer that Judah's motive for separating from his paternal household may well have been an infatuation for this daughter

of Shuah. Although it would appear that the tribe of Judah had an early history independent of the other tribes of Israel, the fact remains that Judah himself was back with his brothers in their various appearances in Egypt after Joseph became the *vizier* there under Pharaoh. As a matter of fact Scripture represents Judah as having taken subsequently a decided lead in all the affairs of Israel's family. When it became necessary to go into Egypt for food a second time, Judah remonstrated with Jacob against his detention of Benjamin and undertook to be responsible for the safety of the lad (43:3-10). When the telltale cup was found in Benjamin's sack, and punishment by Joseph seemed imminent, Judah's earnest petition for his father and brothers and his offer of himself as a slave so moved his princely brother that the latter could no longer retain the secret of his identity (44:14-34). Soon after, also, it was Judah who was sent by Jacob to act as guide ("show the way") for the migration of the latter and his house into the land of Goshen (46:28). We read no more of him until we find him receiving, along with his brothers, his father's final blessing (49:8-12). We now understand what the inspired writer means when he tells us that Judah, though not the firstborn of Israel's progeny, still and all "prevailed above his brethren" (1 Chron. 5:2).

As stated above, Judah married the daughter of Shuah, a Canaanite, (V. 2—Shua was *not* the name of Judah's wife, but that of her father, cf. v. 12). The woman bore a son, and Judah named him Er. When Er was grown up, according to ancient custom (cf. 21:21, 34:4), his father gave him a wife, named Tamar (v. 6), probably a Canaanite, of unknown parentage. But Er proved to be too wicked for Yahweh even to tolerate his continued existence, and so He "slew him" (*i.e.*, caused him to die). The son-in-law, no doubt, was addicted to all the abominable vices of Canaan (cf. Rom. 1:20-32). The wickedness involved elicited the heaviest divine disapproval; the wick-

edness—in all likelihood, some form of sex perversion—made Er guilty in a special sense, and so “Yahweh let him die.” We find here a positive evidence of the truth, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (cf. Gen. 2:17, Psa. 90:7ff., Prov. 10:27, Ezek. 18:20, Gal. 6:7-8, etc.)—an echo that rings throughout the entire Bible.

After the death of Er, Judah wished Onan, as the brother-in-law, to marry the childless widow of his deceased brother, and thus to raise up seed, *i.e.*, a family, for him. But Onan knew, of course, that the firstborn son would not be the founder of his own family, but would perpetuate the family of the deceased and receive his inheritance, and therefore prevented conception when consummating the marriage by spilling the semen, letting it fall on the ground. “This act not only betrayed a want of affection to his brother, combined with a despicable covetousness for his possession and inheritance, but was also a sin against the divine institution of marriage and its object, and was therefore punished by Jehovah with sudden death. The custom of *levirate marriage*, which is first mentioned here, and is found in different forms among Indians, Persians, and other nations of Asia and Africa, was not founded upon a divine command, but upon an ancient tradition, originating probably in Chaldea. It was not abolished, however, by the Mosaic law (Deut. 25:5ff.), but only so far restricted as not to allow it to interfere with the sanctity of marriage; and with this limitation it was enjoined as a duty of affection to build up the brother’s house, and to preserve his family and name” (K-D, 340). (Cf. also Matt. 22:23-33). “The custom of levirate marriage seems to have prevailed quite universally at the time, as it is known to have been customary among many nations ancient and modern. Judah does not appear as an innovator in this instance. Levirate marriage implied that if a man had died without leaving a son, the next brother of the deceased, if unmarried, would take

the widow to wife with the understanding that the first son born would carry on the line of the deceased, but all other children would be accounted his own. . . . Onan knew of this provision and intentionally prevented its realization. Selfishness may have prompted him: he did not care to preserve his brother's family. Greed may have been a concurrent motive: he desired to prevent the division of the patrimony into smaller units. But in addition to these two faults there was palpably involved the sin of a complete perversion of the purpose of marriage, that divine institution. What he did is described as 'taking preventive measures.' The original says: '*he destroyed [i.e., the semen] to the ground.*' From him the extreme sexual perversion called *onanism* has its name. The case is revolting enough. But plain speech in this case serves as a healthy warning. Yahweh let him die even as his brother" (EG, 980-981). In the science of medicine, *masturbation* (commonly called "self-abuse") is erroneously designated *onanism*. Onan's act was an offense against the theocratic family, not an act indulged for erotic gratification, an act which, if allowed to become habitual, undoubtedly contributes to sexual impotence in later life. *It is interesting to note that Er and Onan disappear from the sacred narrative never to be heard of again, except as statistics* (Gen. 46:12, Num. 26:19, 1 Chron. 2:3-4).

The sudden death of his two sons, in each instance soon after marriage with Tamar, must have made Judah hesitate to give her the third son as a husband also, thinking, it would seem, according to a superstition which we find in the apocryphal book of Tobit (ch. 3), that either she herself, or marriage with her, had been the cause of her husbands' deaths. He therefore sent her back to her father's house, telling her to remain there as a widow, with the promise that he would give her his youngest son Shelah to wed her as soon as Shelah had grown up. It is generally conceded that Judah never meant this seriously, for *he*

thought lest (i.e., he was afraid that) he [Shelah] also might die like his brethren. "Judah sends Tamar home to her family, on the pretext that his third son Shelah is too young to marry her. His real motive is fear lest his only surviving son should share the fate of Er and Onan, which he plainly attributes to Tamar herself" (ICCG, 452). Her return to her father's house was in accordance with the law for a childless widow (Lev. 22:13, Ruth 1:8): so Tamar "*went and dwelt in her father's house*" (v. 11).

3. *Tamar's Stratagem* (vv. 12-19).

Skinner calls it "*Tamar's daring stratagem*," and indeed it was just that. Tamar, after waiting a long time, saw that Shelah had grown up and was not yet given to her as a husband; she therefore determined to procure children from Judah himself who had become a widower in the meantime. Judah, having comforted himself (*i.e.*, ceased to mourn for his deceased wife) went to the sheep-shearing at Timnath. The sheep-shearing was kept with great feasting by shepherds. Judah therefore took his friend Hirah with him, a fact noted in v. 12 in relation to what follows. When Tamar heard that Judah was on his way to the feast, she took off the garments of widowhood, put on a veil, and sat down, disguised as a prostitute, by the gate of Enaim, by which Judah would be sure to pass on his return from Timnath. (Enaim no doubt was the same as Enam in the lowland of Judah, Josh. 15:34). (The veil was the sign of the harlot, here the term is *kedeshah*, that is, a cult prostitute, a woman dedicated to impure heathen worship, cf. Deut. 23:17, Hos. 4:14). Tamar's veil, her wrapping herself and sitting by the way-side (at the crossroads) set her apart as one who plied this iniquitous trade. (There are two evils that man, in his entire history on earth, has never been able to eliminate or even to control: one is drunkenness, and the other is prostitution). When Judah saw her, naturally he took her for what she expected him to: her design actually was

realized. "Judah does not appear to a very good advantage in this account. He seems to know altogether too well how to carry on a transaction of this sort. Since the veil seems to be the customary device to give herself the appearance of coyness, such as persons of this sort may use, it effectually served the purpose of disguising Tamar. When, besides, it is indicated that Judah did not know that she was his daughter-in-law [“for she had covered her face”], we see that Judah surely would not have consciously made himself guilty of incest” (EG, 984). Of course they entered into “negotiations.” The price agreed upon was “a kid of the goats.” This is indeed suggestive in view of the fact that the goat, because of its prolificness, played a rather prominent role in the ancient Fertility Cult, and hence was sacred to Astarte. “The present of a kid on these occasions may be due to the fact that (as in classical antiquity) the goat was sacred to the goddess of life” (ICCG, 453). (Cf. Pausanias,, VI, 25, 2; Tacitus, *Hist.*, 2, 3; Lucian, *Dial, meretr.* 7, 1). Tamar’s master-stroke, however, was the obtaining of a pledge which made the identification of the owner absolutely certain. The pledge was Judah’s *seal*, *cord*, and *staff*. This was his signet-ring, with the band by which it was hung around his neck, and his staff: these served as a pledge of the young buck-goat which he offered her. These were objects of value and were regarded as ornaments in the East (cf. *Herodotus*, i, 195). The cord may have been regarded as having magical powers “like those occasionally worn by Arab men” (ICCG, 454). Judah then lay with Tamar, and she became pregnant by him. She then put off her veil and put on her garments of widowhood.

4. *Tamar’s Vindication*, (vv. 20-26).

When Judah sent the young buck-goat to the supposed harlot, by his friend Hirah, for the purpose of redeeming his pledges, the latter could not find her, and was told, on inquiring of the people of Enaim, that there was no

prostitute there (literally no *consecrated* one). “‘The consecrated,’ i.e., the *bierodule*, a woman sacred to Astarte, a goddess of the Canaanites, the deification of the generative and productive principle of nature; one who served the goddess by prostitution: cf. Deut. 23:17-18). This was no doubt regarded as the most respectable designation for public prostitutes in Canaan” (K-D, 341). Ritual prostitution was an essential element of the Cult of Fertility which flourished throughout the entire ancient pagan world. *Kedeshab* here, v. 21, “strictly ‘sacred prostitute’—one ‘dedicated’ for this purpose to Ishtar-Astarte, or some other deity, Deut. 23:18, Hos. 4:14,” ICCG, 454).

When Judah’s friend returned with the kid and reported that he had had no success in finding the woman, Judah decided to leave his pledges with the girl, lest he might expose himself to popular ridicule by any further inquiries, since he had done his part toward keeping his promise. “It is significant that Judah employs his *fidus Achates* Hirah in this discreditable affair, and will rather lose his seal, etc., than run the risk of publicity, v. 23.”

In due time, however, it was made known to Judah that his daughter-in-law had played the harlot and was certainly with child. Hence it fell to Judah as the head of the family to bring her to justice. This meant that she should be brought out and burned. “Death by burning is the punishment imposed in Hammurabi, sect. 157, for incest with a mother, and was doubtless the common punishment for adultery on the part of a woman in ancient Israel. In later times the milder penalty of stoning was substituted (Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:23ff., Ezek. 16:40, John 8:5), the more cruel death being reserved for the prostitution of a priest’s daughter (Lev. 21:9, cf. Hammurabi, Sect. 110). Judah ordered the burning, whereupon Tamar, on being brought forth for the infliction of the penalty,

by thus waiting till the last moment, "made her justification as public and dramatically complete as possible." Producing the things which Judah had given her as a pledge, she addressed the crowd, saying, *By the man to whom these belong I am with child.* Judah recognized the seal, the cord, and the staff as his own, and frankly confessed that her conduct was justified by the graver wrong which he had done her in not giving her his son Shelah as a husband. "In passing sentence on Tamar, Judah had condemned himself. His sin, however, did not consist merely in having given way to his lusts so far as to lie with a supposed public prostitute of Canaan, but still more in the fact, that by breaking his promise to give her his son Shelah as her husband, he had caused his daughter-in-law to practise this deception upon him, just because in his heart he blamed her for the early and sudden deaths of his elder sons, whereas the real cause of the deaths which had so grieved his paternal heart was the wickedness of the sons themselves, the mainspring of which was to be found in his own marriage with a Canaanite in violation of the patriarchal call. And even if the sons of Jacob were not unconditionally prohibited from marrying the daughters of Canaanites, Judah's marriage at any rate had borne such fruit in his sons Er and Onan, as Jehovah the covenant God was compelled to reject. But if Judah, instead of recognizing the hand of the Lord in the sudden death of his sons, traced the cause to Tamar, and determined to keep her a childless widow all her life long, not only in opposition to the traditional custom, but also in opposition to the will of God as expressed in His promises of a numerous increase of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Tamar had by no means acted rightly in the stratagem by which she frustrated his plan, and sought to procure from Judah himself the seed of which he was unjustly depriving her, though her act might be

less critical than Judah's. For it is evident from the whole account, that she was not driven to her sin by lust, but by the innate desire for children; and for that reason she was more in the right than Judah. Judah himself, however, not only saw his guilt, but he confessed it also; and showed both by his confession, and also by the fact that he had no further conjugal intercourse with Tamar, an earnest endeavor to conquer the lusts of the flesh, and to guard against the sin into which he had fallen. And because he thus humbled himself, God gave him grace, and not only exalted him to be the chief of the house of Israel, but blessed the children that were begotten in sin" (K-D, 342-343). "It follows that the episode is not meant to reflect discredit on the tribe of Judah. It presents Judah's behavior in as favorable light as possible, suggesting extenuating circumstances for what could not be altogether excused; and regards that of Tamar as a glory to the tribe; cf. Ruth 4:12" (ICCG, 455). "To suppose that incidents like that recorded in vv. 12-26 were of frequent occurrence in ancient Israel, or that it was the duty of the father-in-law under *any* circumstances to marry his son's widow, is to miss entirely the point of the narrative. On the contrary, it is just the exceptional nature of the circumstances that explains the writer's obvious admiration for Tamar's heroic conduct. Tamar shows her fortitude by her disregard of conventional prejudice, and her determination by any means in her power to secure her wifely rights within her husband's family. To obtain this right the intrepid woman dares the utmost that womanly honor could endure—stoops to the level of an unfortunate girl, and does that which in ordinary cases would lead to the most cruel and shameful death, bravely risking honor and life on the issue. At the same time, like a true mother in Judah, she manages her part so cleverly that the dangerous path conducts her to a happy goal" (*ibid.*, 455).

5. Birth of Perez and Zerah, (vv. 27-30).

Tamar brought forth twins, and a circumstance occurred at the birth, which does happen occasionally when the children lie in an abnormal position. Moreover, it always impedes delivery, and this fact was regarded in this instance as so significant that the names of the two children were founded on it. At the birth, a hand came out first, around which the midwife tied a scarlet thread to mark this as the firstborn (v. 20). We then read that when the child drew back its hand "*behold, his brother came out.*" Then the midwife said, "*wherefore hast thou made a breach for thyself?*" (Marginal, "*How hast thou made a breach? a breach be upon thee!*"). That is, *Thou bearest the blame of the breach*, i.e., by breaking through by pressing forward. From this fact he received the name Perez ("breach," "breaker through"). Rashi renders it: "'Why hast thou acted with such strength' to force thy way out before thy brother" (SC, 241). Then the other child, the one with the scarlet thread around his arm, came into the world, and was named Zerah ("exit," "rising," or according to Rashi, "shining," because of the bright color of the crimson thread, SC, 241). Zerah sought to appear first, whereas in fact Perez was the firstborn, and is therefore placed before Zerah in the genealogical tables (46:12, Num. 26:20. Perez was the ancestor of the tribe-prince Nahshon (Num. 2:3), and of King David also (Ruth 4:18-22, 1 Chron. 2:3-17). Through Perez, it should be especially noted, Tamar has her place as one of the female ancestors of Christ. Perez himself carried on the chosen line that culminated in Messiah (Matt. 1:3). "The grace of God is vividly demonstrated by His use of these abominable events to accomplish His own purposes. The Divine Potter, undoubtedly for reasons of His own, has often worked with very inferior clay (cf. Jer. 18:1-12). Again we must be impressed with the fact that the Bible is a very *realistic* book: it pictures life as men and

women have lived it, and continue to live it. It is pre-eminently the Book of Life.

"The twin-birth of Rebecca is once more reflected. We see how important the question of the firstborn remains to the Israelitish mother and midwife. In the case of the twins there appears more manifestly the marks of a striving for the birthright. Pharez, however, did not obtain the birthright, as Jacob sought it, by holding on the heel, but by a violent breach. In this he was to represent Judah's lion-like manner within the milder nature of Jacob. According to Knobel, the midwife is supposed to have said to Pharez: a breach upon thee, *i.e.*, a breach happen to thee; and this is said to have been fulfilled when the Israelitish tribes tore themselves away from the house of David, as a punishment, because the Davidian family of the Pharezites had violently got the supremacy over its brethren" (Lange, 593). (Cf. 1 Chron. 11:11, 27:2-3; Neh. 11:4-6). Later references to the progeny of Judah's third son, Shelah, are found in Gen. 46:12; Num. 26:20; 1 Chron. 2:3, 4:21-23). These references to the line of Shelah are, as will be noted, mostly statistical.

We probably should mention here the matter of the sequence of time between chapters 37 and 38. "At that time," v. 1, ch. 37, must surely mean, just after, or soon after, Joseph had been sold into Egypt, at the age of seventeen (37:2). He was elevated to the position of prime minister of the land at the age of thirty (41:46). It will thus be evident that some twenty-two years intervened between the sale of Joseph and the settlement in Egypt (13 years until Joseph's promotion plus 7 years of plenty *plus* 2 years of famine). On this basis Judah had time to marry, to have a son whom he gave in marriage in his seventeenth year; to have a second son whom in his eighteenth year he gave to the same wife; allowing an additional two years for the rest of the events narrated in ch. 38. "Judah departed from his brethren in vexation

over their treatment of their brother Joseph and over their hypocrisy in the sight of their father. At least some such reason for his going 'away from his brethren' is possible. . . . Judah does approach more closely to a Canaanite man, who appears to have been friendly and welcomed the approach. . . . A further contact with the Canaanites follows. A man by the name of Shua (a name meaning perhaps 'opulence') has a daughter whom Judah takes to wife. Whether resentment against his brethren had anything to do with this, or whether easygoing friendship with Canaanites lay at the bottom of it all, is hard to say" (EG, 977). (It is interesting to note that Leupold differs from authorities quoted above on the matter of Judah's motivation in "pitching his tent" toward Canaanites). Again, on the chronological problem we note the following: "The 23 years which intervened between the taking of Joseph into Egypt and the migration of Jacob thither, furnish space enough for all the events recorded in this chapter (38). If we suppose that Judah, who was 20 years old when Joseph was sold, went to Adullam soon afterwards and married there, his three sons might have been born four or five years after Joseph's captivity. And if his eldest son was born about a year and a half after the sale of Joseph, and he married him to Tamar when he was 15 years old, and gave her to the second son a year after that, Onan's death would occur at least five years before Jacob's removal to Egypt; time enough, therefore, both for the generation and birth of the twin-sons of Judah by Tamar, and for Judah's two journeys into Egypt with his brethren to buy corn" (K-D, 339).

The Tribe of Judah, together with that of Benjamin, retained its identity down to New Testament times, we might well say to the Fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent Dispersion, A.D. 70. The history of this tribe is of considerable importance, in view of the fact that Messiah was of the seed of Abraham, of the royal lineage of David,

and of the tribal lineage of Judah (although a high priest after the order of Melchizedek) (Gal. 3:16, 3:29-29; 2 Sam. 7:12; Matt. 21-9; John 7:42; Rom. 1:3; Rev. 5:5, etc.; Heb., ch. 7, also 6:20).

Judah early in life took a prominent role among his brothers, as is shown by the story of Joseph (Gen. 37:26-27, 43:3-10, 44:16-34, 46:28). Genesis, ch. 38, though throwing light on the beginnings of the tribe of Judah, probably stands where it does for the purpose of contrasting Judah's character with that of Joseph. Gen. 49:8-12, though not strictly a promise of kingship to Judah, but rather of leadership and tribal stability, the promise of Shiloh does involve kingship ultimately. (Note the blessings of Moses on Judah; Deut. 33:7). The genealogies of Judah's descendants are given us in 1 Chron., chs. 2-4. When Judah went into Egypt he had three sons, but so rapidly did his family increase that at the time of the first census it numbered 74,600 (Num. 1:26-27) and was first in population of all the tribes. At the second census, it numbered 76,500, still retaining its rank (Num. 26:22). Its representative among the spies, and also among those appointed to partition the land, was the great leader Caleb, the son of Jephunneh (Num. 13:6). "According to rabbinical authority, Judah's standard was green, with the symbol of a lion (Keil)" (UBG, s.v.). Throughout the Exodus and the Wanderings, the tribe of Judah was at the forefront of the procession (Num. 2:3, 9). Judah was the first tribe which received its allotted territory ("inheritance") west of the Jordan, which included fully one-third of the entire land. When a survey was made later, at the completion of the Conquest, an adjustment was made by which a part of Judah's territory was given to Simeon (Josh. 15:20-63, 18:1-10; Judg. 1:3). The boundaries and cities of the region allotted to Judah are given at great length (Josh. 15:20-63). Judah and Simeon led the military expedition which resulted in the defeat

of the Canaanites, including the capture of Jerusalem (Judg. 1:10); whereupon they extended their conquest by overrunning most of the coastal plain (Judg. 1:16-21). "During the rule of the judges, Judah maintained an independent spirit toward the other tribes; and while they acquiesced in the Benjamite (Saul's) appointment as king, it could hardly have been with a very good grace, as may be inferred from the very small contingent they supplied to that monarch's army against Amalek. (1 Sam. 15:4). When Judah established David as king, and removed the sanctuary to Jerusalem, the Ephraimites were dissatisfied, and seized the first opportunity of setting up an independent kingdom. Then the history of Judah as a tribe lapsed into that of *Judah as a kingdom*" (UBD, 614). "Then followed a long history of wars, vassalage and occasional prosperity. Against Judah were arrayed Israel, Egypt, Syria, and finally the country was ravaged by the king of Babylon, Jerusalem was burned with fire, the holy temple laid in ashes, the people taken away into captivity, and Judah was no more" (*ibid.*, p. 615). (Cf. 2 Kings, chs. 24, 25; Jer. chs. 39-41).

The territory of Judah extended east and west from the northern end of the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, and north and south from this line to the region of Kadesh-Barnea. It included the cities which figure pre-eminently in the Biblical story, and with great significance especially in New Testament times. It is interesting to keep in mind that from the tribe of Judah came the Son of Mary by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and that from the tribe of Benjamin came Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:1, Phil. 3:5, 2 Cor. 11:22).

The following comment on ch. 38 by Dr. Speiser is important: "Because of the eventual pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah, the personalized history of that branch was of obvious interest to tradition. Through the period of

Judges and down to the time of David, Judah expanded by absorbing various Canaanite elements. This beginning of that composite history is here intimated by Judah's settlement among the Canaanites and his acquisition of a Canaanite wife. His line, however, is in danger of extinction; but a daughter-in-law by the name of Tamar, apparently another Canaanite, takes heroic measures and triumphs in the end. In resolutely following the intent of the law, by unorthodox and hazardous means, Tamar thus takes her place alongside Rachel (31:19). She had the stuff, it was felt, to be the mother of a virile clan, which is clearly the main theme of the story. What brings this theme into bold relief is the institution of the levirate marriage, that is, marriage with the wife of a deceased brother (or another relative in special circumstances). The objective was to maintain the family line in a society that set great store by blood ties, and consequently had little use for adoption. Biblical law upholds this obligation and frowns on any attempt to circumvent it (cf. Deut. 25:5ff., Ruth, ch. 3f.). Judah sought to live up to this practice, yet shrank from risking the life of his last surviving son. When Tamar became convinced that her father-in-law was temporizing, she tricked him into leaving her with child, by waylaying him in the disguise of a harlot. But she had the presence of mind to secure positive proof of her mate's identity. Here J adds a subtle human touch. Judah mistakes Tamar for a common harlot, Heb. *zanah*, v. 15, just as he was meant to do. But when his friend Hirah seeks to redeem the pledge, he asks for the local *kedeshah* (votary, hierodule, cult prostitute), in order to place the affair on a higher social level. At the critical moment, Judah finds out that Tamar was no wanton, and absolves her of any guilt in the matter. She rewards him for his candor and understanding by presenting him with twins. An aetiological notice about the boys' names brings the unique tale to a close" (ABG, 300).

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FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING
The Book of Life

The Bible pictures life just as it is lived by men and women in all ages. There is no false modesty in the Book of Books. The Old Testament pictures life as it was lived in ancient times—in all its sensuality, debauchery, and vice. This, unfortunately, seems to be the way men are living in our day: apart from the influence of Biblical religion and morality, they—seem not to have changed very much, if at all. The charge of vulgarity has been hurled against the Bible. Some have said that it is bestial. No, it is not the Bible that is vulgar, bestial: it is men and women who choose to live life on the level of the brute, indulging their animal passions to the full. The Bible portrays life exactly as human beings live it. It pictures their vices as truly as their virtues. It is pre-eminently the Book of Life. The content of the Bible is essentially *realistic*, from every point of view.

This is not true of ordinary writers of fiction. Their villains are too villainous and their heroes too heroic. I recall some of the works of fiction which I read as a boy, especially a novel by the name of *St. Elmo*. The leading man of the story was the meanest villain I had ever read of, and the heroine was simply too good for this world. Characterizations were so overdrawn as to be absurd. And the cheaper the fiction, the greater the exaggeration in character portrayal. I recall other books, *Ishmael*, *Self Raised*, *Lena Rivers*, etc. "Nick Carter" was the most unrealistic character in the time of Victorian fiction, with the possible exception of "Rollo" or "Little Lord Fauntleroy." And of all the tear-jerkers that ever appeared in print, what shall we say of *East Lynne*?

But the characters of the Bible are true to life. The more one studies them, the more one realizes that they were the same kinds and classes of men and women as

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those with whom one rubs elbows day by day. Their modern parallels are living down the street from our home or across the hall from our apartment. First, there was gentle, peace-loving Abel, and there was wild, reckless, daring Cain—two boys of completely different temperaments and aspirations such as are often found in the same family. There was old patient Noah, a righteous man in the midst of an ungodly generation, but his righteousness did not prevent his falling a prey to the wine-cask. Some are inclined to exonerate Noah on the ground that he was the first to cultivate the vineyard and did not know that the product was intoxicating if taken in excess. They may be right.

There was patriarchal Abraham, with flowing beard and spiritual mien—grand, solitary, sublime, in his walk with God, a friend of God and the father of all the faithful. But he did not always tell the whole truth. On two occasions, when a half-lie seemed to serve his purpose better, he told the half-lie and was caught in it both times.

There was self-seeking Lot. Lot always looked out for "number one." There was Isaac, the hen-pecked man, who seemed unable to realize that his wife was taking advantage of him repeatedly. There was shrewd, property-loving Jacob, a man who could take a small investment and build it into a fortune. There was strong-willed Joseph: one instance in which the "dreamer" proved to be the most practical man of his time. We are compelled to admire Joseph. There was the meek Moses who endured as seeing Him who is invisible (Heb. 11:27). Moses could not make a speech (so he said), and so God sent Aaron along to do the persuading. Aaron was a typical "politician": the words ran out of his mouth like oil, and he always kept his ear to the ground to gauge

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the direction of the winds of public sentiment, and when the people wanted to set up the golden bull and worship it, he allowed it to be done. We suppose he thought he could get away with it, but Moses returned at the wrong time and caught him red-handed in the act of sanctioning idolatry. There is persistent, plodding Joshua, the U.S. Grant of the Bible who proposed to fight it out on his line if it took all summer or longer. And there was Saul, powerful and handsome in physique, but small in spirit, jealous, revengeful, and mean. Saul hit the bottom rung of the ladder when he drifted into the witch of Endor's den. And there was David! The man who could fight and sing, and sing and fight. Never could man sin more heinously and repent more genuinely than could David. There was Daniel the courageous, who could say "No" to despots, who, like Luther and Knox, defied the powers that be in order to be true to their God. There was hopeful, optimistic Isaiah, melancholy, pessimistic Jeremiah. There was Hosea, the man with a broken heart, who, out of this domestic experience, could give us a deeper picture of God's love than did any other man of Old Testament times. There was John the Immerser, the iconoclast, the smasher of images, who overturned precedents, who could call his audience a "generation of vipers," who cared not one whit what people thought of him but sought only to call them to repentance. There was impulsive, boastful, yet withal lovable Simon Peter. Peter was always out-and-out just what he was: he was adept at opening his mouth and putting his foot in it. One may not have agreed with Peter all the time but one always knew just where he stood! There was Paul, the lawyer, the intellectual giant, a product of Gamaliel's rabbinical school in Jerusalem. Paul was so shrewd in dealing with audiences or in pleading the cause of Christ

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before kings and emperors. When the Jews were about to kill him in Jerusalem, he hurled a question at them about the Resurrection. It so happened that the mob was made up of both Pharisees (who believed in the resurrection of the dead) and the Sadducees (who did not, Acts 23:6-8). The shrewd Apostle cried out that he was being opposed because he believed in the resurrection of the body, whereupon the Pharisees and Sadducees went to arguing among themselves, and while they argued, Paul slipped away unharmed. There was James, the practical man, who paid his respects to backbiters and gossips, and who had much to say about the danger of riches, the brevity of life, the nastiness of the tongue, the real meaning of faith, and pure and undefiled religion. And there was the beloved John, who reclined on the Master's bosom at the Last Supper, whose vision penetrated eternity and heaven itself to let us know that in the beginning there was the Word, and that the Word was with God, and that the Word is God, that is, deity as truly as Father and Son are deity.

Two women, one named Mary, the other Martha, are mentioned by two New Testament writers. Luke writes five verses about them, and John writes fourteen. Yet these two women live in our own day and their names are household words among people who read the Bible, despite the fact that all we know about them is to be found in nineteen New Testament passages. The characters of the Bible are genuine. They are true to life. They are portrayed just as they lived, thought and acted. No book in all the world is as true to life in its portrayal of all shades of human character as is the Bible. It is a realistic book. It deals with mankind honestly. It tells him that he is in sin, and it shows him the way out. To fail to read and meditate upon the Word that is in the Bible is to miss the pearl of great price. C.C.C.

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REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-FIVE

1. What reasons are suggested by various writers for the insertion of this story about Judah and Tamar at this point in the patriarchal narratives?
2. Are we still following the account of the *toledoth* of Jacob? How does the story of Joseph fit into this background?
3. What are the two periods of Jacob's life following his entrance into full possession of the patriarchal inheritance? When did that event occur?
4. What is the *motif* that pervades the entire narrative of Joseph's career?
5. What reasons are suggested for Judah's "separating himself" from his brothers?
6. What problem did his consorting with Canaanites raise? Why is this story of Judah and Tamar inserted into the story of Joseph at this point?
7. Whom did Judah marry? What were the names of his three sons? Which of the three did God allow to die?
8. In what passages does Judah appear again in the story of Joseph in Egypt?
9. What particular sin did Onan commit? What was his purpose in doing what he did? What is known as *onanism* today? Is this designation strictly relevant? Explain.
10. What was the custom of levirate marriage? To what extent did it prevail in the ancient world? What was the purpose of it?
11. What was Judah's reaction to the deaths of his first two sons by Tamar?
12. What did he do with Tamar? What did he promise her, and why did he fail to fulfil his promise to her?

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13. What deception did Tamar perpetrate on Judah? What was her purpose?
14. Distinguish between the *zanah* and the *kedeshah* in the Canaanite culture.
15. What was the price agreed upon between Tamar and Judah? What was the significance of this price?
16. What threefold pledge did Judah give Tamar to bind the bargain?
17. Explain what ritual prostitution was in the ancient pagan world? With what cult was it associated?
18. Why did Judah decide to leave his threefold pledge with Tamar?
19. How did Tamar dramatically—and publicly—prove Judah's guilt in this transaction?
20. How did Judah react? On what ground did he justify Tamar's act? What did he admit to be his own motive in failing to keep his original promise concerning Shelah?
21. On what basis may we justify—at least partially—Tamar's role in this incident?
22. What aspect of nobility does Judah finally manifest in this incident?
23. How would you evaluate this incident morally and spiritually in the light of the motives of the two persons involved? How are we justified in speaking of this as a "human interest" story?
24. What two sons did Tamar bear to Judah? What was significant about the manner of their birth? In what respects was this a sort of repetition of the story of the birth of Rebekah's sons?
25. How explain the sequence of the time element between chs. 37 and 38? (That is, between the story of young Joseph and the story of the sons of Judah).
26. What two tribes retained their identity down to the Fall of Jerusalem? Who was the great Personage who

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hailed from the tribe of Judah? What important person came from the tribe of Benjamin?

27. Trace briefly the history of the tribe of Judah as it is pieced together out of the Old Testament record. What gave it its special significance?
28. Summarize Dr. Speiser's presentation of the significance of this story of Judah and Tamar, also his evaluation of Tamar's character, and of Judah's role in the affair.
29. How does Dr. Leupold differ from other commentators in his theory of Judah's motivation in this case?
30. Why do we say that the Bible is the Book of Life? Show how this story of Judah and Tamar proves this to be true. What do we mean when we say that it is a realistic book?
31. What son and what grandson of Jacob became members of the Line that brought forth Messiah?
32. Explain the metaphor, "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah." What does this metaphor suggest?

PART FORTY-SIX

THE STORY OF JOSEPH

(Genesis 37:1-36; 39:1—47:31)

1. The Biblical Story: Joseph as a Youth in Canaan (37:1-36).

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, 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 he was a lad with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought the evil report of them unto their father. 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 colors. 4 And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to 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 came 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 to his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream; and, behold, the sun and the moon and 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 th earth? 11 And his brethren envied him; but his father kept the saying in mind.

12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Are not thy brethren feeding 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 now, see whether it is well with thy brethren, and well with the flock; 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 am seeking my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they are feeding the flock. 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 they saw him afar off, and 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 one of the pits, and we will say, An evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. 21 And Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, Let us not take his life. 22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him: that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father. 23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him; 24 and they took him, and cast him into the 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 caravan of Ishmaelites was coming 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

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is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? 27
Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh.
And his brethren hearkened unto him. 28 *And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty 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 clothers.* 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 he-goat, and dipped the coat in the blood;* 32 *and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father, and said, This have we found: know now whether it is thy son's coat or not.* 33 *And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.* 34 *And Jacob rent his garments, and put sack-cloth 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 said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning.* And his father wept for him 36 *And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard.*

(1) *The Motif of the Joseph-Story* is obvious, namely, that of the operation of Divine Providence in relation to human affairs, and in relation especially to all those eminent personages whose lives in any significant way become related to the development of God's Plan and Redemption, both through His people of the Old Covenant and His people of the New Covenant, the fleshly and spiritual seed of Abraham, respectively (Gal. 3:23-29). "With the exception of ch. 38 and ch. 49 the whole of this final section of Genesis is a biography of Joseph. This narrative,

unlike what has gone before, proceeds without any visible divine intervention and without any new revelation; it is one long lesson. Providence thwarts mens' plots and turns their malice to profit. The lesson is explicit in 50:20 (cf. 45:5-8). Betrayed by his brothers, Joseph is rescued by God who makes the betrayal itself serve the divine purpose, for its result—the arrival of Jacob's sons in Egypt is the first step in the making of a chosen people. This theme of salvation ('the survival of a numerous people,' 50:20) runs throughout the whole of the Old Testament to be enriched in the New. Here, as later in the Exodus, we have a preliminary sketch of the Redemption. Not a few details in the narrative bear witness to a precise knowledge of Egyptian affairs and customs as known to us from Egyptian sources" (JB, 59).

(2) *Joseph the Dreamer: His Brothers' Hatred* (vv. 1-24). We meet Joseph again as a lad of seventeen years dwelling with his father in the land of the latter's "sojourning," that is, in the area around Hebron (25:37). It is interesting to note that Jacob, like his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham, was just "sojourning" in the Land of Promise. They were still "pilgrims" (cf. Heb. 11:8-16). They owned nothing except the plot that had been purchased by Abraham for a burial site, the Cave of Machpelah (23:17-20). At the beginning of the significant history of Joseph, we find him on his way, at his father's command, to the place where his brothers were tending their flocks, supposedly near Shechem. However, on arriving at Shechem Jacob learned that the brothers had gone to Dothan, to which place he accordingly followed them. Already Joseph had aroused the hatred and envy of the brothers "on three counts" (as would be said in legal phraseology): 1. He reported to his father the misconduct (whatever form that took) of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob's concubines. We find it diffi-

cult to believe that Joseph had any personal prejudices in the matter or even any personal desire to injure these men. We are inclined to think that his motive was good: apparently he had higher ideals than the brothers and felt that his father should know about their delinquencies. Or perhaps it was just childish naivete, on the part of this lad of seventeen. At any rate, the brothers hated him for voluntarily taking upon himself the role of a tale-bearer. However, there are some who would justify his actions, e.g., the following: "It is no just charge against Joseph that he brought an evil report of his brethren. Had he carried it out of malice, however true, it had been so far evil; but brought from a desire that parental advice might effect reformation, it was both justifiable and right" (SIBG, 273). 2. Jacob loved him more than his other children, and showed his partiality by decking out Joseph in "a coat of many colors." "A garment of several colors is a mark of honor in all countries, more especially in the East. In Europe every dignitary has its appropriate color and garment, in every profession and employment, civil or military. This was a long outer robe, made of many bright pieces and bright colors. It was expensive, showy, and usually worn only by persons of rank" (SIBG, 273). This garment must have been a constant source of irritation to the brothers. It is supposed to have been a long coat (tunic) with sleeves (cf. 2 Sam. 13:18), that is, an upper coat reaching to the wrists and ankles, such as noblemen and kings' daughters wore. This parental favoritism made Joseph actually hated by his brothers, so much so that they "*could not speak peaceably unto him*," that is, ask him how he was, offer him the customary salutation, "Peace be with thee," etc. 3. *His dreams* of a prophetic character finally tipped the scales. The first dream was that his brothers' sheaves all made obeisance to his sheaf; the second, that the sun, moon, and eleven stars (that is

to say, his father, mother, and eleven brothers) all bowed down before him, pointing in an unmistakable way to Joseph's supremacy: the first to his supremacy over his brethren, the second to his supremacy over the whole house of Israel. "The brothers with their ill-will could not see anything in the dreams but the suggestions of his own ambition and pride of heart; and even the father, notwithstanding his partiality, was grieved by the second dream. The dreams are not represented as divine revelations; yet they are not to be regarded as pure flights of fancy from an ambitious heart, but as the presentiments of deep inward feelings, which were not produced without some divine influence being exerted upon Joseph's mind, and therefore were of prophetic significance, though they were not inspired directly by God, inasmuch as the purposes of God were still to remain hidden from the eyes of men for the saving good of all concerned" (K-D, 335). (Note the allusion, to his mother, v. 10. Rachel, Joseph's mother, was now dead, but the customs of the Jews and of other nations conceded the title of *mother* to one who was not really a mother, but merely the wife of a father.) These dreams were "interpreted" by Joseph himself: we can only wonder whether his demeanor in telling them expressed self-righteousness or sheer naivete. Certainly his interpretation indicated his future supremacy over his entire family: "the father could well sense that a secret pride and self-satisfaction prompted the telling and administered a deserved rebuke" (EG, 960). The father saw what the dream signified: he interpreted the luminaries to mean "I and thy mother and thy brethren." "The question naturally arises: how can the mother, though dead, make obeisance? The simplest answer is that though she was dead she lived in the memory of this son and the father" (EG, 960). We read that Jacob, though reprimanding his son, kept the son's saying "in mind" (cf. Luke 2:19, 51). Dreams play a large part in the history of Joseph (cf.

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ch. 40); however, they are evidently not divine apparitions (as in 20:3, 28:12ff., 31:11, 24); essentially they are, in Joseph's case, of the character of *premonitions*.

We have been told in v. 8 that the brothers hated Joseph for his dreams and all the more for his interpretation of them. Now in v. 11, we read that they *envied* him. Envy is now added because this second dream went far beyond the first in its implications. Previously, Joseph's supremacy over his brothers had been indicated. Now it is supremacy over the whole family that is suggested. "But Jacob, like Mary, Luke 2:19, bore the thing in mind. Strange things seemed to be foreshadowed by these remarkable dreams. In a measure they coincided with Jacob's own purposes, which he had intimated by the special cloak he had been providing for his favorite son. On the whole the folly of parental partiality is only too effectively portrayed" (EG, 960).

(3) *The Conspiracy* (vv. 18-24). Throughout all this Jacob seems to have been strangely ignorant of the attitude of his other brothers toward Rachel's son. Joseph himself seems not to have suspected that their envy was so strong as to turn into the commission of a crime against him. At any rate he went, under his father's orders, to Shechem but discovered that the brothers had moved on some distance to Dothan, a place fifteen miles north of Shechem, toward the plain of Jezreel. Joseph arrived at his destination only to find out that his brothers' hatred had burgeoned into a conspiracy to kill him. We can clearly detect the sheer contempt in their voices when, on seeing the lad approach them, they said one to another, "*Behold, this dreamer cometh!*" Immediately they formed the malicious resolution to put "this dreamer" to death, to throw him into one of the pits (cisterns), and then report to the father that a wild beast had slain him, and in this manner to bring the dreamer's *dreams and words* (v. 8) to nought.

We might raise the question at this point as to what kind of personality Joseph manifested in these various relationships. We find great difference of opinion. For instance, one writer tells us: "The very youthful Joseph must have been exasperating, to say the least. Undisciplined by contact with the world, he was boastful, thoughtless and egotistical. He needed the experience which came to him in order that he should become his noblest self. To be protected in a happy home from everything disagreeable is a pleasant experience, but not one which develops real greatness of character" (HH, 43). Some commentators think of Joseph as what we would call a "spoiled brat." We might ask, Is it possible to avoid the feeling, from what is said about him, especially in these days of his youth, that he was tainted with a large measure of self-righteousness? Other writers view the young man in a better light. Concerning the evil report which he brought back to his father of the evil doings of the sons of Bilhah and those of Zilpah, Murphy writes: "The unsophisticated child of home is prompt in the disapproval of evil and frank in the avowal of his feelings." With reference to Joseph's interpretations of his dreams, Murphy writes: "His frankness in reciting his dream to his brothers marks a spirit devoid of guile, and only dimly conscious of the import of his nightly visions" (MG, 442-443). Lange writes: "At the age of seventeen Joseph became a shepherd with his brethren. Jacob did not send his favorite son too early to the herds; yet, though the favorite, he was to begin to serve below the rest, as a shepherd-boy. At this age, however, Joseph had great naiveness and simplicity. He therefore imprudently tells his dreams, like an innocent child. On the other hand, however, he was very sedate; he was not enticed, therefore, by the evil example of some of his brethren, but considered it his duty to inform his father. . . . That the sons of the concubines surpassed the others in rude conduct, is easily understood.

Joseph's moral earnestness is, doubtless, the first stumbling-block to his brethren, whilst it strengthens his father in his good opinion" (CDHCG, 583).

At any rate, it was Reuben, who was the eldest son, and therefore specially responsible for his younger brother, opposed this murderous proposal. He dissuaded his brothers from killing Joseph outright, advising them to throw him into a dry pit (cistern) that was near. Naturally, Joseph would inevitably perish in the pit, and so their hatred was satisfied. However, it was Reuben's intention to take Joseph out of the pit later and restore him to his father. As soon as Joseph arrived on the scene, they took off his coat of many colors (his coat with sleeves) and threw him into the pit.

(4) *Joseph is Sold into Slavery* (vv. 25-28). No sooner had the would-be fratricides sat down to eat, after throwing Joseph into the dry cistern, than they espied a company of Ishmaelites from Gilead advancing along the road that traversed the plain of Dothan to the great caravan highway that led from Damascus by way of Megiddo, Ramleh and Gaza into Egypt. The caravan drew near laden with spices, including the balsam for which Gilead was so well-known (43:11; Jer. 8:22, 46:11). Judah seized this opportunity to propose to the brothers that they sell Joseph to these Ishmaelites. Said he, "*What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh.*" "Lest the victim's blood cry to heaven, the murderer covered it with earth (Gen. 4:10, Ezek. 24:7)" (JB, 61). And the brothers "*hearkened unto him.*"

Just what motivated Judah to take this step? Was it for the sum of money that would be their gain in consequence of the transaction? We can hardly think so. As we shall see later, Judah's conduct throughout the entire history of Joseph and his sons was marked by a

certain quality of nobility that we cannot overlook. "Reuben wished to deliver Joseph entirely from his brother's malice. Judah also wished to save his life, though not from brotherly love so much as from the feeling of horror, which was not quite extinct within him, at incurring the guilt of fratricide; but he would still like to get rid of him, that his dreams might not come true. Judah, like his brethren, was probably afraid that their father might confer upon Joseph the rights of the first-born, and so make him lord over them. His proposal was a welcome one. When the Arabs passed by, the brethren fetched Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites, who took him into Egypt" (K-D, 337). "'Then Judah began to use the language of a hypocritical self-interest,' says Delitzsch. This, however, seems not at all justified by Judah's after-history. It must be presupposed that Judah was unacquainted with Reuben's intention. The brethren were so much excited that Judah alone could not have hoped to rescue Joseph from their hand. The ferocity, especially, of Simeon and Levi, is known to us from former history. Judah, therefore, could not think otherwise than that Joseph must die from hunger in the pit. As in opposition to this, therefore, and not as a counteraction of Reuben's attempt at deliverance, is his proposal to be judged. Joseph lived still, though a slave. There was a possibility of his becoming free. He might make his escape by the caravan routes that passed south through his home. Reuben, in his tenderness, had made a subtle attempt to save him. In the bolder policy of Judah we see that subtle attempt crossed by one more daring. No doubt both had some ill-feeling towards Joseph, and were, therefore, not capable of a mutual and open understanding. That both, however, preserved a better conscience than the rest, is evident from the later history. . . . What Joseph says of himself afterwards, that he was stolen

out of the land of the Hebrews (40:15), does not contradict our narration. Was he to sell to the Egyptians the crime of his brethren?" (Lange, 584).

"The different names given to the traders—viz., *Ishmaelites* (vers. 25, 27, 28b), *Midianites* (ver. 28a), and *Medanites* (ver. 36)—do not show that the account has been drawn from different legends, but that these tribes were often confounded, from the fact that they resembled one another so closely, not only in their common descent from Abraham (16:15 and 25:2), but also in the similarity of their mode of life and their constant change of abode, that strangers could hardly distinguish them, especially when they appeared not as tribes but as Arabian merchants, such as they are here described as being: '*Midianites, merchantmen.*' [Why not say that the names were used *interchangeably*? For *Medanites*, see the marginal rendering of v. 28, ASV.] That descendants of Abraham should already be met with in this capacity is by no means strange, if we consider that 150 years had passed since Ishmael's dismissal from his father's house—a period amply sufficient for his descendants to have grown through marriage into a respectable tribe. The price, '*twenty (sc. shekels) of silver,*' was the price which Moses afterwards fixed as the value of a boy between 5 and 20 (Lev. 27:5), the average price of a slave being 30 shekels (Exo. 21:32). But the Ishmaelites naturally wanted to make money by the transaction" (K-D, 337). "It would not make sense to say in one breath, 'Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites,' and then in the same breath without explanation show how he was sold to Midianites, who, by the way, again appear as Ishmaelites before the end of the verse. Incidentally, in v. 36 a modification of the name Midianites occurs: they are called '*Medanites*', [again see 25:2]. Nor is the difficulty grave. First of all, Ishmaelites and Midianites have one ancestor, Abraham (16:15, 25:2). Both groups may have been in this

caravan. The Ishmaelites may have been the dominant faction, the Midianites the more numerous. In such a case both designations would be suitable. Instead of trying to reconcile a surface discrepancy critics press the different names in the interest of proving that the material of the chapter came from two different sources" (Leupold, EG, 969). As to the statement attributed to Joseph in 40:15 in which he emphatically protested that he "was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews," Leupold adds: "But would you expect Joseph actually to reveal what his brothers had done to him? That passage would hardly cover the case of the Midianites who are supposed to have drawn him from a well. For to draw an abandoned wretch from a pit and to sell him is hardly theft" (EG, 969).

(5) *Jacob's Deep Grief* (vv. 29-36). The Ishmaelites, having completed the transaction, went on their way. Everything was settled in Reuben's absence; it may be that the brothers suspected that he intended to rescue Joseph. When he *returned* (note this verb: obviously, *he had been absent*) and found Joseph gone, he *rent his clothes* (a sign of intense grief "on the part of the natural man"), and exclaimed "*The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?*" That is, How shall I account to his father for his disappearance? The brothers, however, were at no loss about what to do: they dipped the colorfully variegated tunic (which had been an eyesore from the beginning) in the blood of a he-goat and sent it to Jacob, asking him whether it was Joseph's garment. ("Their revenge thus prepared a cruel shock for the father. Had the father controlled his grief he might have found it *suspicious* that the cloak was not torn, but only stained with blood"). At any rate, everything worked out as scheduled: the father examined the cloak, and recognized it immediately as Joseph's. But the murderers were hardly prepared for the intense grief that overwhelmed Jacob. Their cruel

device succeeded too well: Jacob was simply inconsolable: alarmed, and probably prompted by a feeling of guilt "all his sons and all his daughters" sought to comfort him. (Dinah is, of course, his only daughter named in Scripture). But Jacob refused to be comforted! He, too, *rent his garments and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned for his son many days.* (Sackcloth was made of goat's hair, a coarse texture of a dark color: cf. Isa. 50:3, Rev. 6:12. Wearing sackcloth was another badge of grief among Jews and heathen alike: 2 Sam. 3:31; 1 Ki. 20:31, 21:27; 1 Chron. 21:16; Neh. 9:1; Isa. 37:1-2; Rev. 11:3). Assuming that Joseph—the child of his deep and true love, the son of Rachel—had been devoured and destroyed by wild beasts, Jacob gave himself over to bitter, uncontrollable grief, exclaiming, "Do not attempt to comfort me, *for I will go down to Sheol mourning for my son.*" "How should his sons comfort him, when they were obliged to cover their wickedness with the sin of lying and hypocrisy, and when even Reuben, although at first beside himself at the failure of his plan, had not courage enough to disclose his brothers' crime" (K-D, 338).

While his father Jacob "wept for him," Joseph was taken into Egypt by the Midianites and sold to Potiphar, the commanding officer of the royal bodyguard, the official who executed the capital sentences ordered by the king (corresponding to a similar office among the Chaldeans, cf. 2 Ki. 25:8; Jer. 39:9, 52:12). "Joseph, while his father was mourning, was sold by the Midianites to Potiphar, the chief of Pharaoh's *trabantes*, to be first of all brought low, according to the wonderful counsel of God, and then to be exalted as ruler in Egypt, before whom his brothers would bow down, and as the savior of the house of Israel" (K-D, 338). Note the word *Sheol* here: this was the Hebrew counterpart of the Greek and Roman *Hades*, the gloomy underworld of departed spirits or "shades." (The word for the eternal abode of lost souls,

in the New Testament, is *Gehenna*, a name derived from the gorge outside Jerusalem known as Ge-Hinnom, or the Valley of Hinnom, the place where the refuse of the city was constantly burning. It is significant that Jesus used this term, Gehenna (cf. Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28, 18:9, 23, 15, 23:23; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5, Jas. 3:6). (For Sheol in the O.T., see especially Deut. 32:22, 2 Sam. 22:6; Job 11:8, 26:6; Psa. 16:10, 139:8; Prov. 15:11, 27:20; Isa. 28:18, Ezek. 32:27; Jon. 2:2, Hab. 2:5, etc.). Modern English translations generally use the originals, Sheol in the O.T., and Hades in the N.T. In most cases in the O.T., it simply signifies the grave. It can have no other meaning, apparently, in Gen. 37:35, 42:38; 1 Sam. 2:6; 1 Ki. 2:6; Job 14:13, 17:13, 16, and in many passages in the writing of David, Solomon, and the prophets. "The darkness and gloom of the grave was such that the word denoting it came to be applied to the abiding place of the miserable." (UBD, s.v.). In some instances, the word surely denotes the opposite of heaven (cf. Job 11:8, Psa. 139:8, Amos 9:3). In others it seems to mean strictly the abode of the wicked (as in Psa. 9:17, Prov. 23:14) as distinguished from the righteous. The same general concepts are apparent in the *Hades* of the New Testament writings. In some cases the term does surely refer to the grave (e.g., Acts 2:31, 1 Cor. 15:55); in others, to the underworld of punishment beyond the grave (Matt. 11:23, 16:18; Luke 10:15, 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev. 1:18, 6:8, 20:13, 14). In classical Greek, Hades is indeed the unseen world, taking its name from the god of this world. In Greek mythology the cosmos was divided among three brothers: Zeus ruled over the land, Poseidon over the sea, and Hades over the world beyond death and the grave. (Their Roman counterparts were Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto). In the eleventh chapter of the Odyssey, Homer pictures Odysseus and his crew as "plunging into the deep waters of the river Oceanus [which was supposed

to encircle the earth], where lie the land and city of the Cimmerians who live enshrouded in mist and darkness, which the rays of the sun never pierce either at his rising or as he goes down again out of the heavens, but the poor wretches live in one long melancholy night. When we got there, we beached the ship, took the sheep out of her, and went along by the waters of Oceanus till we came to the place of which Circe had told us." This place was at the entrance to Hades, the underworld. Odysseus goes on to tell how he ordered his men to dig a trench there, how he prayed "sufficiently" to the dead, and how he then took the necessary steps to achieve communication with the "shades" who inhabited this dreary land. He tells the story as follows: "I cut the throats of the two sheep and let the blood run into the trench, whereon the ghosts come trooping up from dark Erebus—brides, young bachelors, old men worn out with toil, maids who had been crossed in love, and brave men who had been killed in battle, with their armor still smirched with blood; they came from every quarter and flitted round the trench with a strange kind of screaming sound that made me turn pale with fear." One by one the great heroes and heroines of the Heroic Age came up to the trench; and on drinking of the sacrificial blood, each recovered memory and conversed with Odysseus [the Latin Ulysses] concerning reminiscences of life on earth. The testimony of the "shade" or ghost of Achilles is perhaps the most significant of all. Said Achilles: "Speak not a word in death's favor. I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead" (Samuel Butler translation). The Butcher-Lang translation here is more meaningful, as follows: Achilles says: "Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, oh great Odysseus. Rather would I live on ground as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the

dead that be departed." At the termination of the conversation, Odysseus tells us: "So I spake, and the spirit of the son of Aeacus, fleet of foot, passed with great strides along the mead of asphodel, rejoicing in that I had told him of his son's renown." This is the true picture of Hades as envisioned in the early classical world—the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew Sheol. It was the dark, dank, colorless habitation of the "shades" of the "departed dead," a refuge, one might well say, of eternal melancholy hopelessness. This would indeed be "eternal punishment."

T. Lewis makes the following interesting comments on "the primitive conception of Sheol." "This is the first place in which the word occurs, and it is very important to trace, as far as we can, the earliest conception, or rather emotion, out of which it arose. 'I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol'—*towards* Sheol, or, on the way to Sheol, the reference being to the decline of life terminating in that unknown state, place, or condition of being, so called. One thing is clear: it was not a state of not-being, if we may use so paradoxical an expression. Jacob was going to his son; he was still his son; there is yet a tie between him and his father; he is still spoken of as a personality; he is still regarded as having a being somehow, and somewhere. Compare 2 Sam. 12:23, 'I am going to *him*, but *he* shall not return to *me*.' The *him* and the *me* in this case, like the *I* and the *my son* in Genesis, are alike personal. In the earliest language, where all is hearty, such use of the pronoun could have been no unmeaning figure. The being of the one who has disappeared is no less real than that of the one who remains still seen, still *found*, to use the Shemitic term for existence, or *out-being*, as a known and visible state. . . . It was not to his son in his grave, for Joseph had no grave. His body was supposed to be lying somewhere in the desert, or carried off, by the wild beasts (v. 33). To resolve it all into figurative expressions for the grave would be

simply carrying over our meaningless modern rhetoric into ancient forms of speech employed, in their first use, not for the reflex painting, but for the very utterance of emotional conceptions. However indefinite they may be, they are too mournfully real to admit of any such explanations. Looking at it steadily from this primitive standpoint, we are compelled to say, that an undoubting conviction of personal extinction at death, leaving nothing but a dismembered, decomposing body, now belonging to no one, would never have given rise to such language. The mere conception of the grave, as a place of burial, is too narrow for it. It, alone, would have destroyed the idea of its germ, rather than have given origin or expansion to it. The fact, too, that they had a well-known word for the grave, as a confined place of deposit for the body (see Gen. 23:9 for a possession, or property, of the grave) shows that this other name, and this other conception, were not dependent upon it, nor derived from it. . . . There is reference also to the German *holle*, or the general term of the northern nations (Gothic- Scandinavian, Saxon), denoting *hole*, or cavity, though this is the very question, whether the northern conception is not a secondary one, connected with that later thought of penal confinement which was never separable from the Saxon *hell*—a sense-limitation, in fact, of the more indefinite and more spiritual notion presented primarily by the Greek Hades, and which furnishes the true parallel to the early Hebrew Sheol. . . . That Sheol, in its primary sense, did not mean the grave, and in fact had no etymological association with it, is shown by the fact already mentioned, that there was a distinct word for the latter, of still earlier occurrence in the Scriptures, common in all the Semitic languages, and presenting the definite primary conception of digging, or excavating. There was no room here for expansion into the greater thought. . . . Had Joseph been lying by the side of his mother in the field

near Bethlehem Ephratah, or with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, in the cave of Machpelah, or in some Egyptian sarcophagus, embalmed with costliest spices and wrapped in aromatic linen, the idea of his unbroken personality would have been no more vivid, Joseph himself (the very *ipse*) would have been no nearer, or more real, to the mourning father, than as he thought of his body lying mangled in the wilderness, or borne by rapacious birds to the supposed four corners of the earth. I will go to my son mourning *Sheol-ward*—on the way to the unknown land. . . . This view of Sheol is strongly corroborated by the parallel etymology, and the parallel connection of ideas we find in the origin and use of the Greek Hades. . . . Hades, like Sheol, had its two conceptual stages, first of *state*, afterwards of *locality*. To the Greek word, however, there was added a third idea. It came to denote also a power; and so was used for the supposed king of the dead (*Iliad*, 20:61). This personification appears again in the later Scriptures, 1 Cor. 15:55, O Hades, where is thy victory? and in Rev. 6:8, 20:13, 14, where Hades becomes limited to Gehenna, and its general power, as keeper of souls, is abolished" In Lange, 586, 587).

Again: "See a very remarkable passage, Diodorus Siculus, lib. 1, ch. 51, respecting the belief of the very ancient Egyptians: 'The habitations of the living they call inns, or lodging-places, since we dwell in them so short a time, but those of the dead they style *everlasting abodes*, as residing in them forever.' Why should not Jacob have had the idea as well as these most ancient Egyptians? That his thought was more indefinite, that it had less of circumstance and locality, less imagery every way, than the Greek and Egyptian fancy gave it, only proves its higher purity as a divine hope, a sublime act of faith, rather than a poetical picturing, or a speculative dogma. The less it assumed to know, or even to imagine, showed its stronger trust in the *unseen* world as an assured reality, but depen-

dent solely for its clearer revelation on the unseen God. The faith was all the stronger, the less the aid it received from the sense or the imagination. It was grounded on the surer rock of the 'everlasting covenant' made with the fathers, though in it not a word was said directly of a future life. 'The days of the years of my pilgrimage,' says Jacob. He was 'a sojourner upon the earth as his fathers before him.' The language has no meaning except as pointing to a home, an eternal habitation, whether in Sheol, or through Sheol, was not known. It was enough that it was a return unto God, 'his people's dwelling-place in all generations' (Psa. 90:1). It was, in some way, a 'living unto him,' however they might disappear from earth and time; for 'he is not the God of the dead.' His covenant was an assurance of the continued being of those with whom it was made, 'Because he lived they should live also.' 'Art thou not from everlasting, Jehovah, my God, my Holy One? we shall not (wholly) die.' 'Thou wilt lay us up in Sheol; thou wilt call and we will answer; thou wilt have regard to the work of thy hands.' *The pure doctrine of a personal God, and a belief in human extinction, have never since been found conjoined. Can we believe it of the lofty theism of the patriarchal age?"* (T. Lewis, *ibid.*, 587). (Cf. Gen. 47:9, Heb. 11:8ff., Matt. 22:32, John 14:19, Hab. 1:12, etc. Cf. also Psa. 16:8-10, Acts 2:27: in these passages the reference is specifically to the redemption of the body, the last phase of redemption, known also as the putting on of immortality (Rom. 8:23, 1:5-7; Rom. 8:11, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:55-58; 2 Cor. 5:1-10: note here the phrase, "that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life," v. 4).

A final word here, *in re.* Gen. 37:35: "Jacob will wear the mourner's garb till his death, so that in the underworld his son may know how deep his grief has been

(Gunkel). The shade was believed to appear in *Sheol* in the condition in which it left the world" (Skinner, ICCG, 449).

After all, Jacob's inconsolable grief was in a sense a just retribution: cf. Gal. 6:7-8. "Jacob's experience reflects some fulfilment of the dictum that 'as a man sows so shall he also reap.' Himself a deceiver who stole Esau's blessing and bought his birthright, he is now cruelly deceived by his own sons. Twenty years later the deceiving sons are to experience the anguish of guilty consciences as they see themselves threatened with retribution (Cf. 42:21)" (HSB, 61).

Of the wickedness of Jacob's sons, there is much to be said. "Lord, what is man? Behold the sons of Jacob hating a brother who had done them no evil, envying a brother because God portended him good, murdering a brother in purpose, and preparing to break a father's heart with sorrow. Yet, in the midst of all, they sat down to eat bread! But passion blinds the eyes, hardens the heart, and sears the conscience. The deeds of men differ in comparative enormity; but every heart is desperately wicked till its evil is mortified, Rom. 8:13, and its nature renewed, Rom. 12:2, by the Spirit of God" (SIBG, 275).

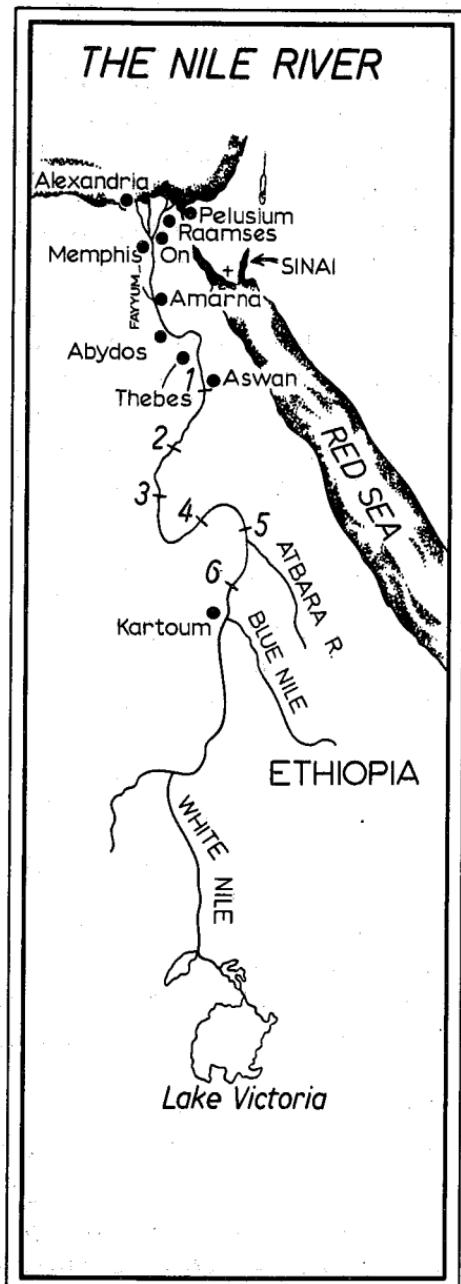
"Imagine Joseph advancing in all the unsuspecting openness of brotherly affection. How astonished and terrified must he have been at the cold reception, the ferocious aspect, the rough usage of his unnatural assailants! A vivid picture of his state of agony and despair was afterwards drawn by themselves (cf. ch. 42:21). *They sat down to eat bread.* What a view does this exhibit of those hardened profligates! Their common share in this conspiracy is not the only dismal feature in the story. The rapidity, the almost instantaneous manner in which the proposal was followed by their joint resolution, and the cool indifference, or rather the fiendish

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satisfaction, with which they sat down to regale themselves, is astonishing; it is impossible that mere envy at his dreams, his gaudy dress, or the doting partiality of their common father, could have goaded them on to such a pitch of frenzied resentment, or confirmed them in such consummate wickedness. Their hatred of Joseph must have had a far deeper seat—must have been produced by dislike of his piety and other excellences, which made his character and conduct a constant censure upon theirs, and on account of which they found they could never be at ease till they had rid themselves of his hated presence. This was the true solution of the mystery, just as it was in the case of Cain (1 John 3:12)" (Jameison, CECG, 232). *How true it is always that evil hates true piety and becomes enraged in the very presence of it.*

2. Joseph as Prisoner in Egypt (39:1—41:45).

39 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites, that had brought him down thither. 2 And Jehovah 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 Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 And Joseph found favor in his sight, and he ministered unto 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 made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Jehovah 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 that was with him, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was comely, and well-favored.



EGYPT and the Nile

"Egypt is the gift
of the Nile."
(Herodotus)

The Nile is 3,743 miles long
from its origin at Lake Victoria in central Africa to the
Mediterranean.

Numbers on the map indicate
the cataracts of the Nile.

The first cataract at Aswan
marks the southern
limits of Egypt.

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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 knoweth not what is with me in the house, and he hath put all that he hath into my hand: 9 he is not greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything 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 he went into the house to do his work; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12 And she caught him by the 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 that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a 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 by me, and fled, and got him out. 16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his master came home. 17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, whom 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 by 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, the place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. 21 But

Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor 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 anything that was under his hand, because Jehovah was with him; and that which he did, Jehovah made it to prosper.

40 And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was wroth against his two 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 ministered unto 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, who were bound in the prison. 6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and saw them, and, behold, they were sad. 7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in ward in his master's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sad today? 8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell it me, 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 its 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

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cup into Pharaoh's hand. 12 And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; 13 wherein yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head, and restore thee unto thine office: and thou shalt give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. 14 But have me in thy remembrance 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: 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, three baskets of white bread were on my head: 17 and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of baked food 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 within yet 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 the head 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 forgat him.

41 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 kine, well-favored and fat-fleshed; and they fed in the reed-grass. 3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after

them out of the river, ill-favored and lean-fleshed, and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4 And the ill-favored and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he slept and dreamed a second time: and, behold, seven ears of grain came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6 And behold, seven ears, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up 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 dream; 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 house of the captain of the guard, 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 with us there a young man, a 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.

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 when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it. 16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph,

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17 In my dream, behold, I stood upon the brink of the river: 18 and, behold, there came out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favored; and they fed in the reed-grass: 19 and, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favored and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20 and the lean and ill-favored 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-favored, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up upon 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 swallowed up the seven good ears; and I told it 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: what God is about to do he hath declared unto Pharaoh. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27 And the seven lean and ill-favored kine that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind; they shall be seven years of famine. 28 That is the thing which I spake unto Pharaoh: what God is about to do he hath showed 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 which followeth; for it shall be very grievous. 32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh, 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.

34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers 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 these good years that come, and lay up grain under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. 36 And the food shall be for a 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, a man in whom the spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this there is none so discreet and wise as thou: 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. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his signet 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 set him 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 his foot in all the land of Egypt. 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenathpaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

(1) *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (39:1-23)*. It is a characteristic of Joseph that throughout his life his faithfulness to God brought upon him, and upon all those associated with him, the blessing of God. So it was in Potiphar's household into which he was sold as a slave.

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Here he soon rose to the high post of overseer, and the house, we are told, was divinely blessed for his sake, a fact which even Potiphar himself recognized (vv. 3-6). We have to admit that Joseph, whatever may have been his faults as a youth, certainly developed into one of the most admirable men of all those who figure in the Old Testament records. "The character of Joseph stands out as one of the purest in the whole compass of sacred history. No temptation could overcome his high-toned morality, no calamity could shake his implicit faith in God. Adversity in its bitterest form did not unduly depress him, and neither did the giddiest height of prosperity generate unseemly pride. In his father's house pampered and fondled; in slavery wantonly and falsely accused; in the palace wielding unlimited power, he was always the same truthful, pure, just, noble-minded, God-fearing man" (SIBG, 279). The fact he loved God, however, and was destined to accomplish God's will in Egypt did not make it possible for him to be spared the injustice of false accusations and undeserved imprisonment. When Potiphar's wife, a fair example of her kind (whose name is Legion), tried to take advantage of his physical attractiveness and vigor by repeatedly trying to inveigle him into an adulterous relationship, he stoutly refused to be unfaithful either to his God or to his master, and fled the place of temptation, even as the Apostle advises all righteous men to do on facing the snares of the devil (1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 6:18, 1 Tim. 3:7, Eph. 6:11). From this human point of view, Joseph could not betray the trust placed in him by Potiphar. It is significant, however, that he affirmed a higher motivation for his refusal, "*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" Angered by Joseph's refusal to accept her advances, Potiphar's wife determined to get revenge. She called for the male servants in the house, who in any event would have been glad to be rid of the "foreigner."

She spoke of Joseph as a Hebrew using Egyptian racial prejudice to serve her purpose. On one occasion, previously, finding herself alone with Joseph, she took hold of his garment in her desire to consummate her sinful appeal. But this was the occasion on which Joseph fled, unfortunately, however, leaving the garment in her hand. Now, in her desire to make him pay for his rejection of her, she told the Egyptian servants that Joseph had been the aggressor, and that she had resisted his advances, calling for help, and seizing his garment when he fled. When Potiphar heard this report he was angered and had Joseph put into prison. (It has been suggested that he might have had some doubt about his wife's story, otherwise Joseph would have been put to death immediately.) (It should be noted, too, that Joseph had the responsibility for all the business of this household, with one exception, namely, the provision of food (43:32). Egyptians would have considered themselves defiled, we are told, if they were to eat with a foreigner.) Some authorities call attention to the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers* as an interesting parallel of this account of the temptation of Joseph. In that story it is the younger brother who is falsely accused by the older brother's wife. When the truth is finally known, the wicked wife is slain by her husband. It seems rather far-fetched to establish any significant correspondence between the two tales.

(2) *Joseph in Prison* (vv. 20-23). "The best of men have been accused of the most atrocious crimes. And there is a great readiness in men to believe an evil report, especially against the professors of religion. Here the most improbable story gains easy credit. How often is guilt honored, and innocence oppressed and punished! Yet let me not be weary in well-doing, or in resisting unto blood, striving against sin; for the bitterest sufferings, with a good conscience, are to be preferred to all the

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pleasures of sin. Though persecutors should be deaf to my plea, there is one, Jehovah, who seeth and judgeth. In his time he will vindicate my character and plead my cause. No prison can exclude his presence" (SIBG, 279). Joseph was to learn that "to them that love God all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28). "When Joseph was sold as a slave he could hardly have known that God was arranging circumstances which would make possible the fulfilment of his dreams (37:5-10). Nor could he have suspected the long years needed before the fulfilment. But of one truth he early became aware—that God was with him, for no adversity could make him bitter or distrustful of God. Twice we are told that the Lord *was with Joseph* (39:2, 21). Joseph's rich spiritual insight was plainly evidenced when he attributed to God his imprisonment and slavery as well as his rise to power (45:7, 8). His brothers sinned as they wrought their own wilful wickedness, but God used it for the accomplishment of the divine purpose (45:7, 50:20, Psa. 76:10) (HSB, 63). (Cf. Isa. 46:8-11). The story was the same in prison as it had been in Potiphar's house: Joseph rose to the position of great responsibility: the keeper of the prison soon came to trust him implicitly, and finally put him in charge of all those who were in the prison. "Jehovah was with Joseph and showed kindness unto him," etc., v. 21.

(3) *Joseph the Interpreter of Dreams* (40:1-23). It so happened that the king's chief butler and chief baker were thrust into prison for offenses against the Pharaoh. In prison each of these men had a remarkable dream which he related to Joseph. The butler dreamed that he saw a vine with three branches, the clusters of which produced ripe grapes; these he pressed into Pharaoh's cup. As 'scribe of the sideboard' he had been responsible, of course, for the king's food and drink. The dream was in harmony with his vocation, his usual employment: however, he had

sone something to cause him to fall into disfavor with the monarch. Joseph interpreted the dream to signify that in three days he, the butler, should be released from prison and restored to his position. Joseph asked of this butler a favor, a very small favor in a sense, in view of the butler's restoration to his place in the royal court: he asked the butler to call the Pharaoh's attention to his unjust imprisonment and to intercede for him. He did not mention the incident with Potiphar's wife but did protest his innocence. He mentioned his having been "stolen away" out of the land of the Hebrews (v. 15), a reminder that he had not been a slave from birth. The baker dreamed that he had three white baskets on his head, the uppermost basket containing baked meats for Pharaoh which were eaten by the birds while he was carrying it. (We learn that bread baskets such as those described here appear in tomb paintings from ancient Egypt.) This dream was explained by Joseph to mean that the chief baker also should be taken from prison in three days, but only to be hung on a tree for the birds to eat the flesh off his bones. (To the Egyptian who held that the welfare of the soul in the next life would be dependent on the preservation of the body, that is, the earthly body, such a destiny would be particularly offensive.) The two dreams were fulfilled to the letter: on the third day the chief butler was restored to his office, where he immediately forgot all about Joseph and his request; and on the third day the chief baker was hanged. "Joseph had to choose between his position and his purity. He chose the latter only to suffer unjust accusation and punishment for a crime he did not commit. Yet his noble stand was not in vain, for it resulted in his meeting the king's butler and baker, and this contact in turn made possible his becoming premier of Egypt under the Pharaoh" (HSB, 64).

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(4) *Joseph the Interpreter of the Pharaoh's Dreams* (41:1-36). For two whole years the chief butler "forgot," and for two whole years Joseph lingered in prison. Of all the sins in the category, yet the most universal undoubtedly, what is baser, what is more deplorable, more genuinely selfish, than ingratitude? The Bible portrays heaven as essentially the place of joyous eternal thanksgiving (Rev. 5:9-14, 11:15-17, 15:2-3, 19:1-10): and in this world he who has the most thankfulness in his heart has the most of heaven in his life. At the end of the two years, however, something happened: The Pharaoh himself had two dreams. In the first he stood by the river, the Nile of course, on which the very life of all Egypt depends. Irrigation comes to the soil of Egypt by the annual overflow of the Nile; apart from this river, Egypt would be only a part of the great desert which covers all of northern Africa. The Pharaoh saw, coming up out of the river seven fat "kine" (cows) which proceeded to feed on the marsh-grass that grew along its banks. (In the Egyptian heiroglyphics, the ox is the emblem of agriculture). Then, behold, the Pharaoh saw seven lean cows come up out of the river and devour the seven fat ones. Then he had a second dream: in this he dreamed that seven full ears of grain came up on one stalk, and behold, seven thin ears sprung up after the good ones and devoured them. The king was sore troubled, of course; none of his magicians (not necessarily wise men, but necromancers) could interpret these dreams. Then it was that the chief butler *remembered!* He came to the Pharaoh with an open confession, "I do remember my faults this day!" and he told the king about the young Hebrew prisoner who had correctly interpreted the dreams of the butler and baker in prison. Joseph was hastily released and prepared for his meeting with the Pharaoh. As of Semitic origin of course he wore a beard, but now he must be shaved in anticipation of his meeting with

the Egyptian monarch (it must be remembered that "Pharaoh" was only a title, like Caesar, Czar, Kaiser, etc.). Suitable clothing was provided for Joseph and he was ushered into the presence of the king. With a minimum of ceremony, the monarch quickly related to Joseph the contents of his dreams which were actually only one as to meaning. It is interesting to note that Joseph disclaimed any personal psychic powers: "what God is about to do he hath declared unto Pharaoh," v. 25. Joseph then explained the dreams of the cattle and the ears of grain as descriptive of the immediate agricultural future of Egypt: the seven good cattle and seven good ears signified seven years of plenty; but the seven thin cattle and the seven bad ears signified seven bad years that would follow. God was warning the Pharaoh that he must prepare during the seven years of plenty for the seven years of famine that would inevitably follow. "*The dream,*" said Joseph, "*was doubled unto Pharaoh, because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.*" Joseph then proceeds to make some recommendations. He suggests that the king appoint an administrator to be responsible for securing sufficient food during the years of plenty to provide for the needs which would arise during the years of famine. One fifth of the produce of the good years, he said, should be placed in the royal granaries for distribution throughout the land during the lean years. The king recognized in Joseph the kind of administrator he was now in need of, the kind who would serve Egypt in the impending time of crisis. Whereupon, he appointed Joseph himself as Grand Visier, or Prime Minister ("over my house," 41:10). The official signet ring was given to Joseph that he would have power to issue edicts in the name and with the seal of the Pharaoh. He arrayed Joseph in vestments of Egyptian fine linen, the material used by the royal family and the highest officials of the realm. The king put the gold chain around Joseph's neck, the emblem of a signal honor, and

kind of "distinguished service" medal. He caused Joseph to ride in the second chariot, next to that of the king himself. A herald went before Joseph crying out, *Abrech*, meaning probably, *Bow the knee*. The royal command was given as stated in v. 44, and meaning, it would seem, something like "Without thee, or thy command, shall no man do anything." Joseph was also given an Egyptian name, *Zaphenath-paneah* (a name of uncertain derivation and said to be meaningless in Hebrew). He took as his wife an Egyptian named Asenath, the daughter of *Potiphera*, a priest of *On*. "A characteristically Egyptian tableau of investiture: Joseph is made viceroy of Egypt; he is second only to the Pharaoh; his house is the centre of administration and he is the keeper of the king's seal. The runners before his chariot of state cry 'Abrek,' which suggests the Egyptian 'thy heart to thee,' 'beware,' 'make way'" (JB, 65). "These three names indicate pretty clearly the nature of the religion at that time prevailing in Egypt. *Asenath* signifies 'belonging to *Neith*', and *Neith* was the Egyptian Minerva. *Potipherah* means 'belonging to the sun,' and *On* seems to have been identical with the Syrian *Baal*—the Sun-god. The Egyptians, in fact, were wholly given to idolatry" (SIBG, 282). (Minerva was the Roman goddess of wisdom. The Sun-god in Egypt was most generally known as *Re*; his seat of worship was at Heliopolis in the Delta. Herodotus, the "father of history," relates in detail the circumstances of his visit to Heliopolis.)

* * * * *

On Dreams: An Excursus

Dreams have always been fascinating subjects in human experience. What is the relation between our dream world and the world of our waking hours? Who can say? Erich Fromm tells the story of a Chinaman who had an unusual dream. In it he dreamed that he was a butterfly flitting around and sipping nectar from flower to flower—a delectable experience. Suddenly he was awakened by a loud noise. Then he began to think, and ask himself: Was I, a few minutes ago, a Chinaman dreaming that I was a butterfly, or am

I now a butterfly dreaming that I am a Chinaman? This, absurd though it may seem, is a question not to be dismissed too carelessly.

What is the nature of dreams? Dr. James L. Jarrett, in his excellent book, *The Quest for Beauty*, 59-63, deals with this subject most interestingly. He writes: "There is an easy answer to the question: a dream is the psychic activity—the experience of happenings, thoughts, feelings, images—during sleep. But to go further in our probing is not quite so easy. Why does one dream? To protect one's sleep, says Freud, by channeling certain stimuli which might otherwise wake one up. Not all agree with Freud's answer, but a more important question for our purpose is this: Why does one dream what he does dream? And this: Do dreams mean anything? Do they signify? The easy answer—perhaps the most popular one, even today—is that dreams are mere nonsense, just a jumble of images as if the wind caught and scattered the snapshots from an open drawer. There is no reason for dreaming the way we do—except, perhaps, that when our digestive system is having its troubles, we do tend to have troubled dreams; and when our feet get cold, we may have some appropriate dream, such as walking over snow—but nothing more profound than this. So there is not importance or significance to dreams—though occasionally one may be amusing or weird enough to tell at the breakfast table, even if the audience, in such cases, is seldom as interested as the teller. Jonathan Swift in his parody of Petronius has expressed this position:

On Dreams

Those dreams that on the silent night intrude,
And with false flitting shades our minds delude,
Jove never sends us downwards from the skies;
Nor can they from infernal mansions rise;
But are all mere productions of the brain,
And fools consult interpreters in vain.
For when in bed we rest our weary limbs,
The mind unburden'd sports in various whims;
The busy head with mimic art runs o'er
The scenes and actions of the day before.

"But not everyone has thought so lightly of dreams—even before the influence of psychoanalysis. Literature of every age expresses people's concern with their dreams; consider Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream of the fat kine and the lean kine, Chaucer's 'Nun's Priest's Tale,' or the wife warning her husband in Tolstoy's 'God Sees the Truth But Waits' not to undertake a journey because she had dreamed his hair turned suddenly white. Then there are Strindberg's *Dream Play* and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, a whole novel expressive of a dream—but the list is virtually endless. Dreams, then, according to some strains of folk opinion, are important, at least sometimes. They are ominous, revelatory, prophetic. If they are shadows, they are fore-shadows and had better not be lightly dismissed, though their meaning may well be ambiguous and obscure like the pronouncements of the oracles.

"Our language employs two other meanings of 'dreaming,' both so common as to require no more than mention. One is 'idle, profitless musing.' Thus Wordsworth's 'Expostulation and Reply':

Why, William, on that old grey stone,
Thus, for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

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"Another common meaning is: 'wishing, hoping, planning.' When Jeannie of the light brown hair is dreamed of, there is present, no doubt, something more wishful than a mere phantasmagoria. The 'coming true' of dreams is a favorite cliche of song writers and advertising copy writers.

"Now, these two latter uses will be noticed to refer especially to daydreams, which differ from sleeping dreams mainly in being somewhat more coherent and certainly under better control from the conscious will of the dreamer; but as the language suggests, the similarity between day and night dreams is more impressive than their differences.

"So far, then, mention has been made of four characteristics commonly attributed to dreams: irrationality or silliness, occasional prophetic quality, idleness as contrasted with 'up and doing,' and wishfulness as contrasted with present reality.

"As everyone knows, one of the distinctive and (to many people) outrageous characteristics of depth psychology is its insistence upon taking dreams seriously. [*Depth psychology* postulates some conception of an unconscious dimension in the self, emphasizes unconscious or hidden motivation and the emotional element in the human being. It stresses especially the *irrationality* of man.] Nevertheless, it by no means contradicts the common-sense notions. It too says that dreams are irrational, prophetic, idle, and wishful; and it goes on to say that however ill dreams conform to the outside world, they arise from and therefore potentially reveal the inside world of the dreamer. The primary assumption is that there is some reason for our dreaming everything we do dream. This reason, though usually not perfectly apparent at first, is discoverable; indeed, in some sense the dreamer knows the meaning of his own dream though it may require a therapist to help him realize explicitly what he knows.

"We must distinguish, Freud tells us, between the surface or manifest plot of the dream and the deeper symbolic latent significance that it almost always has. A child may wish to go on a picnic and then dream of going on a picnic; but the older the child gets, the more complex and involved his dreams become. He begins to employ symbols which are at once richer and more obscure than the child's direct imagery. At the adult's dreamed picnic there may be apples and flowers and ants and swings and lakes, but these things will seem somehow different from their waking selves—and they *are*, because they are not only themselves but are also persons and acts in disguise. Above all, the dreams are the products of our feelings and attitudes, our loves and hates, wishes and fears, confidences and insecurities. A dream may reveal to us emotions that we are unaware of, antipathies which we have never been willing to admit, dreads that we have kept hidden even without trying to, desires that we consider shameful, beneficial courses of action that for some reason we have regarded as impossible.

"The symbols that dreamers employ are not, according to the psychoanalytic theory, entirely understandable without the interpretive help of the dreamer; yet men for some reason dream more nearly alike than might be supposed. Consequently, there are a number of dream symbols which have a nearly constant meaning, however particularized a significance they have in different occurrences. Water, for instance, seems always to have to do with birth, as journeying symbolizes death. And these meanings, it is curious and interesting to note, apparently do not vary much as to time and place. However unlikely it might offhand seem, there are striking similarities in the dreams of a twentieth-century Wall Street broker; his contemporary, a Zuni warrior; and their ancient predecessor, a Persian king. Yet perhaps it is not so strange either; men everywhere and in every time are born, reared, and educated; they work, marry, raise children, and die. Their

bodies are much alike; they share certain basic needs. All of them must relate in a variety of ways to their fellows; all of them love and hate, know fear and hope; have times of joy and times of sorrow. Man, said someone, is the animal who knows he must die. Man, said Aristotle, is the rational animal; but, said Aristotle, he is also vegetative and carnal. And man, as all men know, is a dreamer of dreams. [Plato taught, in the *Republic*, that the "good" (just) man is the man in whom reason sits on the throne and functions to control the emotions and direct the will. He admits, however, that in every man a wild beast is lurking in his interior depths and may break loose if not continually kept in subjection by the reason and the will.]

"Dreams are irrational if by that description is meant that their coherence is a coherence of emotional tone and not, necessarily, of orderly sequence of events and of images matching those of waking perception and of thoughts arranged in syllogistic pattern. Their irrationality, however, is not beyond all understanding. [The chief characteristic of man, said Aristotle, that which marks him off a man, is the range of his moral potential: he is capable either of wallowing in the gutter or walking up among the stars.]

"For instance, dreams may be understood to be prophetic. Not because of their being vehicles of occult omniscience but because they are records of the past and present, which are the seedbed of the future. Take the wonderful case of Pilate's wife. She warned her husband not to deal with Jesus because, she said, 'I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him' (Matthew 27:19). May it not be that her dream showed her something about her own perception of Jesus that she had not before been quite able to acknowledge? The person who had been dreaming of falling down mountain cliffs might be advised to postpone his ascent of F-6, not because the dreams are a glimpse of fate exactly, but because they perhaps reveal a certain fear of the dreamer, a fear which might during a climb contribute to the actualization of the dreams." (The student who may wish to pursue this subject further is advised to make a study of Jung's interesting doctrine of the Collective Unconscious).

As usual, as on other matters of human experience, our great genius, William Shakespeare, has a most significant comment to give us on the subject of dreams, as embodied in Hamlet's famous soliloquy:

"To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep:
No more: and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep:
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. . . ."

* * * * *

Dreams: In The Bible

Dreams, in Biblical terms, may be classified as (1) Vain dreams (Job 20:8, Psa. 73:20, Isa. 29:8); (2) Dreams employed by God in the actualization of His designs in the production of which He works according to the laws of the mind and perhaps always makes use of

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secondary causes. These are (1) designed to affect the spiritual life of specific persons, *e.g.*, the Midianite's dream which was providentially overheard by Gideon and encouraged the latter to his signal victory (Judg. 7:13). The dream of Pilate's wife may have been of this character (Matt. 27:19). (2) Designed to be directive and prophetic when revelation was as yet incomplete. These carried with them, it seems, credentials of their divine origin. We find many of these in Genesis: 20:3, 28:12, 31:10, 31:24; 37:5, 9, 10, 20; 40:5, 41:7, 15, 25, 26. See also 1 Ki. 3:5; Dan. 2:1, 4, 36; 4:1ff., 7:1ff.; Matt. 1:20, 2:12. The power of accurately interpreting prophetic dreams was granted to certain favored people, as to Joseph (Gen. 41:16), and to Daniel (2:25-28, 47). Dreams offered as revelations to the O.T. saints were subjected to tests to determine their character. If they inculcated immoral conduct, they were by that very fact proclaimed false; and any person who sought by such means to lead Israel from the worship of Jehovah was to be put to death (Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:25-32, 29:8; Zech. 10:2).

"The dream is a domain of experience, having an intellectual, ethical, and spiritual significance. Living in an earthly body, we have, as the background of our being, a dim region, out of which our thinking labors forth to the daylight, and in which much goes forward, especially in the condition of sleep, of which we can only come to a knowledge by looking back afterward. Experience confirms to us the assertion of Scripture (Psa. 127:2) that God giveth to his beloved in sleep. Not only many poetical and musical inventions, but, moreover, many scientific solutions and spiritual perceptions, have been conceived and born from the life of genius awakened in sleep. [Students of psychic phenomena are unanimous in our day in affirming that the Subconscious in man is the seat of perfect memory, perfect perception of the fixed laws of nature, and creative imagination. See my *Genesis*, Vol. I, 456-7, 460-465.]

"Another significant aspect of dreaming is the ethical. In the dream one's true nature manifests itself, breaking through the pressure of external relations and the simulation of the waking life. From the selfishness of the soul, its selfish impulses, its restlessness stimulated by selfishness, are formed in the heart all kinds of sinful images, of which the man is ashamed when he awakens, and on account of which remorse sometimes disturbs the dreamer. The Scriptures appear to hold the man responsible, if not for dreaming, at least for the character of the dream (Lev. 15:16, Deut. 23:10).

"A third significant aspect of dreams is the spiritual: they may become the means of a direct and special intercourse of God with man. The witness of conscience may make itself objective and expand within the dream-life into perceptible transactions between God and man. Thus God warned Abimelech (Gen. 20) and Laban (31:24) in a dream, and the wife of Pilate warned her husband against being concerned in the death of the Just One" (Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*, 324ff., quoted, UBD, p. 275). "A good dream" was one of the three things—viz., a good king, a fruitful year, and a good dream—popularly regarded as marks of divine favor; and so general was the belief in the significance that it passed into this popular saying: "If anyone sleeps seven days without dreaming call him wicked" (as being unremembered by God): see again Delitzsch (*ibid.*). "The conviction of the sinfulness and nothingness of man is related by Eliphaz as realized in a dream" (Job 4:12-21).

There are many instances in Scripture of dreams in which the special will of God is revealed to men. (Cf. Gen. 28:12, 31:10-13; 1 Ki. 3:5; Matt. 1:20; Acts 16:9, 18:9, 23:11, 27:28: note that these last were night visions of the Apostle Paul). Waking visions probably

are to be distinguished from prophetic dream visions, which the seer, whether by day or by night (Ezek. 8:1; Dan. 10:7; Acts 7:55; Acts 10:9-16; Acts 16:9, 18:9), receives in a waking state. As we have noted heretofore, dreams of presentiment (premonitions) occur frequently in Scripture (as especially were the dreams that played such an important role in the career of Joseph, Gen., chs. 37:5-11, 40, 41; cf. 42:9). Dreams and visions are said to be two forms of the prophetic revelations of God (Num. 12:6). Still and all, we are warned against putting too much reliance on dreams (Eccl. 5:7). In the pagan world, because dreams were looked upon as communications from the gods, there arose those who professed special ability to interpret them (Magi). These men were not to be heeded if they taught anything contrary to the Law (Deut. 13:1ff., Jer. 27:9). There are instances recorded of God's helping men to understand dreams and the divine truth communicated through them (Gen. 40:5,ff.; 41:7-32; Dan. 2:19ff.; 4:8).

"In common with contemporary peoples the Hebrews sought an explanation of their dream experiences. But in the matter of the interpretation of dreams the Bible distinguishes between the dream-phenomena reported by non-Israelites and by Israelites. Gentiles such as Pharaoh (Gen. 41:15ff.) and his high-ranking officers (40:12ff., 18ff.) require Joseph to explain their dreams, and Nebuchadnezzar needs Daniel (Dan. 2:17ff.). On occasion God Himself speaks and so renders human intervention unnecessary (Gen. 20:8ff., 31:24; Matt. 2:12). But when the members of the covenant community dream, the interpretation accompanies the dream (Gen. 37:5-10; Acts 16:9ff.).

"This subject is important for the Old Testament view of prophecy. Among the Hebrews there was a close association between dreams and the functions of a prophet. The *locus classicus* is Deut. 13:1-5, but 1 Sam. 9:9 remarks that a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer. If 'seer' means a man of visions, then it supports Deut. 13:1, 3, 5, where the prophet is mentioned along with the dreamer without betraying any sense of incongruity. The close connection in Hebrew thought between dreaming and prophesying is again revealed in Jer. 23:25, 32. It is also clear that in the days of Samuel and Saul it was commonly believed that the Lord spoke through dreams as well as by Urim and the prophets (1 Sam. 28:6). However, a revelation through dream phenomena was thought of as being inferior to a revelation that was received by the prophet from the Lord at first hand. This is the conclusion which Num. 12:6-8 forces upon us. Jeremiah uses the same kind of distinction in discrediting the 'revelations' of the false prophets of his own day (23:25, 32). The Word of the Lord which came to the authentic prophet was a hammer and a fire (23:29), whereas a dream-revelation was straw (v. 28)" (See NBD, s.v.).

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3. Joseph as Prime Minister of Egypt (41:46—47:31)

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

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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 laid up grain as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering; for it was without number. 50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-phera priest of On, bare unto him. 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For, said he, God 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 made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. 53 And the seven years of plenty, that was in the land of Egypt, came to an end. 54 And the seven years of famine began to come, according as Joseph had said: and there was famine in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine was sore in the land of Egypt. 57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was sore in all the earth.

42 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is grain 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 grain from Egypt. 4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure harm befall him. 5 And the sons of Israel came to buy among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. 6 And Joseph was the governor over the land; he it was that sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brethren came,

and bowed down themselves to 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 with 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, We 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. 14 And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, We 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 bound, that your words may be proved, whether there be 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 your prison-house; but go ye, carry grain for the famine of your houses: 20 and 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 distress 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? there-

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fore also, behold, his bood is required. 23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for there was an interpreter between them. 24 And he turned himself about from them and wept; and he returned to them, and spake to them, and took Simeon from among them, and bound him before their eyes. 25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their vessels with grain, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provisions for the way: and thus was it done unto them.

26 And they laded their asses with their grain, and departed thence. 27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the lodging-place, he espied his money; and, behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. 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 turned trembling one to another saying, 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 had befallen them, saying, 30 The man, the lord of the land, spake roughly with 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 are twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. 33 And the man, the lord of the land, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men: leave one of your brethren with me, and take grain for the famine of your houses, and go your way; 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 they and their father saw their 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 only is left: if harm befall him by the way in which ye go, then will ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

43 And the famine was sore in the land. 2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain 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 straightly concerning ourselves, and concerning 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 in any wise know that he would say, Bring your brother down? 8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the land 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 we had now returned a second time. 11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it be so now, do this: take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a

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little honey, spicery and myrrh, nuts, and almonds; 12 and take double money in your hand; and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks carry 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 release unto you your other brother and Benjamin. And 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 steward of his house, Bring the men into the house, and slay, and make ready; for the men shall dine with me at noon. 17 And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men to Joseph's house. 18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at 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 spake unto him at the door of the house, 20 and said, Oh, my lord, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: 21 and it came to pass, when we came to the lodging-place, 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 hand to buy food: we know not 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's coming 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 down 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 said, Thy servant our father is well, he is yet alive. And they bowed the head, and made obeisance. 29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin his brother, his mother's son, and said, Is this your youngest brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. 30 And Joseph made baste; for his heart yearned over his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. 31 And he washed his face, and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, Set on bread. 32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, that 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 first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one with 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.

44 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 grain 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

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and their asses. 4 And when they were gone out of the city, and were 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 that in which my lord drinketh, and whereby he indeed divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. 6 And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these words. 7 And they said unto him, Wherefore speaketh my lord such words as these? Far be it from thy servants that they should do such a thing. 8 Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouth, 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, let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondsmen. 10 And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my bondman; and ye shall be blameless. 11 Then they hasted, and took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. 12 And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left off 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; and 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? know ye not that such a man as I can indeed 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 bondmen, both we and he also in whose hand the cup is found. 17 And he said, Far be it from me that I should do so: the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my bondman; but 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, 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 have not seen him since: 29 and if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol. 30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the land's life; 31 it will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. 32 For thy servant became surety for the land unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever. 33 Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up

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

45 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 heard, 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 And now 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 there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive 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 ruler over 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 there are yet five years of famine; lest thou come to poverty, thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast. 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 And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

16 And the report 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 yours.

21 And the sons 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 grain and bread and provision 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 they told him, saying Joseph is yet alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt. And his 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

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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.*

46 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 wagons 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, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's first-born. 9 And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, and Pallu, and Hezron, and Carmi. 10 And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel, and Jamin, and Obab, and Jackin, and Zobah, 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 Perez, and Zerah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 13 And the sons of Issachar: Tola, and Puvah, and Iob, and Shimron. 14 And the sons of Zebulun: Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel. 15 These are the sons of Leah, whom she bare unto Jacob in Paddan-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: Imnah, and Ishvah, and Ishvi, 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, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bare unto him. 21 And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ebi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard. 22 These are the sons of Rachel who 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 Nezer, and Shillem. 25 These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob: all the souls were seven. 26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, that came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; 27 and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him 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 he presented himself unto him, and 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, that thou art yet alive. 31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and tell Pharaoh, and will say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32 and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and

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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 have been keepers of cattle from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

47 Then Joseph went in 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 from among his brethren he took 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 our fathers. 4 And they said unto Pharaoh, To sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for thy servants' 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 thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any able men among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. 7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How many are the days of the years of thy life? 9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. 10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of 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.

13 And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and 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 grain which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15 And when the money was all spent 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 our 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 the horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their cattle for that year. 18 And when that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide from my lord, now that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's; there is nought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: 19 wherefore should 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, and that the land be not desolate.

20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine was sore upon them: and the land became Pharaoh's. 21 And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof. 22 Only the land of the priests bought he not: for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and

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did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore they sold not their land. 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 at the ingatherings, that ye shall give a fifth 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 of your little ones.* 25 *And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.* 26 *And Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests alone became not Pharaoh's.*

27 *And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they gat them possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly.* 28 *And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were a hundred forty and seven years.* 29 *And the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found favor 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 when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place.* 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) *Joseph's Administration* (41:46-57). For the first seven years of his administration Joseph went throughout Egypt and gathered up the produce of the land that was needed to preserve the nation in the period of famine that was to follow. "All the food of the land," v. 48, "a general expression that must be viewed as limited to the proportion of one-fifth of the crop (v. 34). It gives a

striking idea of the exuberant fertility of this land, that, from the superabundance of the seven plenteous years, corn [grain] enough was laid up for the subsistence, not only of its home population, but of the neighboring countries, during the seven years of dearth" (Jamieson). The Oriental hyperbole here must be understood as actualized in the form of a royal impost: the ordinary royal impost appears to have been a land tax of one-tenth; hence this was a *double tithe*. (It must be noted that Joseph was thirty years of age when he entered upon the office of Vizier of Egypt. Note v. 38, in which the Pharaoh spoke of Joseph as "*a man in whom the spirit of God is.*" that is, "the spirit of supernatural insight and wisdom." Evidently Joseph had been in Egypt thirteen years as a slave, and at least had spent at least three years in prison, after ten years in Potiphar's house. "This promotion of Joseph, from the position of a Hebrew slave pining in prison to the highest post of honor in the Egyptian kingdom, is perfectly conceivable, on the one hand, from the great importance attached in ancient times to the interpretation of dreams and to all occult sciences, especially among the Egyptians, and on the other hand, from the despotic form of government in the East; but the miraculous power of God is to be seen in the fact, that God endowed Joseph with the gift of infallible interpretation, and so ordered the circumstances that this gift paved the way for him to occupy that position in which he became the preserver, not of Egypt alone, but of his own family. And the same hand of God, by which he had been so highly exalted after deep degradation, preserved him in his lofty post of honor from sinking into the heathenism of Egypt; although, by his alliance with the daughter of a priest of the sun, the most distinguished caste in the land, he had fully entered into the national associations and customs of the land" (K-D, 352). "How gloriously does God compensate

to go with them, lest some calamity befall him as he believed had occurred to Joseph. Imagine Joseph's surprise when, in receiving the various delegations, he discovered *his own brothers* bowing down to him "*with their faces to the earth.*" "At least twenty years had passed before Joseph's boyhood dreams were fulfilled. He first dreamed when seventeen years of age (37:2). He appeared before Pharaoh thirteen years later (41:46). The seven years of plenty followed. Then came the years of famine. This meant that his brothers had not seen him for at least twenty years. He knew them, but they were unable to recognize him in his new role of splendor and authority" (HSB, 67). Joseph received them harshly, first accusing them of being spies, that is, of hunting out the unfortified parts of the kingdom that would be easily accessible to a foe. When they explained who they were, protesting they were not spies but servants, Joseph put them into custody for three days. Relenting, however, at the end of this time, he released them, demanding that one of the group remain in prison, but allowing the other nine to return home with grain for their families. He retained Simeon in custody, as a pledge that they should return with their younger brother, a procedure which he demanded in order that it might be proved that they were not spies. (We can hardly think that this charge of "spying" was completely out of line with the facts in the case. What evidence did Joseph have as yet that these brothers had abandoned any of their disposition to deceive?) He had Simeon bound before their eyes, to be detained as a hostage (not Reuben—for he had overheard Reuben reminding them of his attempt to dissuade them from killing him, a disclosure which must have opened Joseph's eyes and fairly melted his heart—but Simeon the next in age). He then ordered his men to fill their sacks with corn, to give each one back his money putting it in his sack, and providing them with food for

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the journey. Vv. 26-38: Thus they started home with their asses laden with the corn. When they reached their first halting-place for the night, one of them opened his sack to feed his beast and found his money in it. The brothers looked on this as incomprehensible except as a divine punishment, and neglected in their alarm to look into the rest of the sacks. On their arrival at home, they told their father Jacob all that had happened. But when they emptied their sacks, and to their own and their father's terror, found their bundles of money in their separate sacks, Jacob burst out with recriminations, '*You are making me childless! Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone, and ye will take Benjamin! All this falls on me!*' Reuben then offered his own two sons as pledges for Benjamin's safe return, if Jacob would entrust him to his care: Jacob might slay them, if he did not bring Benjamin back—about the costliest offer a son could make to a father. But Jacob refused to let Benjamin go.

(3) *Second Visit of Joseph's Brothers* (43:1—45:28). Famine at last compelled Jacob to yield and to send Benjamin with his older brothers to Egypt to buy corn; however, the old man strictly charged his sons to propitiate the Egyptian ruler by presents and to take double money, lest that which they had discovered in their sacks should have been placed there inadvertently. On their arrival in Egypt, Joseph ordered his steward to take them to his house and make ready the noonday meal. The brothers were now frightened, and on reaching the house they explained to the steward the restoration of their money, but he replied that he had received it, and must have been their God who restored it; he further reassured them by bringing out Simeon. Joseph soon followed his brethren and the meal was served, but Joseph sat at one table, his brethren at another, and the Egyptians at a third, "as shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians." The brothers were entertained liberally, but were surprised at

finding themselves placed at their table exactly in the order of their ages, and that Joseph sent a fivefold portion to Benjamin. The next morning they left the city, but Joseph had first commanded his steward to restore the money as before, and to place his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. They had not, therefore, proceeded far before the steward overtook them and charged them with robbery. They immediately protested their innocence, challenged investigation, and invoked death on the man who would be found guilty. But the cup was found with Benjamin, and the distressed brothers were compelled to return to Joseph. Judah now made to the supposed Egyptian ruler a touching relation of the disappearance of Joseph, and of Jacob's special affection for Benjamin; and then, after stating that the death of their aged father would certainly follow the detention of his beloved young son, he offered to abide himself as bondman if the lad were permitted to return. Joseph now understood so many things he had not understood before, e.g., how it was that, as he thought, his father had forgotten him, how that the brothers had paid for their deception, what Reuben had done to try to save him, what Judah had done later to save him from being killed, etc. Everything began to fall into a mosaic of Divine Providence. Joseph could refrain no longer from disclosing his identity. He told the brothers that the one whom they had sold for a slave had become the Vizier of Egypt, and that he now realized that God had used these means of bringing him into this position in order that he might save his household from famine. He assured them of his hearty forgiveness, and invited both them and their father to settle in Egypt during the remaining years of famine. The invitation was seconded by the Pharaoh, and wagons, and changes of raiment, and asses laden with provisions were sent by the king and Joseph for the accommodation of the children of Israel. (The story of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers is another of those

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"human interest" stories the like of which is found only in the Bible). Thus the stage was set for the period of bondage, the glorious deliverance under Moses, and the final occupancy of the Land of Promise, just as all this had been foretold to Abraham long before (Gen. 15:12-16). Joseph's realization came at last that his humiliation and exaltation had been the work of Providence looking toward the saving of Israel (as a people) for their great mission, that of preserving belief in the living and true God, that of preparing the world for Messiah, and that of presenting Messiah to the world (Gen. 45:5-8).

(4) *The Israelites Migrate to Egypt* (46:1—47:12). When the brothers returned from Egypt the second time, the venerable father Jacob could hardly believe their report. But when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to move him and his house, he cried: "*It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive: I will go and see him before I die.*" Accordingly he set out on the journey. The brothers doubtless had told him of their treatment of Joseph, but Jacob could readily forgive them now that he knew Joseph was alive. Jacob's early life had been one of deceit; he had, in turn been deceived himself; now, however, he could look forward to seeing his beloved Joseph once more. At Beersheba, he offered sacrifices. "*And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night;*" telling him to go on down into Egypt, promising to make of him a great nation, promising to go down with him and bring him out again (that is, He would surely recover his body for interment in Canaan, should he die in Egypt, and his descendants for settlement in the land of their inheritance); and promising that Joseph "should put his hand upon his [father's] eyes" (that is, perform the last offices of affection by closing his eyes in death, a service upon which the human heart in all ages has set the highest value (cf. PCG, 501)). So Jacob and his retinue arrived in Egypt, with his sixty-four sons and grandsons, one daughter,

Dinah, and one granddaughter, Sarah, numbering in all sixty-six persons (46:26). These, with Jacob himself, and Joseph and Joseph's two sons, made seventy persons (v. 27); while the sixty-six persons, with his nine sons' wives, made the seventy-five persons mentioned in Acts 7:14. The following table will make this clear (from OTH, 122-123):

The children of Leah, 32, viz.,

1.	Reuben and four sons	5
2.	Simeon and six sons	7
3.	Levi and three sons	4
4.	Judah and five sons (of whom two were dead) and two grandsons	6
5.	Issachar and four sons	5
6.	Zebulun and three sons	4
	Dinah	1

The children of Zilpah, considered as Leah's,

16, viz.,

7.	Gad and seven sons	8
8.	Asher: four sons, one daughter, and two grandsons	8

The children of Rachel, 14, viz.,

9.	Joseph (see below)	
10.	Benjamin and ten sons	11

The children of Bilhah, considered as

Rachel's, 7, viz.,

11.	Dan and one son	2
12.	Naphtali and four sons	5

Total of those "who came with Jacob

into Egypt" 66

To these must be added Jacob, Joseph,

and his two sons 4

Total of Israel's house 70

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Benjamin's sons are evidently added to complete the second generation, for Benjamin was only 25 years old, and the tone of the whole narrative is scarcely consistent with his yet having a family.

Upon their arrival in Egypt, Joseph, after a most affecting reunion with his father, presented five of his brothers to the Pharaoh; and the king, on being informed that they were shepherds, a class held in abomination by the Egyptians, we are told, gave them for their separate abode the land of Goshen or Rameses (47:6, 11), which was the best pasture land in Egypt, and intrusted to them his own flocks, while Joseph supplied them with bread during the remaining five years of famine. That they were tillers of the land as well as shepherds is clear from their being employed "*in all manner of service in the field*" (Exo. 1:14), and from the allusion of Moses to "*Egypt, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it*" (Deut. 11:10).

(5) *Economic Policies of Joseph During the Famine* (47:13-27). In contrast to the happy condition of Joseph's father and brothers in the land of Goshen, the Biblical record next depicts the state of privation in Egypt. In need of food, the Egyptians presented themselves to Joseph to explain their plight. On the first such occasion, Joseph purchased their cattle, allowing them "bread" in exchange for horses, flocks, herds, and asses. When the Egyptians presented themselves a second time, they had nothing to exchange for food except their lands. Thereupon Joseph secured the lands of the Egyptian people for Pharaoh, because they received an allotment of food at Pharaoh's expense. This introduced the feudal system into Egypt: the system of land tenure. Seed was allotted to the Egyptians on condition that one-fifth of the produce land would revert to Pharaoh. "Although this act of Joseph involved a measure of humiliation, including the surrender of lands to the state, it made possible

a strong central government which could take measures to prevent famines. The life of Egypt depends upon the Nile, and all the inhabitants of the Nile Valley must co-operate if the water is to be used efficiently. The government was in a position to regulate the use of Nile water and also to begin a system of artificial irrigation by means of canals which could carry the waters of the river to otherwise inaccessible areas. Joseph's economic policy is described with no hint as to either approval or censure. Some have thought that Joseph drove a 'hard bargain' and took advantage of the conditions to enhance the power of the throne. That the emergency resulted in a centralization of authority is clear. There is no hint that Joseph, personally, profited from the situation, however. On the contrary, the people said to Joseph, '*Thou hast saved our lives*' (47:25). Many, doubtless, resented the necessity of being moved, but in famine conditions it was necessary to bring the population to the store-cities where food was available. Convenience must be forgotten in a life-and-death situation such as Egypt faced. Joseph thus destroyed the free proprietors and made the king the lord-paramount of the soil, while the people became the hereditary tenants of their sovereign, and paid a fifth of their annual produce as rent for the soil they occupied. The priests alone retained their estates through this trying period" (Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis*, 98-99). The 'tax' of a fifth of the produce of the fields was not excessive according to ancient standards, we are told. In the time of the Maccabees the Jews paid the Syrian government one-third of the seed (1 Mac. 10:30). Egyptologists inform us that large landed estates were owned by the nobility and the governors of the nomes ("states") during the Old Empire period (c. 3000-1900 B.C.). By the New Kingdom (after 1550 B.C.) power was centralized in the person of the Pharaoh. It would appear that Joseph, as Prime Minister, was instrumental in hastening

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this development. There is no doubt that Egypt was, during the most of the last two millenia of her existence, essentially a feudal state in which the nobility flourished and slaves did all the work. "At the end of two years (see Gen. 45:6) all the money of the Egyptians and Canaanites had passed into the Pharaoh's territory (Gen. 47:14). At this crisis we do not see how Joseph can be acquitted of raising the despotic authority of his master on the broken fortunes of the people; but yet he made a moderate settlement of the power thus acquired. First the cattle and then the land of the Egyptians became the property of the Pharaoh, and the people were removed from the country to the cities. They were still permitted, however, to cultivate their lands as tenants under the crown, paying a rent of one-fifth of the produce, and this became the permanent law of the tenure of land in Egypt; but the land of the priests was left in their own possession (Gen. 47:15-26) (OTH, 121). It is a well-known fact also that in those ancient times Jewish men were sought as mercenary soldiers by the nations which were vying for hegemony in the area of the Fertile Crescent. This fact does not make the career of Joseph in Egypt an anomaly at all.

The Land of Goshen, or simply Goshen, was evidently known also as "the land of Rameses" (Gen. 47:11), unless, of course, this latter may have been the name of a district in Goshen. Goshen was between Joseph's residence at the time and the frontier of Palestine. Apparently it was the extreme province toward the frontier (46:29). The reading of Gen. 46:33, 34, indicates that Goshen was hardly regarded as a part of Egypt proper and that it was not peopled by Egyptians—characteristics that would indicate a frontier region. The next mention of Goshen confirms the previous inference that it lay between Canaan and the Delta (47:1, 5, 6, 11). It was evidently a pastoral country, where some of the Pharaoh's cattle were kept. The

clearest indications of the exact location of Goshen are found in the story of the Exodus. The Israelites set out from the town of Raamses (or Rameses) in the land of Goshen, made two days' journey to the "edge of the wilderness," and in one additional day reached the Red Sea. "This was a very fertile section of Egypt, excellent for grazing and certain types of agriculture, but apparently not particularly inviting to the pharaohs because of its distance from the Nile irrigation canals. It extends thirty or forty miles in length centering in Wadi Lumilat and reaches from Lake Timsa to the Nile. It was connected with the name of Rameses because Rameses II. (c. 1290-1224 B.C.) built extensively in this location at Pithom (Tell er Retabeh) and Rameses (or Raamses) (Zoan-Avaris-Tanis). Tanis was called the House of Rameses (c. 1300-1100 B.C.)" (See Exo. 1:11, 12:37; cf. UBD, s.v., p. 420).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

*Analogy: Joseph and Christ
(Genesis 37:1-28)*

We often wonder why incidents occurred as they did in the lives of the patriarchs; why the ark was builded by Noah, of gopher wood throughout, three stories high, with one door, and with one window in the top; why Isaac was born out of due season, figuratively offered and resurrected on Moriah; why Jacob went into a far country and labored for his bride; why Joseph was hated of his brethren and sold into Egyptian slavery; and so on. But when we find the answer in the fact that God, in these various happenings, was setting up types of Christ and the Church; and that the minutest of details often had a typical significance, we exclaim with Paul. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!", Rom. 11:33-36. We will find many typical references, in the life of Joseph, to the life of Christ.

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1. Joseph was much beloved by his father, Gen. 37:3-4.
2. Joseph was sent unto his brethren, who hated and rejected him, Gen. 37:12-22, Gen. 37:4.
3. Sold to the enemy for twenty pieces of silver, Gen. 37:23-28, by his brethren.
4. Joseph wore a "coat of many colors." After his betrayal, this coat was dipped in the blood of a kid, and returned to his father, Gen. 37:31-35.
5. Joseph was condemned and numbered among transgressors for no sin of his own, Gen. 39. His humiliation.
6. Joseph raised from his humiliation to exaltation, to a position of great advantage to his people, 41:41, especially 45:4-8.
1. Jesus was the beloved Son of the Heavenly Father, Matt. 3:17, 17:5, II Pet. 1:17-18, John 3:16. This is brought out by the intimate relationship between the Father and Son, John 10:29-30, 17:1-5.
2. Jesus was sent unto His people, but was hated, and rejected by them, Matt. 10:5-7, John 1:10-11, Matt. 23:37-39, Acts 2:38-36, 4:11.
3. Sold by one of His apostles, to his enemies, for thirty pieces of silver, Zech. 11:13, Matt. 26:14-15, 47-49, 27:3-5.
4. Jesus bore "the sins of many" upon His own body, "upon the tree," Heb. 9:28, I Pet. 2:21-24. On Calvary, the "sins of many" were dipped in His own precious blood, or whatever was lost by the first Adam was unconditionally regained by the second, Rom. 3:24-25, v. 18, I John 1:7, 2:2, Heb. 10:11-12. We meet this blood in the grave of water, John 19:34, Eph. 5:26, Tit. 3:5. The outward washing of the body in water is a figure of the inward cleansing of the soul by His blood according to divine appointment, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38.
5. Jesus was condemned with two malefactors of the civil law, although without personal sin, Isa. 53:12, Mark 15:25-28, John 8:46, Heb. 4:15, 7:26-28, I Pet. 2:22, I John 3:5. "A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief," Isa. 53:1-5, Luke 22:44, John 11:38-35, Heb. 2:10.
6. Christ rose in his exaltation to "the right hand of His Majesty on high," where He is today, acting as our Great High Priest, the Mediator between His people and the Father, Acts 2:36, Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 1:1-4, 8:1-2, 4:14-16, Rev. 19:16.

At this point, the typical relationship between Joseph and Christ is apparently lost. We can see the hand of God in the life story of Joseph. The Messianic hope,

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indeed the world's salvation, was tied up in the children of Israel, the chosen people of God. And at this time a famine drove Jacob and his sons into Egypt until such time as they were able to reoccupy their land. How clearly the divine hand is seen in making possible Joseph's exaltation, that his brethren might not perish, and his people might not be exterminated!

Again, there is something beautifully suggestive of the spirit of Christ in Joseph's forgiveness of his brethren, and their subsequent reconciliation! Although, in envy and hate, they had sold him into slavery, he lived to comfort them in God's providence. Said he to them, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance," Gen. 14:7. Does not this breathe the spirit of Him who prayed, even for His enemies who were crucifying him in jealous rage, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"? Luke 23:34. From the Cross, O sinner, He pleads with you to come and be washed in His own precious blood.

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Divine Providence: Joseph

A sermon delivered August 20, 1893, by J. W. McGarvey. Originally published by the Standard Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, in *McGarvey's Sermons*, here reprinted verbatim.

I will read verses four to eight in the forty-fifth chapter of Genesis:

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

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The story of Joseph is one of those undying narratives which have been of deepest interest to all readers for more than three thousand years, and will be to the end of time. It is interesting to children, to simple-minded people who understand it the least; and it is still more interesting to profound scholars, who understand it the best. (1) It occupies a larger space in the Old Testament than any other personal narrative, except that of Abraham; and have you never wondered why this simple story was allowed so much space? (2) Whether there was any design in it beyond that of entertaining and interesting the reader, as a novel or a fine poem entertains and interests us? (3) And have you never, in studying the story, wondered why Joseph, after he became governor over Egypt and had command of his own time, spent the whole seven years of plenty and two years of famine without going to see his father, who lived only two hundred miles away over a smooth road? And finally, has not the question occurred to you, Why did God select to be the heads of ten of the twelve tribes of His own people, ten men who were so cruel, so inhuman as to take their seventeen year old brother and sell him into bondage in a foreign land? The task that I have undertaken in the discourse this morning, will be to give, as well as I can, an answer to these three questions, and in doing so, to point out a striking example of the providence of God.

In regard to the design of allowing this story to occupy so much space, I think I may safely say that there is nothing recorded in this Holy Book, which has no higher purpose than to entertain and interest the reader. There is always in the divine mind something beyond and higher than that. If you will read a little further back in the book of Genesis, you will find that on a certain occasion, God, after having promised Abraham again and again that he should have offspring who would inherit the land of Canaan as their possession, commanded him one day to

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slaughter some animals and lay them in two rows. He did so, and seeing that the birds of prey were gathering to devour them, he stood guard and drove them away until night came, and they went to roost. Then he also fell asleep, and "a horror of great darkness" fell upon him. I suppose it was a terrible nightmare. He then heard the voice of God saying to him, "Thy seed shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they shall be afflicted four hundred years. After that, I will judge the nation by whom they shall be afflicted, and bring them out, and bring them into this land, and give it to them as an inheritance." [Gen. 15:12-16]. From these solemn words, Abraham now knows that it is to be four hundred years, and more, before his people will inherit this promised land, and that they shall pass, in the meantime, through four hundred years of bondage and fearful affliction; but that then the good word of the Lord will be fulfilled. It gave him a totally different view of those promises, from that which he had entertained before.

We learn by the subsequent history, that Abraham never did learn that the foreign land in which his people were to be bondmen was Egypt; and that a removal of his posterity to that land was necessary to the fulfillment of Jehovah's words. He lived and died, however, in Canaan. His son Isaac lived one hundred and eighty years, and died and left his children, his servants and his flocks and herds, still in Canaan. Jacob, although he had spent forty years in Paddan-Aram, still lived in Canaan with his twelve sons and his flocks and herds; and up to the very hour when his sons came back from Egypt the second time, and said, "Joseph is alive, and is governor over all Egypt," and he saw a long line of wagons coming up and bringing the warm invitation of Pharaoh and Joseph to hasten down and make their home in Egypt—up to that hour he had never entertained the idea of migrating to Egypt. He as little thought of it as we do of migrating

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to the moon. What then was it that brought about, after so many years, that migration of the descendants of Abraham into Egypt, and led to the four hundred years of bondage? You are ready to answer, that the immediate cause of it was the fact that Joseph, the son of Jacob, was now governor over all Egypt, and wanted his father and his brothers to be with him. That is true. But, how had Joseph happened to be governor over all the land of Egypt? You say, the immediate cause of it was, that when he predicted the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine, he proposed to the king that a man be selected to go out and gather up grain during the years of plenty, to save the people from starving in the years of famine; and that Pharaoh had the good sense to accept the proposal, and to appoint Joseph governor. But then, how is it that Joseph predicted that famine? You say it was the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream and so it was. But how did he happen to interpret that dream? You say, because all the magicians of Egypt had been called on to interpret it, and had failed. They not only could not see the real meaning of it, but they did not venture a supposition as to what it meant. A dream in which a man saw fat cows coming up out of a river! The idea of cows coming up out of a river! And then, other cows, lean cows, coming up out of the same river, and devouring these fat cows, and looking just as lean and thin as they were before! Why, that went outside all the rules for interpreting dreams that the dream interpreters of that age had invented; and they could not give the remotest suggestion as to what it meant. The failure of the magicians then, was one necessary cause of Joseph's being called on to interpret the dream. And then, how did Joseph happen to be called on? If that butler had not forgotten his promise to Joseph, made two years before, to speak to the king and have Joseph released out of an imprisonment which was unjust, Joseph would have been

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released most likely, and might have been anywhere else by this time than in the land of Egypt. The forgetfulness of the butler, who forgot his friend when it was well with himself, was a necessary link in the chain. He says, when all the magicians had failed, "I remember now my fault"; and he told the king about a young Hebrew whom he met in prison, who interpreted his dream and the baker's, and both came to pass; "Me he restored to my office, and the chief baker he hanged." The king immediately sent for Joseph. But how did he happen to interpret the dreams of the butler and the baker? That depended upon their having the dreams, and upon their having those dreams in the prison, and upon Joseph being the man who had charge of the prisoners, and who, coming in and finding the two great officers of the king looking very sad, asked what was the matter. But how did Joseph happen to have the control of the prisoners, so as to have access to these officers? Why, that depended upon the fact that he had behaved himself so well in prison as to win the confidence of the keeper of the jail, and had been promoted, until the management of the whole prison was placed in his hands. Well, how did Joseph happen to be in prison? Why, you will say that the wife of Potiphar made a false accusation against him. But have you not wondered why Potiphar did not kill him? An average Kentuckian would have done it "instanter." I think it depended upon the fact that Potiphar knew his wife well and knew Joseph well, and had about as much confidence in Joseph's denial as in her accusation. And how did it happen that she had a chance to bring such accusations against Joseph? Because Joseph had won the confidence of his master as a young slave, till he had made him supreme director of everything inside of his house. He had access to every apartment, and provided for his master's table, so that the text tells us there was nothing inside his house that Potiphar knew of, except the food

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on his table. It was this that gave the opportunity to the bad woman. But then I ask further, How did Joseph happen to be there a house-boy in the house of Potiphar? Well, he bought him. He wanted a house-boy, and went down to the slave market, and found him there and bought him. How did Joseph happen to be in the slave market? Because his brothers sold him. But suppose he had never been sold into Egypt! Would he ever have interpreted dreams? Would he ever have been governor of Egypt? Would he ever have sent for his father and brothers to come down there? But how did he happen to be sold as a slave? If those traders had been fifteen minutes later passing along, Reuben would have taken the boy up and let him loose, and he would have gone back to his father. Everything depended on that. But how did he happen to be in that pit from which Reuben was going to deliver him? You say, they saw him coming from home to the place where they were grazing their flocks, and they remembered those dreams. They said, "Behold, the dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, let us slay him and cast him into one of the pits." Then they would see what would become of his dreams. Dissuaded by Reuben from killing him outright, they put him in a pit to die. It was their jealousy that caused them to put him into the pit. But then, how is it that those dreams had excited their jealousy to such a pitch? I do not suppose that they would, if they had not already been jealous because of the coat of many colors. Now we have traced these causes back from one to the other, back, back, back, till we have reached the source of all in the partiality of the old father in giving the coat of many colors. And brethren, let me say here by way of digression, that the history of many a family trouble, with its trials and alienations and distresses, running sometimes through generations, is traceable to jealousy springing from parental partiality. But now, every one of these causes that I have mentioned

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stands like a link in the long chain by which God, having determined that these Hebrews should dwell in Egypt for four hundred years, after predicting it two hundred years before, draws them down where He wants them to be.

And what are the links in this chain? Some of them are desperately wicked deeds; some of them are good deeds. The fidelity of Joseph; sold to be a slave, but evidently saying within himself, "As I have to be the slave of this man, I will be the best slave he has. I will be the most faithful one. I will win his confidence. I will do my duty like a man." And thus he rises. And then the same kind of fidelity when he is cast into prison: "As I have to be in prison, I will be the best prisoner in this jail. I will do what I ought to do here in the fear of my God." Thus he rises to the top again; illustrating the fact, and I wish I had young men in abundance to speak this to—that a young man who has true character, unfaltering fidelity, and some degree of energy and ability, can not be kept down in this world. You may put him down, but he will rise again. You may put him down again and again; but he will come up. A young man like that, is like a cork; you may press it under the water, but it will soon pop up again. Oh that the young men of our country had such integrity, such power to resist temptation, such resolution and perseverance, as this Jewish youth had.

So then, this long story is told as an illustration of the providence of God, by which He can bring about His purposes without the intervention of miraculous power except here and there; for in all this long chain of causes God touched the links only twice, directly: once, when He gave power to Joseph to interpret the dreams of the butler and the baker, and once when He gave him power to interpret the dream of Pharaoh. Just those two instances in which the finger of God touched the chain; all the rest were the most natural things in the world, and

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they brought about God's design just as effectively as though He had wrought one great miracle to translate Jacob and his children through the air, and plant them on the soil of Egypt. The man who studies the story of Joseph and does not see this in it, has failed to see one of its great purposes. And what is true in bringing about this result in the family of Jacob, may be true—I venture to say, it is true—in regard to every family of any importance in this world; and it extends down to the modes by which God overrules our own acts, both good and bad, and those of our friends, and brings us out at the end of our lives shaped and molded as he desires we shall be.

Now let us look for a moment at the second question. Why did Joseph not go and see his father and his brothers during the nine years in which he could have gone almost any day? I think that when we reach the answer we will see another and perhaps a more valuable illustration of the providence of God. In order to understand the motives which actuate men under given circumstances, we must put ourselves in their places and judge of them by the way that we would ourselves feel and act; for human nature is the same the wide world over, and in all the different nations of men. Suppose then, that you were a boy of seventeen. Your brothers have all been away from home, sixty or seventy miles, with the flocks, until your father has become anxious about them, and sends you up to see how they do. You go, as Joseph did, but you fail to find them. While you search you meet a stranger who tells you they are gone to Dothan, fourteen or fifteen miles farther away. With this news Joseph continued his journey, and how his heart leaped at last to see his brothers again! How glad a welcome he expected from them and inquiries about home, and father, and all. But when he came up, he saw a scowl upon every face. Instead of welcoming, they seized him, and with rough hands stripped the coat from his back, draggled

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him to the mouth of a dry cistern, and let him down in it. "Now we will see what will become of his dreams."

How did the boy then feel? I have thought that perhaps he said to himself, "My brothers are only trying to scare me. They are just playing a cruel joke on me, and don't mean to leave me here to perish." But perhaps he had begun to think they were in earnest, when he heard footsteps above, and voices. He sees one of their faces looking down, and a rope let down to draw him up, and he thinks the cruel joke is over. But when he is drawn up and sees those strangers there, and hears words about the sale of the boy, and his hands are tied behind him, and he is delivered into their hands, and they start off with him, what would you have thought or felt then? If the thought had come into his mind that it was another joke, he might have watched as the merchants passed down the road, on every rising piece of ground he might have looked back to see if his brothers were coming to buy him back again, and to get through with this terrible joke; but when the whole day's journey was passed, and they went into camp at night, and the same the next day, no brothers have overtaken him, what must have been his feelings? When he thought, "I am a slave, and I am being carried away into a foreign land to spend the rest of my life as a slave, never to see father and home again," who can imagine his feelings? So he was brought down into Egypt and sold.

But it seems to me that Joseph must have had one thought to bear him up, at least for a time. "My father loves me. He loves me more than he does all my brothers. He is a rich man. When he hears that I have been sold into Egypt, he will send one hundred men, if need be, to hunt me up; he will load them with money to buy me back. I trust in my father for deliverance yet. But he is sold into the house of Pharaoh, and years pass by. He is cruelly cast into prison, and years pass by, until thirteen

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long years of darkness and gloom and sorrow and pain have gone, and he has never heard of his father sending for him. He could have done it. It would have been easy to do. And now, how does he feel toward his brothers and toward his father? Would you have wanted to see those brothers again? And when he found his father had never sent for him, knowing, perhaps, how penurious and avaricious his father had been in his younger days, may he not have said, "The old avaricious spirit of my father has come back on him in his declining years, and he loves his money more than he loves his boy?" And when that feeling took possession of him, did he want to see his father anymore? Or any of them? Could he bear the thought of ever seeing those brothers again? And could he at last bear the thought of seeing that father who had allowed him to perish, as it were, without stretching out a hand to help him? The way he did feel is seen in one little circumstance. When he was married and his first-born son was placed before him, he named him Manasseh, "forgetfulness," "Because," he says, "God has enabled me to forget my father's house." The remembrance of home and brothers and father had been a source of constant pain to him; he never could think of them without agony of heart; but now, "Thank God, I have forgotten them." Oh, brethren, what a terrible experience a boy must have before he feels a sense of relief and gladness that he has been enabled to forget all about his father and his brothers in his early home! That is the way Joseph felt when Manasseh was born. And would not you have felt so, too?

Everything was going on more pleasantly than he thought it ever could, with him—riches, honor, wife, children: everything that could delight the heart of a wise and good man—when suddenly, one day his steward comes in and tells him that there are ten foreigners who desire to buy some grain. He had a rule that all foreigners

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must be brought before him before they were allowed to buy grain. Bring them in. They were brought in, and behold, there are his brothers! There are his brothers! And as they approach, they bow down before him. Of course, they could not recognize him, dressed in the Egyptian style—governor of Egypt. Even if he had looked like Joseph, it would only have been a strange thing with them to say, He resembles our brother Joseph. There they are. It was a surprising sight to him and a painful one. He instantly determines to treat them in such a way that they will never come back to Egypt again. He says, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." "No," they say, "we are come to buy food; we are all the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. We are twelve brothers. The youngest is with our father, and one is not."

That remark about the youngest awakened a new thought in Joseph. Oh how it brought back the sad hour when his own mother, dying on the way that they were journeying, left that little Benjamin, his only full brother, in the hands of the weeping father! And how it reminded him, that when he was sold, Benjamin was a little lad at home. He is my own mother's child. Instantly he resolves that Benjamin shall be here with him in Egypt, and that these others shall be scared away, so that they will never come back again; so he says, "Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; that your words may be proved, or else by the life of Pharaoh ye are spies." He cast them all into prison; but on the third day he went to them and said: "I fear God; if ye be true men let one of you be bound in prison, and let the others go and carry food for your houses; and bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die." When he said that, they began to confess to one another their belief about the providential cause of this distress, when Reuben made a speech that brought a revela-

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tion to Joseph. He said to his brethren, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear. Therefore, behold his blood is required." Joseph learns for the first time that Reuben had befriended him, and this so touched his heart that he turned aside to weep. He passes by Reuben and takes the *next* to the oldest for the prisoner.

He now gave the directions to his steward to sell them the grain; and why did he order the money to be tied up in the mouth of every man's sack? "They were once so mean and avaricious that they sold me for fifteen petty pieces of silver. I will put their silver in the mouths of their sacks, and I will see if they are as dishonest as they were then. If they are, I will never hear of that money again." Not many merchants in these days, if you go in and buy ten dollars' worth of goods, will wrap the ten dollars in the bundle to see if it will come back. "I will see," thought Joseph, "if they are honest."

Time went on—a good deal more than Joseph expected, on account of the unwillingness of Jacob to let Benjamin make the journey. But finally the news is brought that these ten Canaanites have returned. They are brought once more into his presence, and there is Benjamin. They still call him the "little one" and "the lad"; just as I have had mothers to introduce me to "the baby," and the baby would be a strapping fellow six feet high. There he is. "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke?" He waits not for an answer, but exclaims, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." He slips away into another room to weep. How near he is now to carrying out his plan—to having that dear brother, who had never harmed him, to enjoy his honors and riches and glory, and get rid of the others. He has them to dine in his house. That scared them. To dine with the governor! They could not conceive what it meant. Joseph knew. He had his plan formed. He wanted them there to give

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them a chance to steal something out of the dining-room. They enjoyed the dinner. They had never seen before so rich a table. He says to the steward, "Fill the men's sacks with food; put every man's money in his sack's mouth, and put my silver cup in the sack's mouth of the youngest." It was done, and at daylight next morning they were on their journey home. They were not far on the way when the steward overtook them, with the demand, "Why have ye rewarded evil for good? Is it not this in which my Lord drinketh, and wherewith he drivineth? Ye have done evil in so doing." They answered, "God forbid that thy servants should do such a thing. Search, and if it be found with any one of us, let him die, and the rest of us will be your bondmen." "No," says the steward, "he with whom it is found shall be my bondman, and ye shall be blameless." He begins his search with Reuben's sack. It is not there. Then one by one he takes down the sacks of the others, until he reaches Benjamin's. There is the cup! They all rend their clothes; and when the steward starts back with Benjamin, they follow him. They are frightened almost to death, but the steward can not get rid of them. Joseph was on the lookout for the steward and Benjamin. Yonder they come, but behind them are all the ten. What shall now be done? They come in and fall down before him once more, and say, "We are thy bondmen. God has found out our iniquity." "No," he says, "the man in whose hand the cup is found shall be my bondman; but as for you, get you up in peace to your father."

Joseph thought that his plan was a success. They will be glad to go in peace. I will soon have it all right with Benjamin. They will hereafter send somebody else to buy their grain. But Judah arose, drew near, and begged the privilege of speaking a word. He recites the incidents of their first visit, and speaks of the difficulty with which they had induced their father to let Ben-

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jamin come. He quotes from his father these words: "Ye know that my wife bore me two sons; one of them went out from me, and I said surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since. If ye take this one also from me and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." He closes with the proposal, "Let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren." Here was a revelation to Joseph—two of them. First, I have been blaming my old father for these twenty-two years because he did not send down into Egypt and hunt me up, and buy me out, and take me home; and now I see I have been blaming him unjustly, for he thought I was dead—that some wild beast had torn me in pieces. O what self-reproach, and what a revival of love for his old father! And here, again, I have been trying to drive these brothers away from me, as unworthy of any countenance on my part, or even an acquaintance with them; but what a change has come over them! The very men that once sold me for fifteen paltry pieces of silver, are now willing to be slaves themselves, rather than see their youngest brother made a slave, even when he appears to be guilty of stealing. What a change! Immediately all of his old affection for them takes possession of him, and with these two revelations flashing upon him, it is not surprising that he broke out into loud weeping. He weeps, and falls upon his brothers' necks. He says, "I am Joseph." A thought flashes through his mind, never conceived before, and he says, "Be not grieved, or angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither." He sees now God's hand all through this strange, sad experience, and using a Hebraism, he says, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God; God did send me before to preserve life." When he was a prisoner there in the prison, he did not see God's hand. I suppose he thought that it was all of the devil; but now

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that he has gotten to the end of the vista and looks back, he sees it is God who has done it. He sees in part what we saw in the first part of this discourse. O, my friends, many times when you shall have passed through deep waters that almost overwhelm you, and shall have felt alienated from all the friends you had on earth, thinking that they had deserted you, wait a little longer, and you will look up and say it was God; it was the working of grand, glorious, and blessed purposes that He had in his mind concerning you.

The last question we can dispose of now very quickly, because it has been almost entirely anticipated. Why did God select ten men to be the heads of ten tribes of his chosen people, who were so base as to sell their brother? O, my brethren, it was not the ten who sold their brother that God selected, but the ten who were willing to be slaves instead of their brother. These are the ten that he chose. If you and I shall get to heaven, why will God admit us there? Not because of what we once were, but because of what He shall have made out of us by His dealings with us. He had his mind on the outcome, and not on the beginning. If you and I had to be judged by what we were at one time, there would be no hope for us. I am glad to know that my chances for the approval of the Almighty are based on what I hope to be, and not on what I am. Thank God for that!

And they were worthy. How many men who, when the youngest brother of the family was clearly guilty of stealing, and was about to be made a slave, would say, "Let me be the slave, and let him go home to his father"? Not many. And what had brought about the wondrous change which they had undergone? Ah, here we have the other illustration of God's providential government to which I have alluded. When these men held up the bloody coat before their father, knowing that Joseph was not dead, as he supposed, but not able to tell him so

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because the truth would be still more distressing than the fiction. What father would not rather a thousand times over that one of his sons should be dead, than that one of them should be kidnapped and sold into foreign bondage by the others? If their father's grief was inconsolable, their own remorse was intolerable. For twenty-two long years they writhed under it, and there is no wonder that then they should prefer foreign bondage themselves rather than to witness a renewal of their father's anguish. The same chain of providence which brought them unexpectedly into Egypt, had fitted them for the high honors which were yet to crown their names.

Is there a poor sinner here today, whom God has disciplined, whether less or more severely than He did those men, and brought to repentance? If so, the kind Redeemer whom you rejected, and sold, as it were, to strangers, stands ready to forgive you more completely and perfectly than Joseph forgave his brethren. He has found out your iniquity; he knows it all; but he died that he might be able to forgive you. Come in his appointed way; come guilty and trembling, as Joseph's brothers came, and you will find His everlasting arms around you.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-SIX

1. What is the over-all *motif* of the Joseph-Story?
2. Where was Joseph dwelling with his parental household at the time he now appears in the Biblical narrative? How old was he at this time?
3. Were Joseph's brothers justified in their hatred of him?
4. What was it that made his good qualities offensive? Can we sympathize with them at all? Could we be justified in accepting what they did to him?

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5. How did the brothers get the opportunity to dispose of Joseph?
6. What special gift did Jacob give to Joseph?
7. Who were the brothers of whom he brought back to his father an evil report?
8. What were the two dreams which Joseph experienced and what did they mean?
9. What were the three things that incensed the brothers against Joseph? To what extent did envy enter into their attitude, and why?
10. To what place did Jacob send Joseph to find the brothers? Where did he find them?
11. Which of the brothers kept the others from killing Joseph? Why did he do this?
12. Which one suggested that Joseph be sold? What was probably his real motive for doing this?
13. To what people was Joseph sold? What was the price involved?
14. What was done with Joseph's coat? How did the brothers account for Joseph's disappearance?
15. What was Jacob's reaction when he saw the coat?
16. Explain what Sheol was in Old Testament thought? How did the O.T. concept of Sheol correspond to the N.T. doctrine of Hades? Explain the distinction between Hades and Gehenna in New Testament teaching.
17. To whom was Joseph sold in Egypt? What office did his owner hold?
18. How did Joseph get along in his master's house? To what extent did his owner trust him?
19. What temptation was thrust upon Joseph in his owner's house? Against whom did Joseph declare that this sin would be?
20. How did he escape the woman? What was the lie she told? What did the owner do with him as a consequence?

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21. What special prisoners were kept in the place where Joseph was imprisoned?
22. How did Joseph get along in prison? What two royal officials were cast into the prison?
23. What were the dreams which these two prisoners experienced? What interpretations did Joseph give of these dreams?
24. What special request did Joseph make of the chief butler?
25. How were the dreams fulfilled?
26. Who was it that forgot Joseph and for how long?
27. What were the two dreams which the Pharaoh experienced? What did the word "Pharaoh" signify?
28. Who among the Egyptians could not interpret the Pharaoh's dreams?
29. Who told the Pharaoh of Joseph? What confession did he make?
30. What preparations did Joseph make to present himself before the king? What did these signify especially?
31. To whom did Joseph give credit for the dreams which the king had experienced and for what purpose were they granted the king?
32. What was Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams? Why was his dream "doubled"? What advice did Joseph give him?
33. With what office did the Pharaoh invest Joseph? What special rank did he give him?
34. Who was given to Joseph as his wife? What was her father's name and position?
35. Explain the significance of the names, Asenath, Potiphera, and On.
36. What was Joseph's age at the time he was made Prime Minister?
37. What general policy did Joseph advise the Pharaoh to adopt in view of the impending crisis?

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38. What was the general character of the various dreams which Joseph interpreted?
39. What is the popular opinion as a rule with regard to the significance of dreams?
40. What is the over-all psychoanalytic theory of dreams?
41. In what sense were the dreams interpreted by Joseph premonitions?
42. Who were the "professional" interpreters of dreams in the pagan world?
43. What are the two general categories of dreams reported in Scripture?
44. What two functions do dreams serve which in Scripture are divinely inspired?
45. How is the power of interpretation varied in relation to the functions served by dreams?
46. How closely related are dreams to visions? How are waking visions to be distinguished from dreams? How is the dream related to prophecy in Scripture?
47. How old was Joseph when he became Prime Minister of Egypt?
48. How did God compensate him for his former unhappiness?
49. How much grain did Joseph gather? Where did he store this grain?
50. What were the names of Joseph's two sons and what did each name mean?
51. What area did the famine cover?
52. What caused Jacob's sons to go into Egypt the first time?
53. Which son of Jacob was left at home, and why?
54. Whom did the brothers face in Egypt? How did their visit fulfil a dream?
55. Of what did Joseph accuse the brothers? What was their reply?
56. How long did Joseph keep them in jail?

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57. What tests did Joseph impose on them and for what purpose?
58. Whom were they ordered to bring back to Egypt and why?
59. What did the brothers think had caused them to suffer this penalty?
60. Which brother was detained in Egypt?
61. What facts were little by little revealed to Joseph about the brothers and the father with respect to what had happened to him in Canaan?
62. What did Joseph cause to be placed in the brothers' sacks? Which brother was detained in Egypt?
63. How did the brothers react when they discovered the contents of their sacks?
64. What accusation did Jacob bring against the brothers on their return home?
65. Why did the brothers return to Egypt a second time?
66. What security did Reuben offer Jacob as proof he would care for Benjamin?
67. Who told Jacob that Benjamin must be taken into Egypt? What was Jacob's reaction?
68. What caused the father finally to relent? What did he tell the brothers to take back into Egypt?
69. What hospitality did Joseph show them when they returned to Egypt?
70. What did Joseph say when the brothers tried to return their money?
71. What did the brothers offer Joseph?
72. How did Joseph react when he saw Benjamin?
73. Why did Joseph not sit at the table with his brothers?
74. How were the brothers arranged at their table? Who got the most food and how much more did he get?
75. What was placed in the brothers' sacks and in Benjamin's sack?
76. What did Joseph have the steward, on catching up

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with the brothers as they started for home, accuse them of stealing?

77. What did the brothers say should be done to them as a punishment if they were guilty?
78. How did they react when the cup was found?
79. How did Joseph declare that Benjamin should be punished?
80. Who interceded for Benjamin, offering to serve as hostage, and why?
81. Why did Joseph send everyone out of the room but the brothers?
82. Whom did Joseph ask about first after disclosing his identity?
83. How did the brothers react to this revelation?
84. In what statement did Joseph declare his conviction that this entire happening was providential? How was it providential?
85. Trace the hand of God in the story of Joseph as this story was unfolded by His providence?
86. How many years of famine had passed by this time?
87. What arrangements were made for transporting Jacob's household to Egypt?
88. What part of the country was given them for a dwelling, and why?
89. How did Jacob react to the news about Joseph?
90. What arrangements for transporting Jacob's family to Egypt did the Pharaoh make?
91. How old was Jacob when he came down to Egypt? What did he say to Pharaoh at their meeting?
92. What three things did Joseph obtain from the people for Pharaoh?
93. What did God promise Jacob that he would do for him in Egypt?
94. What economic policies did Joseph institute with reference to land ownership? What over-all changes

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did this make in the economics and politics of Egypt?
Was it good or bad? Explain your answer?

95. What class of people retained their land? What part of the land production was collected for Pharaoh?
96. How many souls of the house of Jacob came into Egypt?
97. How reconcile this figure with that which is given in Acts 7:14?
98. What are the analogies between the life of Joseph and the life of Christ?

PART FORTY-SEVEN

THE LAST DAYS OF JACOB AND JOSEPH

(Genesis 48:1—50:26)

The Biblical Account

48 And it came to pass after these things, that one said to 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 company of peoples, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. 5 And now thy two sons, who were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. 6 And thy issue, that thou begettest after them, shall be thine; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7 And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some distance to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem).

8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? 9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, who God hath given me here. 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 let me see thy seed also. 12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees; and he bowed himself

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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 first-born. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 the angel who hath 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 first-born; 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: howbeit 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 will 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 will be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your father. 22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

49 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the latter days.

2 Assemble yourselves, and hear, ye sons of Jacob;
And hearken unto Israel your father.

- 3 Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength;
 The pre-eminence of dignity, and the pre-eminence of power.
- 4 Boiling over as water, thou shalt not have the pre-eminence;
 Because thou wentest up to thy father's bed;
 Then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.
- 5 Simeon and Levi are brethren;
 Weapons of violence are their swords.
- 6 On my soul, come not thou into their council;
 Unto their assembly, my glory, be not thou united;
 For in their anger they slew a man,
 And in their self-will they hocked an ox.
- 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, thee shall thy brethren praise:
 Thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies;
 Thy father's sons 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 a lioness; who shall rouse him up?
- 10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
 Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
 Until Shiloh come;
 And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.
- 11 Binding his foal unto the vine,
 And his ass's colt unto the choice vine;
 He bath washed his garments in wine,
 And his vesture in the blood of grapes;
- 12 His eyes shall be red with wine,
 And his teeth white with milk.
- 13 Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea;

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- And he shall be for a haven of ships;
And his border shall be upon Sidon.
- 14 Issachar is a strong ass,
Couching down between the sheepfolds:
- 15 And he saw a resting-place that it was good,
And the land that it was pleasant;
And he bowed his shoulder to bear,
And became a servant under task-work.
- 16 Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.
- 17 Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
An adder in the path,
That biteth the horse's heels,
So that his rider falleth backward.
- 18 I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah
- 19 Gad, a troop shall press upon him;
But he shall press upon their heel.
- 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,
A fruitful bough by a fountain;
His branches run over the wall.
- 23 The archers have sorely grieved him,
And shot at him, and persecuted him:
- 24 But his bow abode in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made strong,
By the hands of the Mighty One 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 coucheth beneath,
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 is a wolf that raveneth:*

*In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at even he shall divide the spoil.*

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 from Ephron the Hittite for a 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 field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth. 33 And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

50 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 embalming: and the Egyptians wept for him threescore and ten days. 4 And when the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found favor 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

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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. 6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. 7 And Joseph went 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 threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and there they lamented with a very great and 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 the 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.

15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him. 16 And they sent a message unto Joseph saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the transgression 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 are thy servants. 19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for 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 a 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 born upon Joseph's knees. 24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up 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 you shall carry up my bones from hence. 26 So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

(1) Jacob's Last Days

1. *The Last Days of Jacob, 47:27—50:14*

(1) *Jacob's Request Concerning His Burial* (47:27-31). Although the years of Jacob's sojourn in Egypt were characterized by rather tragic economic problems for the Egyptians, for Jacob and his household in Goshen they were days of relative abundance and tranquility. Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years and lived to see his progeny "multiply exceedingly," v. 27. Then as his end drew nearer, he sent for Joseph and made him swear—by putting his hand under his father's thigh (cf. Gen. 24:2, 9)—that he would not bury him in Egypt, but take him out of Egypt and bury him in the sepulchre of his fathers (cf. 50:13). Egypt had served as a refuge in a time of

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famine, but the patriarch—Israel—insisted that his bones be interred in the “land of promise” alongside the bones of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and his own first wife, Leah. This Joseph was, of course, most willing to do. Thankful that Joseph had assured him of a burial in Canaan, Jacob, or Israel as he is here named, “bowed down upon the bed’s head” (v. 31). Apparently he turned over on his bed, and bent his head toward the head of the bed, as if to prostrate himself before God in worship. The Septuagint, followed by the words of Heb. 11:21, suggests a different pointing of the Hebrew words, reading “bowed himself upon the top of his staff.” According to this reading, which is followed by the Syriac, Jacob used his staff to raise himself in bed and thus to worship, remembering God’s blessings throughout his life. The first reading is said to be the most natural one, and is followed by the Masoretic Text. Leupold suggests that the author of the Epistle quoted from the Septuagint—as he usually did—without suggesting a change because no vital point was involved. An act of worship certainly is intended, no doubt a thanksgiving to God for the peaceful close of his troubled life, and for the assurance he now had of being “gathered to his fathers.”

(2) *Jacob blesses the Sons of Joseph* (48:1-22). These developments came later (as will be noted). In the subsequent history of the nation of Israel, Joseph does not appear as one of the tribes. The reason for this is here indicated. Joseph became two tribes, for his sons Ephraim and Manasseh are hereby adopted by their grandfather and given an inheritance among his own sons. This was done when Joseph, hearing that his father was ill, went to visit him taking his two sons with him. The dying patriarch blessed Joseph and his sons in the name of the God of Abraham and Isaac, the *God who had fed him all his life long, the Angel who had redeemed him from all evil.* Joseph had enjoyed a position of special favor

with Jacob, as we know, and for this reason he now determines to adopt Joseph's two sons. The reference to Rachel, v. 7, shows how keenly he had felt her loss to the day of his death. His adoption of Joseph's sons seems to have been a special tribute to her. He claimed Ephraim and Manasseh for his own, placing them even before Reuben and Simeon, whose lust and violence had forfeited their birthright; and henceforth they were numbered among the heads of the tribes of Israel. Thus Rachel became the mother of three tribes: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.

Throughout this whole scene—it will be noted—Israel gave Ephraim the precedence over Manasseh. Though unable to see, he crossed his hands, disregarding Joseph's opposition, so that in blessing them his right hand was on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Manasseh's. Thus was added one more lesson of God's sovereign choice, to the examples of Abel, Shem, Abram, Isaac, and himself, all of whom were younger sons. He foretold for them a prosperity which would make them the envy of the other tribes; and he concluded by giving Joseph an extra portion above his brothers, thus marking him as his heir in respect of *property*; for the *royal power* was given to Judah, and the priesthood was assigned to Levi. "The *division* of these great functions of the patriarchal government is already a mark of the transition from the family to the nation" (ITH, 125).

It should be noted that Jacob mentions here a specific plot of ground which he allotted to Joseph. Whatever the location of this plot, and whatever the circumstances under which it was acquired, its identity continued to be a matter of tradition as late as New Testament times. Sychar is described as "near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph" (John 4:5). (This could hardly have been the city of Shechem, having reference to the tragedy visited on that city (Genesis 34), by Jacob's sons, an act

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which he indignantly repudiated. (The Nuzi tablets indicate that adoption was a common procedure in patriarchal times. They also show, we are told, that an oral blessing such as that pronounced by Jacob, was considered binding when contested in court. The blessing is a kind of "last will and testament." In Scriptural usage, such a blessing also conveys a prophecy concerning the future. Ephraim became the strongest of the twelve tribes. In the time of the divided kingdom the name of Ephraim was frequently used for Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

(3) *Jacob Blesses His Own Sons* (49:1-27). In poetic form a predictive blessing is pronounced by Jacob on his own sons. Although in some cases severe censure is given, in no case is a tribe disinherited. Some of the tribes had positions of greater honor and usefulness than did others, but the Israelites remained conscious of their descent from the twelve sons of Jacob. Jacob called his sons together to hear the last words of Israel their father (ch. 49). He plainly declared that his words were of prophetic import, and that their fulfilment would reach even *to the latter days* (v. 1). Could we expound these prophetic statements fully we should probably find that, in most, if not all the several blessings, there is a reference—first, to the personal characters and fortunes of the twelve patriarchs; secondly, to the history and circumstances of the tribes descended from them; and, lastly, a typical allusion to the twelve tribes of the spiritual Israel (Rev. 7). "We can trace the first two elements in all cases, and the last is conspicuous in the blessings on Judah and Joseph, the two heads of the whole family. But the details of the interpretation are confessedly most difficult" (OTH, 125). The whole prophecy should be compared with the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death" (Deut. 33). Like the latter, Jacob's prophecy contains a *blessing* on each tribe,

though in some cases it is almost disguised under the censure which his sons had incurred. (For a follow-up of the historical aspects of this last Testament of Jacob, we refer the student to the textbook, *Old Testament History*, by Smith and Fields, published by the College Press, Joplin, Missouri.)

(4) *Fulfilment of Jacob's Prophecies.* The history of all the tribes would furnish striking instances of the fulfilment of these prophecies, more particularly the history of the descendants of Judah and Joseph. From Judah the country was called "Judea," and the people "Jews." This tribe was famous: 1. For its conquests; 2. For the kingdom of David and Solomon; 3. For the birth of the Messiah; 4. For being a distinct people, having governors of their own down to the time of Messiah or Shiloh. Moreover, while the ten tribes of Israel were carried captive into Assyria and entirely lost (by enforced intermingling with their conquering neighbors), those of Judah and Benjamin were held in captivity in Babylon for seventy years only, after which they returned to the land of their fathers. They did not actually pass from the earthly scene as tribes until the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. In Joseph, the blessing of Jacob was fulfilled in his being the progenitor of the two large tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, from whom sprang the great leader Joshua. The curse of Levi was afterward taken off on account of the zeal of the Levites in destroying the worshipers of the golden calf and consecrating themselves to God.

(5) *Death and Burial of Jacob* (49:28—50:1-14). Having concluded his prophetic benedictions, Jacob charged his sons to bury him in the Cave of Machpelah, and yielded up the ghost at the age of one hundred and forty-seven years. His body was embalmed by Joseph's physicians, a process which lasted, we are told, forty days (v. 3) and the mourning lasted in all seventy days (v. 3);

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after which, Joseph obtained permission of the Pharaoh to attend to the funeral of his father. Accordingly, all the house of Jacob and Joseph, together, together with all the servants of Pharaoh and elders of Egypt, left Goshen and made their sad journey back to Canaan, where they buried Jacob in the Cave of Machpelah, having mourned at the threshing-floor of Atad beyond Jordan for seven days; which place was called Abel-mizraim, or “the mourning of the Egyptians” (50:1-13). “Thus they came to *Goren Atad* beyond the Jordan, as the procession did not take the shortest route by Gaza through the country of the Philistines, probably because so large a procession with a military escort was likely to meet with difficulties there, but went round by the Dead Sea” (K-D, 410). This funeral cortege was certainly a magnificent tribute to Joseph and to the high regard in which he was held by the Egyptian powers and people. After having performed his filial duties, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brethren and all their attendants.

2. *The Last Days of Joseph*

(6) *Joseph Again Forgives His Brethren* (vv. 15-21). After Joseph’s return to Egypt, Joseph’s brothers feared that he might now seek revenge for their former cruelty, but, having sent a message praying for his forgiveness, he reassured them by many kind words and good offices.

(7) *The Death of Joseph* (vv. 22-26). At last, fifty-four years after the death of his father, Joseph having seen the grandsons of his two sons, felt that his dying hour was approaching. He assured his brothers that God would certainly lead them to the land of promise, and enjoined them to carry his bones with them. (Joseph’s faith surely proves that he was never a prey to the paganism of the Egyptians, but to the end of his life cherished faith in the God of his fathers). He died, at the age of one hundred

and ten years; his body was embalmed and placed in a coffin in which it was preserved until the Exodus of the Children of Israel with them. The story ends as in a glorious sunset, as realized by comparing Hebrews 11:22 and Josh. 24:32.

ADDENDA

PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE DESTINIES OF THE TWELVE

1. *Reuben*, the first-born, who had committed incest with Bilhah. “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

2. *Simeon*, 3. *Levi*, who had treacherously slain the Shechemites for their insult to Dinah: “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.”

4. *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. 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? *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.* . . . His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk,”

5. *Zebulun*: “Shall be an haven for ships.”

6. *Issachar*: “Is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: . . . and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.”

7. *Dan*: “Shall judge his people, . . . shall be a serpent by the way, and an adder in the path.”

8. *Gad*: “A troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.”

9. *Asher*: “His bread shall be fat.”

10. *Naphtali*: “A hind let loose; he giveth goodly words.”

11. *Joseph*: “A fruitful bough by a well, . . . The God of thy father, who shall help thee; and the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and blessings of the womb: . . . 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.”

12. *Benjamin*: “Shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” Gen. xlviili.; xlxi.—From *Analysis and Summary of Old Testament History*, by J. T. Wheeler, published 1879, by Work and Company, Philadelphia.

THE DYING BLESSING OF JACOB

In its present form the Blessing of Jacob in Genesis forty-nine is a poem of the early days of the kingdom. In David's day the more ancient tradition regarding the patriarch's blessing was cast into this poetical form. The poem makes a striking series of characterizations of the different tribes,—the morally unstable Reuben, the socially disorganized Simeon and Levi, the warlike Judah, the ignobly lazy Issachar, the brave Gad and fortunate Asher, the prosperous Joseph and alert

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little Benjamin. These are the conditions of the days of the developing kingdom. The tribes had varied fortunes. Some prospered, some had great reverses; some became pre-eminent, a few barely existed. The poem is very valuable as an expression of the "collective consciousness of Israel" on their conduct and destiny.—From *History of the Hebrews*, by Frank Sanders, Ph.D., Scribners, 1914.

ON JOSEPH AS A TYPE

"One very noticeable feature of this 'history (*toledoth*) of Jacob' is the predominance of Joseph practically throughout the entire section. Yet for all that, though he is the mainspring of the movement of the history, Jacob is still the dominant character. We remind of this, for though Joseph is prominent, he is not to be esteemed too highly. God never appeared to him as He did to his father Jacob, or to Isaac and to Abraham. Joseph dare not be ranked higher on the level of faith than his forefathers. It is a case of misplaced emphasis to say that 'the hero himself is idealized as no other patriarchal personality is . . . (Joseph) is the ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal servant, the ideal administrator.' In contact with non-Israelites Joseph surely achieved remarkable prominence, but for the inner, spiritual history of the kingdom of God he does not come up to the level of his fathers.

"There is another feature of his life which is rather striking and demands closer attention. In a more distinct way than in the lives of the fathers Joseph stands out as a type of Christ. Abraham exemplified the Father's love who gave up His only-begotten Son. Isaac passively typifies the Son who suffers Himself to be offered up. But in Joseph's case a wealth of suggestive parallels come to the surface upon closer study. Though these parallels are not stamped as typical by the New Testament, there can hardly be any doubt as to their validity. For as Joseph is a righteous man and in this capacity is strongly antagonized and made to suffer for righteousness' sake, but finally triumphs over all iniquity, so the truly Righteous One, the Savior of men, experiences the same things in an intensified degree.

"Lange lists the details of this type in a very excellent summary. He mentions as prefiguring what transpired in the life of the great Antitype, Jesus Christ, the following: 'the envy and hatred of the brethren against Joseph and the fact that he is sold; the realization of Joseph's prophetic dreams by the very fact that his brethren seek to prevent his exaltation by destroying him; the fact that the malicious plot of the brethren results in the salvation of many, however, in a very particular sense for the brethren and for Jacob's house; the judgment of the Spirit upon the treachery of the brethren and the victory of forgiving love; Judah's surety for Benjamin and his rivalry with Joseph in the spirit of self-sacrifice; the revival of Jacob in his joy over the fact that the son long deemed dead was alive and eminently successful" (Leupold, EG, 950-951).

Pascal (Pensees) beautifully supplements this typology as follows: "Jesus Christ typified by Joseph, the beloved of his father, sent by his father to see his brethren, etc., innocent, sold by his brethren for twenty pieces of silver, and thereby becoming their lord, their savior, the savior of strangers, and the savior of the world; which had not been but for their plot to destroy him, their sale and their rejection of him. In prison Joseph innocent between two criminals; Jesus Christ on the cross between two thieves. Joseph foretells freedom to the one, and death to the other, from the same omens. Jesus Christ saves the elect, and condemns the outcast for the same sins. Joseph foretells only; Jesus Christ acts. Joseph asks him who will be saved to remember him, when he comes into his glory; and he whom Jesus Christ saves

asks that He will remember him, when He comes into His kingdom" (Everyman's Library Edition, p. 229, trans. by Trotter). "The ways of divine providence could hardly be stranger, and God's guiding hand in history is marvelously displayed to the eyes of faith" (EG, 951-2).

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE STORY OF JOSEPH

The substantial accuracy of the Joseph narratives has often been noted. What has been discovered in relation to Egypt in late years is in general accord with the allusions of these narratives to Egyptian usages and institutions. This supports the conclusion that they were put into form at an early date, since the Egypt of Joseph's day differs in many respects from the Egypt of later times. It also emphasizes our sense of reality as read the stories.

Dr. Speiser states the basic truths concerning the narrative about Joseph and the Egyptian background against which the events are painted. "No appreciable progress has been made in the effort to establish the historical setting of the episode, and with it the identity of the Pharaoh 'who knew Joseph.' A faint hint, but no more than that, may be contained in vs. 89, which has Pharaoh refer to God with obvious reverence. An Egyptian ruler of good native stock would not be likely to do so, since he was himself regarded as a god. When the Pharaoh of the Oppression speaks of Yahweh in Exodus, he does so in defiance, or in extreme straits, but never in sincere submission. The attitude of the present Pharaoh, therefore (barring an oversight on the part of the author), might conceivably suggest that he was not a traditional Egyptian ruler; and such a description would fit best some member of the foreign Hyksos Dynasty (ca. 1730-1570). It has long been assumed on other grounds that the Hyksos age offered the best opportunity for the emergence of someone like Joseph. Nevertheless, the narrative before us furnishes too slender a basis for historical deductions. On the other hand, the *incidental detail is authentically Egyptian*. Pharaoh elevates Joseph to the typically Egyptian post of Vizier (43). This is corroborated by the transfer to Joseph of the royal seal (42), inasmuch as the Vizier was known as the 'Seal-bearer of the King of Lower Egypt,' as far back as the third millennium. . . . The gift of the gold chain is another authentic touch. The three names in v. 45 are Egyptian in type and components; so, too, in all probability, is the escort's cry, *Abrek!* While the story is the main thing, the setting is thus demonstrably factual. And although the theme and the setting together cannot as yet be fitted with an established historical niche, the details are not out of keeping with that phase of Egyptian history which can be independently synchronized with the patriarchal period." (ABG, 316).

Other Egyptianisms which may be cited are the following: Joseph's position as Potiphar's "major domo" was common in Egypt (39:5-6); Egyptian situations similar to that of Potiphar's wife appear from the later Egyptian "Tale of the Two Brothers" (39:7-20); from the Rosetta Stone is indicated the pharaoh's custom of releasing prisoners on his birthday and on other great days (40:20); shaving was an Egyptian custom, not Semitic (41:14); the investiture of an official with signet, linen, and neck chain, is commonly recorded (41:42); inscriptions indicate failure of the Nile to flood for as long as 7 years, and the distribution of grain by government officials in times of famine (41:54); nobility and priests are kept apart, even from commoners, much more, foreigners (43:32); Egyptians ostracized shepherds as beyond standards of cleanliness (46:34); crown and priests got all land titles some time before the New Empire (47:20); and embalming took time and substance (50:2-3).

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"That Jacob and his sons went down into Egypt under Joseph's viziership has been denied by some of the more radical critics. . . . But this historical tradition is so inextricably woven into the fabric of Jewish history that it 'cannot be eliminated without leaving an inexplicable gap' (Albright, FSAC, 183ff.). Numerous evidences of Israel's sojourn in Egypt appear in the Genesis-Exodus part of the Pentateuch" (UBD, 607). (1) Among such are the following: the surprising number of Egyptian personal names that show up in the Levitical genealogies. Such names as Moses, Hophni, Phineas, Merari, Putiel, and Asir, are unquestionably Egyptian: this fact is corroborated by 1 Sam. 2:27. (2) Local coloring which appears in numerous instances in the Pentateuch. Many of these bits of Egyptian coloring exist "which are beautifully illustrated by Egyptological discoveries" (Albright, in *Young's Analytical Concordance*, 20th Ed., 1936, p. 27. See his somewhat lengthy presentation (at the back of this book), "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands." This article is 43 pages in length and is invaluable for archaeological corroboration of the Pentateuchal record). Among these "bits of local coloring" we mention the following: (1) the title of Egyptian officials such as the 'chief of the butlers' and 'chief of the bakers' (Gen. 40:2) which are the titles of *bona fide* palace officials mentioned in Egyptian documents (cf. also Gen. 39:4; 41:40; 41:42, 43). (2) Famines of Egypt are illustrated by at least two Egyptian officials who give a resume of their charities on the walls of their tombs, listing dispensation of food to the needy 'in each year of want.' One inscription from c. 1000 B.C., actually mentions the famine of seven years' duration in the days of Pharaoh Zoser of Dynasty III, about 2700 B.C. (3) Such matters as dreams, the presence of magicians (cf. 41:8), mummification (50:2, 26), and Joseph's life span of 110 years (50:22), the traditional length of a happy and prosperous life in Egypt, are abundantly illustrated by the monuments. (4) The family of Jacob's settlement in Goshen, some seventy persons (46:26-34). This area has been clearly identified with the eastern part of the Delta around the Wadi Tumilat. This region was one of the most fertile parts of Egypt, "the best of the land" (47:11). (4) A clear archaeological parallel is the representation of West Semitic immigrants going down into Middle Egypt around the year 1900 B.C. The scene is sculptured on the tomb of one of Senwosret II's officials named Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan. A party bringing products from Southwest Asia appear under the leadership of 'Sheik of the highlands, Ibshe.' The name and the faces are clearly Semitic. Their thick black hair falls to the neck, and their beards are pointed. They are dressed in long cloaks and are armed with spears, bows and throw sticks. The accompanying inscription reads, 'the arrival, bringing eye paint, which thirty-seven Asiatics bring to him' (Finegan, LAP, 1946, p. 83). (5) Canaanite place names in the Delta: Succoth (Exo. 12:37), Baal-zephon (Exo. 14:2), Migdol (Exo. 14:2), Zilu (Tel Abu Zeifah), and very likely Goshen itself (Albright, FSAC, 1940, p. 84).

"The sudden appointment of a foreign-born slave to unlimited authority over a rich, cultured, proud and powerful people could take place nowhere else than in an autocratically governed Oriental state. Probably it could not have occurred in Egypt except at one of two periods, the century when the Hyksos kings were rulers of Egypt (c. 1680-1580 B.C.) or the later portion of the eighteenth dynasty (c. 1580-1350 B.C.) when Egypt under the leadership of a series of conquering kings became a world power, ready to utilize brave, resourceful leadership from any source. The background of the Joseph-story is surely Egyptian. The data available do not enable us to determine with assurance under which group of rulers Joseph rose to dignity and ac-

complished his reforms. The very general conclusion that Rameses the Great of the nineteenth dynasty was the Pharaoh of the Oppression makes it rather necessary to choose between the two periods preceding. That Joseph's Pharaoh was a later king of the eighteenth dynasty is in excellent accord with the facts as we know them today, but no one can be positive in the matter. Kings Amen-hotep III and IV (1411-1358 B.C.) held close relations with Asia and her peoples. Their inscriptions mention foreigners who rose in Egypt to great authority. The three hundred clay tablets discovered in 1888 at Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt are letters exchanged between foreign kings and vassals and the reigning Pharaoh. In addition to throwing a frank and vivid light upon the life of Palestine and Egypt in that day, these letters exhibit the tolerant and friendly disposition of the rulers of Egypt. A Joseph would have found a welcome at their court" (HH, 44-45). (The Amarna letters, excavated from the mound of Amarna, about 200 miles south of Cairo. These were in the form of hundreds of clay tablets in Accadian cuneiform, sent to the Pharaohs by kings in western Asia and by petty princes in Palestine (Canaan) who were ruling there under the supervision of Egyptian inspectors in the 14th century B.C. (See BWDBA, or any up-to-date general work on Biblical archaeology.)

HERODOTUS: ON EMBALMING IN EGYPT

"There are a set of men in Egypt who practise the art of embalming, and make it their proper business. These persons, when a body is brought to them, show the bearers various models of corpses, made in wood, and painted so as to resemble nature. The most perfect is said to be after the manner of him whom I do not think it religious to name in connexion with such a matter; the second sort is inferior to the first, and less costly; the third is the cheapest of all. All this the embalmers explain, and then ask in which way it is wished that the corpse should be prepared. The bearers tell them, and having concluded their bargain, take their departure, while the embalmers, left to themselves, proceed to their task. The mode of embalming, according to the most perfect process is the following: They take first a crooked piece of iron, and with it draw out the brain through the nostrils, thus getting rid of a portion, while the skull is cleared of the rest by rinsing with drugs; next they make a cut along the flank with a sharp Ethiopian stone, and take out the whole contents of the abdomen, which they then cleanse, washing it thoroughly with palm-wine, and again frequently with an infusion of pounded aromatics. After this they fill the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spicery except frankincense, and sew up the opening. Then the body is placed in natrum for seventy days, and covered entirely over. (This included the whole period of mourning. The embalming in natrum (saltpetre or soda) occupied only forty days.) After the expiration of that space of time, which must not be exceeded, the body is washed, and wrapped round, from head to foot, with bandages of fine linen cloth, smeared over with gum, which is used generally by the Egyptians in the place of glue, and in this state it is given back to the relatives, who enclose it in a wooden case which they have made for the purpose, shaped into the figure of a man. Then fastening the case, they place it in a sepulchral chamber, upright against the wall. Such is the most costly way of embalming the dead.

If persons wished to avoid expense, and choose the second process, the following is the method pursued: Syringes are filled with oil made from the cedar-tree, which is then, without any incision or disemboweling, injected into the bowel. The passage is stopped, and the body laid in natrum the prescribed number of days. At the end of the time

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the cedar-oil is allowed to make its escape; and such is its power that it brings with it the whole stomach and intestines in a liquid state. The natrum meanwhile has dissolved the flesh, and so nothing is left of the dead body but the skin and bones. It is returned in this condition to the relatives, without any further trouble being bestowed upon it.

The third method of embalming, which is practised in the case of the poorer classes, is to clear out the intestines with a purge, and let the body lie in natrum for seventy days, after which it is at once given to those who come to fetch it away." (Herodotus, "Father of History," traveled extensively, and reported what he actually witnessed himself. His account of Egyptian embalming is generally acclaimed as being "on the whole very accurate." He lived in the 5th century B.C. The section quoted is from his *History (The Persian Wars)*, Bk. II, chs. 86-91. Modern Library edition, trans. by George Rawlinson.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY-SEVEN

1. How did the Israelites fare in Egypt?
2. How long did Jacob sojourn in Egypt?
3. With what great hopes did Jacob and his household start for Egypt? How were they received by the Pharaoh?
4. What promises did Jacob require Joseph to make?
5. Who was brought to Jacob when he became ill?
6. How did Jacob show affection for Joseph's sons?
7. What requests did Jacob make in regard to his burial?
8. How did Jacob show his affection for Joseph's sons?
9. How did Jacob arrange his hands on Joseph's sons? What did this signify?
10. Which of Joseph's sons was to become the greater? How was this fulfilled later?
11. What did Jacob bequeath especially to Joseph? To Judah? To Levi? What happened later with respect to Levi's descendants?
12. What do we learn about adoption in Canaan from the Nuzi tablets?
13. What was the specific ground allotted to Joseph? How is this related to what New Testament passage?
14. For what purpose did Jacob call his own sons together?
15. What three references were implicit or explicit in the blessings which Jacob pronounced on his sons?

16. What striking fulfilments occurred with respect to Jacob's blessing on Judah?
17. In what sense was this blessing Messianic? When and how was it fulfilled?
18. How was the blessing pronounced on Joseph fulfilled?
19. Describe the circumstances of the death and burial of Jacob. Where did it take place?
20. What other persons were interred in this burial place?
21. After the interment, what did Joseph do? What attitude did he take toward his brothers at this time?
22. How old was Joseph at his death? What evidence do we have that Joseph was faithful to the faith of his fathers? What does this indicate as to his character?
23. What was done with his corpse, and why was it done?
24. Describe the art of embalming as Herodotus describes it in his *History*.
25. Where was Joseph ultimately buried?
26. State the analogies between the life of Joseph and the "life" of Christ.
27. Name the progenitors of the twelve tribes as they appear when finally rearranged by the substitution of the two sons of Joseph.
28. Discuss the archaeological accuracy of the Joseph Narratives. List the Egyptianisms that occur in these accounts.
29. Where was the Land of Goshen and what were the special characteristics of this Land?
30. Correlate Heb. 11:22 and Josh. 24:32, and show the significance of this related testimony.
31. For what great events was the stage now set for the future unfolding of God's Eternal Purpose?
32. How many generations of his descendants did Joseph live to see?

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(VOLS. I, II, III, IV)

(The treatment in the text of many of the topics listed below extends over several pages. However, in most instances (but not in all) I have given here only the number of the page on which the subject is introduced in the text. The reader will see without any difficulty when the textual material extends over subsequent pages. C. C.)

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