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a *Grace Notes* course

## Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

**History 503**

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*Grace Notes*

Web Site: <http://www.gracenotes.info>

E-mail: [wdoud@gracenotes.info](mailto:wdoud@gracenotes.info)

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## by Alfred Edersheim

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## **I\_20 Joseph In Prison - The Dream Of Pharaoh's Two Officers - The Dream Of Pharaoh - Joseph's Exaltation - His Government Of Egypt**

### **Genesis 40, 41, 47:13-26**

ELEVEN years had passed since Joseph was sold into Egypt, and yet the Divine promise, conveyed in his dreams, seemed farther than ever from fulfillment. The greater part of this weary time had probably been spent in prison, without other prospect than that of such indulgence as his services to "the keeper of the prison" might insure, when an event occurred which, for a brief season, promised a change in Joseph's condition. Some kind of "offense" - real or imaginary - had, as is so often the case in the East, led to the sudden disgrace and imprisonment of two of Pharaoh's chief officers. The charge of "the chief of the butlers" - or chief of the cupbearers - and of "the chief of the bakers" naturally devolved upon "the captain of the guard," - a successor, as we imagine, of Potiphar, since he appointed Joseph to the responsible post of their personal attendant. They had not been long in prison when, by the direct leading of Divine Providence, both dreamed in the same night a dream, calculated deeply to impress them. By the same direct guidance of Providence, Joseph was led to notice in the morning their anxiety, and to inquire into its cause. We regard it as directly from God, that he could give them at once and unhesitatingly the true meaning of their dreams.

We are specially struck in this respect with the manner in which Joseph himself viewed it. When he found them in distress for want of such "interpreter" as they might have consulted if free, he pointed them straight to God: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" thus encouraging them to tell, and at the same time preparing himself for reading their dreams, by casting all in faith upon God. In short, whether or not he were eventually enabled to understand their dreams, he would at least not appear like the Egyptian magicians - he would not claim power or wisdom; he would own God, and look up to Him.

We say it the more confidently, that Joseph's interpretation came to him directly from God, that it seems so easy and so rational. For, it is in the

supernatural direction of things natural that we ought most to recognize the direct interposition of the Lord. The dreams were quite natural, and the interpretation was quite natural - yet both were directly of God. What more natural than for the chief butler and the chief baker, three nights before Pharaoh's birthday, on which, as they knew, he always "made a feast unto all his servants," to dream that they were each again at his post? And what more natural than that on such an occasion Pharaoh should consider, whether for good or for evil, the case of his absent imprisoned officers? Or, lastly, what more natural than that the chief butler's consciousness of innocence should suggest in his dream that he once more waited upon his royal master; while the guilty conscience of the chief baker saw only birds of prey eating out of the basket from which he had hitherto supplied his master's table?

Here, then, it may be said, we have all the elements of Joseph's interpretation to hand, just as we shall see they were equally obvious in the dreams which afterwards troubled Pharaoh. Yet as then none of the magicians and wise men of Egypt could read what, when once stated, seems so plainly written, so here all seems involved in perplexity till God gives light.

As already stated, the two dreams were substantially the same. In each case the number three, whether of clusters in the vine from which the chief butler pressed the rich juice into Pharaoh's cup, or of baskets in which the chief baker carried the king's bakemeat, pointed to the three days intervening before Pharaoh's birthday. In each case also their dreams transported them back to their original position before any charge had been brought against them, the difference lying in this: that, in the one dream, Pharaoh accepted the functions of his officer; while, in the other, birds which hover about carcasses ate out of the basket. It is also quite natural that, if the chief butler had a good conscience towards his master, he should have been quite ready at the first to tell his dream; while the chief baker, conscious of guilt, only related his when encouraged by the apparently favorable interpretation of his colleague's. Perhaps we ought also to notice, in evidence of the truthfulness of the narrative, how

thoroughly Egyptian in all minute details is the imagery of these dreams. From the monuments the growth and use of the vine in Egypt, which had been denied by former opponents of the Bible, have been abundantly proved. From the same source we also learn that bakery and confectionery were carried to great perfection in Egypt, so that we can understand such an office as a royal chief baker. Even the bearing of the baskets furnishes a characteristic trait: as in Egypt men carried loads on their heads, and women on their shoulders.<sup>1</sup>

The event proved the correctness of Joseph's interpretation. On Pharaoh's birthday-feast, three days after their dreams, the chief butler was restored to his office, but the chief baker was executed. When interpreting his dream, Joseph had requested that, on the chief butler's restoration, he, who had himself suffered from a wrongful charge, should think on him, who, at first "stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews," had so long been unjustly kept in apparently hopeless confinement. This wording of Joseph's petition seems to indicate that, at most, he only hoped to obtain liberty; and that probably he intended to return to his father's house. So ignorant was he as yet of God's further designs with him! But what was a poor Hebrew slave in prison to a proud Egyptian court official? It is only like human nature that, in the day of his prosperity, "the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him!"

Two other years now passed in prison - probably more dreary and, humanly speaking, more hopeless than those which had preceded. At length deliverance came, suddenly and unexpectedly. This time it was Pharaoh who dreamed successively two dreams. In the first, seven fat kine were feeding among the rich "marsh-grass" on the banks "of the Nile." But presently up came from "the river" seven lean kine, which devoured the well-favored, without, however, fattening by them. The second dream showed one stalk of corn with seven ears, "full and good," when up sprang beside it another stalk, also with seven ears, but "blasted with the east wind;" "and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears." So vivid had been

the dream that it seemed to Pharaoh like reality - "and Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream." Only a dream! and yet the impression of its reality still haunted him, so that he sent for "the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof" to interpret his dreams. But these sages were unable to suggest any explanation satisfactory to the mind of Pharaoh; for we can scarcely believe that they did not attempt some interpretation. In this perplexity, his memory quickened by Oriental terror at his master's disappointment, the chief of the cup-bearers suddenly remembered his own and the chief baker's dreams just two years before, and Joseph's interpretation of them. The event becomes all the more striking and also natural if we may take the date literally as "at the end of two full years," or on the third anniversary of that birthday of Pharaoh.

Before proceeding, we notice some of the particulars which give the narrative its vivid coloring, and at the same time wonderfully illustrate its historical truthfulness. And, first of all, we again mark the distinctly Egyptian character of all. The "river" is "the Nile," the sacred stream of Egypt, on which its fertility depended - and Pharaoh stands on its banks. Then the term which we have rendered "marsh-grass," or "reed-grass," is certainly an Egyptian word for which there is no Hebrew equivalent, because that to which it applied was peculiar to the banks of the Nile. Next, the whole complexion of the dreams is Egyptian, as we shall presently show. Moreover, it is remarkable how closely recent independent inquiries have confirmed the scriptural expressions about "the magicians" and "the wise men" of Egypt. It has been always known that there was a special priestly caste in Egypt, to whom not only the religion but the science of the country was entrusted. But of late we have learned a great deal more than this. We know not only that magic formed part and parcel of the religion of Egypt, but we have actually restored to us their ancient magical Ritual itself! We know their incantations and their amulets, with a special reference to the dead; their belief in lucky and unlucky days and events, and even in the so-called "evil eye." But what is most to our present purpose, we know that the care of the magical books was entrusted to two classes of learned men, whose titles exactly

<sup>1</sup> This would not have been true of other countries. Thus, in Italy and Spain, women carry their loads on their heads.

correspond to what, for want of better designation, is rendered as "magicians," or perhaps "scribes," and "wise men!" It was before this assemblage, then, of the wisest and most learned, the most experienced in "magic," and the most venerable in the priesthood, that Pharaoh vainly related his dreams. Most wise truly in this world, yet most foolish; most learned, yet most ignorant! What a contrast between the hoary lore of Egypt and the poor Hebrew slave fetched from prison: they professedly claiming, besides their real knowledge, supernatural powers; he avowedly, and at the outset, disclaiming all power on his part, and appealing to God! A grander scene than this Scripture itself does not sketch; and what an illustration of what was true then, true in the days of our Lord, true in those of St. Paul, and to the end of this dispensation: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

And yet when we hear the interpretation through the lips of Joseph, how simple, nay, how obvious does it appear, quite commanding Pharaoh's implicit conviction. Clearly, the two dreams are one - the first bearing on the pastoral, the other on the agricultural life of Egypt. The dreams are about the flocks and the crops. In both cases there is first sevenfold fatness, and then sevenfold leanness, such as to swallow up the previous fatness, and yet to leave no trace of it. The second dream illustrates the first; and yet the first bears already its own interpretation. For the kine were in Egypt revered as symbol of Isis, the goddess of earth as the nourisher; and in the hieroglyphics the cow is taken to mean earth, agriculture, and nourishment. And then these kine were feeding by the banks of that Nile, on whose inundations it solely depended whether the year was to be one of fruitfulness or of famine. Equally Egyptian is the description of the stalk with many ears, which is just one of the kinds of wheat still grown in Egypt. But, we repeat it, obvious as all this now seems to us, the wise men of Egypt stood speechless before their monarch! And what a testimony, we again say, for God, when Joseph is "brought hastily out of the dungeon!" To the challenge of Pharaoh: "I have heard of thee, to wit: Thou hearest a dream to interpret it" - that is, thou only requirest to hear, in

order to interpret a dream, - he answers, simply, emphatically, but believingly: "Ah, not I" ("not to me," "it does not belong to me"), "God will answer the peace of Pharaoh;" i.e., what is for the peace of the king. Nor can we omit to notice one more illustration of the accuracy of the whole narrative, when we read that, in preparation for his appearance before Pharaoh, Joseph "shaved himself." This we know from the monuments was peculiarly Egyptian under such circumstances; whereas among the Hebrews, for example, shaving was regarded as a mark of disgrace.

The interpretation, so modestly yet so decidedly given by Joseph, that the dreams pointed to seven years of unprecedented fruitfulness followed by an equal number of famine, so grievous that the previous plenty should not be known, approved itself immediately to the mind of Pharaoh and "of all his servants." With this interpretation Joseph had coupled most sagacious advice, for the source of which, in so trying a moment, we must look far higher than the ingenuity of man. (See Matthew 10:18, 19) He counseled the king to exact in the years of plenty a tax of one-fifth of the produce of the land, and to have it stored under royal supervision against the seven years of famine. Viewed as an impost, this was certainly not heavy, considering that they were years of unexampled plenty; viewed as a fiscal measure, it was most beneficial as compared with what we may suppose to have been previously a mere arbitrary system of taxation, which in reality was tyrannical exaction; while at the same time it would preserve the people from absolute destruction. Lastly, regarded in the light of a higher arrangement, it is very remarkable that this proportion of giving, on the part of Pharaoh's subjects, afterwards became the basis of that demanded from Israel by Jehovah, their heavenly King. We can scarcely wonder that Pharaoh should have at once appointed such a councilor to superintend the arrangements he had proposed. In point of fact he naturalized him, made him his grand vizier, and publicly proclaimed him "ruler over all the land." Once more every trait in the description is purely Egyptian. Pharaoh gives him his signet, which "was of so much importance with the ancient Egyptian kings, that their names were always enclosed in an oval which represented an

elongated signet." He arrays him "in vestures of byssus," the noble and also the priestly dress; he puts the chain, or "the collar of gold" "about his neck," which was always the mode of investiture of high Egyptian officials; he makes him ride "in the second chariot which he had," and he has it proclaimed before him: "Avrech," that is, "fall down," "bend the knee," or "do obeisance." To complete all, on his naturalization Joseph's name is changed to Zaphnath-paaneah, which most probably means "the supporter of life," or else "the food of the living," although others have rendered it "the savior of the world," and the Rabbis, but without sufficient reason, "the revealer of secrets." Finally, in order to give him a position among the highest nobles of the land, Pharaoh "gave him to wife Asenath" (probably "she who is of Neith," the Egyptian goddess of wisdom), "the daughter of Poti-pherah" ("dedicated to the sun"), priest of On," that is, the chief priest of the ancient ecclesiastical, literary, and probably also political capital of the land, "the City of the Sun." This is the more noteworthy, as the chief of the priesthood was generally chosen from among the nearest relatives of Pharaoh. Yet in all this story there is really nothing extraordinary. As Egypt depends for its produce entirely on the waters of the Nile, the country has at all times been exposed to terrible famines; and one which lasted for exactly seven years is recorded in A.D. 1064-1071, the horrors of which show us the wisdom of Joseph's precautionary measures. Again, so far as the sudden elevation of Joseph is concerned, Eastern history contains many such instances, and indeed, a Greek historian tells us of an Egyptian king who made the son of a mason his own son-in-law, because he judged him the cleverest man in the land. What is remarkable is the marvelous Divine appointment in all this, and the equally marvelous Divine choice of means to bring it about.

Joseph was exactly thirty years old on his elevation, the same age, we note, on which our blessed Lord entered on His ministry as "the Savior of the world," "the Supporter of life," and "the Revealer of secrets." The history of Joseph's administration may be traced in a few sentences. During the seven years of plenty, "he gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering," a notice which remarkably agrees

with "the representations of the monuments, which show that the contents of the granaries were accurately noted by scribes when they were filled." Then, during the years of famine, he first sold corn to the people for money. When all their money was exhausted, they proposed of their own accord to part with their cattle to Pharaoh, and lastly with their land. In the latter case exception was made in favor of the priestly caste, who derived their support directly from Pharaoh. Thus Pharaoh became absolute possessor of all the money, all the cattle, and all the land of Egypt, and that at the people's own request. This advantage would be the greater, if there had been any tendency to dissatisfaction against the reigning house as an alien race. Nor did Joseph abuse the power thus acquired. On the contrary, by a spontaneous act of royal generosity he restored the land to the people on condition of their henceforth paying one-fifth of the produce in lieu of all other taxation. Besides the considerations already stated in favor of such a measure, it must be borne in mind that in Egypt, where all produce depends on the waters of the Nile, a system of canals and irrigation, necessarily kept up at the expense of the State, would be a public necessity.<sup>2</sup> But the statement of Scripture, which excepts from this measure of public taxation "the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's," remarkably tallies with the account of secular historians.

Two things here stand out in the history of Joseph. The same gracious Hand of the Lord, which, during his humiliation, had kept him from sin, disbelief, and despair, now preserved him in his exaltation from pride, and from lapsing into heathenism, to which his close connection with the chief priest of Egypt might easily have led him. More than that, he considered himself "a stranger and a pilgrim" in Egypt. His heart was in his father's home, with his father's God, and on his father's promises. Of both these facts there is abundant evidence. His Egyptian wife bore him two sons "before the years of famine came." He gave to both of them Hebrew, not Egyptian names.

<sup>2</sup> In point of fact, we know that a monarch of the twelfth dynasty, Amenemha III., first established a complete system of canalization, and made the immense artificial lake of Moeris to receive and again distribute the superfluous waters of the Nile.

By the first, Manasseh, or "he that maketh forget," he wished to own the goodness of God, who had made him forget his past sorrow and toil. By the second, Ephraim, or "double fruitfulness," he distinctly recognized that, although Egypt was the land in which God had caused him "to be fruitful," it was still, and must ever be, not the land of his joy but that of his "affliction!" If it be asked why, in his prosperity, Joseph had not informed his father of his life and success, we answer, that in such a history safety lay in quiet waiting upon God. If Joseph had learned the great lesson of his life, it was this, that all in the past had been of God. Nor would He now interfere with further guidance on His part. The Lord would show the way, and lead to the end.<sup>3</sup> But as for him, he believed, and therefore made no haste. Thus would God be glorified, and thus also would Joseph be kept in perfect peace, because he trusted in Him.

**I\_21 The Sons Of Jacob Arrive In Egypt To Buy Corn - Joseph Recognizes His Brothers - Imprisonment Of Simeon - The Sons Of Jacob Come A Second Time, Bringing Benjamin With Them - Joseph Tries His Brethren - He Makes Himself Known To Them - Jacob And His Family Prepare To Descend Into Egypt**

**Genesis 42 to 45**

WE are now approaching a decisive period in the history of the house of Israel. Yet once again everything seems to happen quite naturally, while in reality everything is supernatural. The same causes which led to a diminution of rain in the Abyssinian mountains, and with it of the waters of the Nile, brought drought and famine to Palestine. It is quite in character that, in such straits, the wild, lawless sons of Jacob should have stood helplessly despondent, while the energies of their father were correspondingly roused. "Why do ye look one upon another? . . . I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence." The ten sons of Jacob now departed on this errand. But Benjamin, who had taken the place of Joseph in his father's heart, was not sent with them, perhaps from real fear of

"mischief" by the way, possibly because his father did not quite trust the honest intentions of his sons. The next scene presents to us the Hebrew strangers among a motley crowd of natives and foreigners, who had come for corn; while Joseph, in all the state of the highest Egyptian official, superintends the sale. In true Eastern fashion the sons of Jacob make lowest obeisance before "the governor over the land." Of course they could not have recognized in him, who looked, dressed, and spoke as an Egyptian noble, the lad who, more than twenty years before, had, in "the anguish of his soul," "besought" them not to sell him into slavery. The same transformation had not taken place in them, and Joseph at once knew the well-remembered features of his brethren. But what a change in their relative positions! As he saw them bending lowly before him, his former dreams came vividly back to him. Surely, one even much less devout than Joseph would, in that moment, have felt that a Divine Hand had guided the past for a Divine purpose. Personal resentment or pique could not have entered into his mind at such a time. If, therefore, as some have thought, severity towards his brethren partially determined his conduct, this must have been quite a subordinate motive. At any rate, it is impossible to suppose that he cherished any longer feelings of anger, when shortly afterwards, on their expression of deep penitence, "he turned himself about from them and wept." But we prefer regarding Joseph's conduct as consistent throughout. The appearance of his brothers before him seemed to imply that God had not meant to separate him from his family, nor yet that he should return to them, but that they should come to him, and that he had been sent before to keep them alive. But for such a reunion of the family it was manifestly needful, that their hearts and minds should have undergone an entire change from that unscrupulous envy which had prompted them to sell him into slavery. This must be ascertained before he made himself known to them. Moreover, its reality must be tested by the severest trial to which their altered feelings could be subjected.

Thus viewing it, we can understand the whole conduct of Joseph. Of course, his first object would be to separate the sons of Jacob from the crowd of other purchasers, so as to deal specially

<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence, that at that time Joseph knew that God purposed to reunite him again to his family, far less that they were to come to him into Egypt.



with them, without, however, awakening their suspicions; his next to ascertain the state of matters at home. Then he would make them taste undeserved sorrow by the exercise of an arbitrary power, against which they would be helpless - even as Joseph had been in their hands. Thus they might see their past sin in their present sorrow. All these objects were attained by one and the same means. Joseph charged them with being spies, who, on pretense of buying corn, had come to find out the defenseless portions of the land. The accusation was not unreasonable in the then state of Egypt, nor uncommon in Eastern countries. It was not only that this afforded a pretext for dealing separately with them, but their answer to the charge would inform Joseph about the circumstances of his family. For, naturally, they would not only protest their innocence, but show the inherent improbability of such an imputation. Here no argument could be more telling than that they were "all one man's sons," since no one would risk the lives of all his children in so dangerous a business. But this was not enough for Joseph. By reiterating the charge, he led them to enter into further details, from which he learned that both his father and Benjamin were alive. Still their reference to himself as one "who is not," seemed to imply persistence in their former deceit, and must have strengthened his doubts as to their state of mind. But now experience of violence would show them not only their past guilt, but that, however God might seem to delay, He was the avenger of all wrong. More than that, if Benjamin were placed relatively to them in the same circumstances of favoritism as Joseph had been; and if, instead of envying and hating him, they were prepared, even when exposed through him to shame and danger, not only to stand by him, but to suffer in his stead, then they had repented in the truest sense, and their state of mind was the opposite of what it had been twenty years ago.<sup>4</sup> Proceeding on this plan, Joseph first imprisoned all the ten, proposing to release one of their number to fetch Benjamin, in order to test, as he said, the truthfulness of their statements.

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<sup>4</sup> This is substantially the view taken by Luther, and presented in his usual quaint and forcible language.

This excessive harshness was probably intended to strike terror into their hearts; and, at the end of three days, he so far relented as to retain only one of their number as a hostage; at the same time encouraging them both by the statement that, in so doing, his motive was "fear of God," and by the assurance that, once satisfied of their innocence, he cherished no evil design against them. The reference to "fear of God" on the part of an Egyptian, and this apparent shrinking from needless rigor, must have cut them to the heart, as it brought out in contrast their own implacable conduct towards Joseph. Simeon was chosen to remain behind as hostage, because he was the next oldest to Reuben, who was not detained, since he had endeavored to save the life of Joseph. This also must have contributed to remind them of their former wrong; and, for the first time, they avow to one another their bitter guilt in the past, and how God was now visiting it. So poignant were their feelings that, in the presence of Joseph, they spoke of it, in their own Hebrew, ignorant that Joseph, who had conversed with them through an interpreter, understood their words. Joseph was obliged hastily to withdraw, so as not to betray himself; but he wavered not in his purpose. Simeon was bound before their eyes, and the rest were dismissed; but each with ample provender for the journey, besides the corn they had bought, and with the purchase-money secretly restored to them.

The terror with which the unexpected turn of events had inspired them was deepened when, at their first night's quarters, one of them discovered the money in his sack. But, as before, the impression was wholesome. They traced in this also the avenging hand of God: "What is this that God hath done unto us?"

The narrative which, on their return, they had to tell their father was sufficiently sad. But the discovery they now made, that the money which they had paid had been secretly put back into each man's sack, seemed to imply some deep design of mischief, and filled Jacob and his sons with fresh fears. If the condition of their again appearing before the ruler of Egypt was, that they must bring Benjamin with them, then he, who had already lost two sons, would refuse to expose to such a risk his



darling, the last remaining pledge of his Rachel. Reuben, indeed, volunteered the strange guarantee of his own two sons: "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee." But this language was little calculated to reassure the heart of Jacob. For a time it seemed as if Jacob's former sorrow was to be increased by the loss of Simeon, and as if Joseph and his family were never again to meet.

If we ask ourselves why Joseph should have risked this, or added to his father's sorrow, we answer, to the first question, that, since Joseph now knew the circumstances of his family, and had Simeon beside him, he could at any time, on need for it appearing, have communicated with his father. As to the second difficulty, we must all feel that this grief and care could not be spared to his father if his brothers were to be tried, proved, and prepared for their mission. And did it not seem as if Joseph had rightly understood the will of God in this matter, since the heart of his brethren had been at once touched to own their past sin and the Hand of God?

Could he not then still further commit himself to God in well-doing, and trust Him? Nay, could he not also trust Jacob's faith to bear up under this trial? At most it would be short, and how blessed to all the fruits expected from it! Once more the event proved the correctness of his views. As the stock of provisions, which the sons of Jacob had brought, became nearly exhausted, a fresh application to the royal granaries of Egypt was absolutely necessary. This time it was Judah who offered himself in surety for Benjamin. His language was so calm, affectionate, and yet firm, as to inspire Jacob with what confidence can be derived from the earnest, good purpose of a true man. But he had higher consolation - that of prayer and faith: "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin." Yet, even if God had otherwise appointed, - if He saw fit to take from him his children, his faith would rise to this also: "And I, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved!" - good is the will of the Lord, and he would bow before it.

It is touching, as it were, to watch the trembling hands of the old man as he makes feeble attempts to ward off the wrath of the dreaded Egyptian. It was a famine-year, and, naturally, there would be

scarcity of the luxuries which were usually exported from the East to Egypt. Let them, then, take a present of such dainties to the Egyptian - "a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." As for the money which had been put back into their sacks, it might have been an oversight. Let them take it again with them, along with the price of what corn they were now to purchase. And so let them go forth in the name of the God of Israel - Benjamin, and all the rest. He would remain behind alone, as at the fords of Jabbok, - no, not alone; but in faith and patience awaiting the issue. Presently the ten brothers, with more anxious hearts than Joseph ever had on his way to Egypt or in the slave-market, are once more in the dreaded presence of the Egyptian. Joseph saw the new-comers, and with them what he judged to be his youngest brother, whom he had left in his home a child only a year old. Manifestly, it was neither the time nor the place to trust himself to converse with them. So he gave his steward orders to take them to his house, and that they should dine with him at noon. Joseph had spoken in Egyptian, which seems to have been unknown to the sons of Jacob. When they saw themselves brought to the house of Joseph, it immediately occurred to them that they were to be charged with theft of the former purchase-money. But the steward with kindly words allayed the fears which made them hesitate before entering "at the door of the house."

The sight of Simeon, who was at once restored to them, must have increased their confidence. Presently preparations were made for the banquet. It was a deeply trying scene for Joseph which ensued when he met his brethren on his return home. Little could they imagine what thoughts passed through his mind, as in true Oriental fashion they laid out the humble presents his father had sent, and lowly "bowed themselves to him to the earth." His language ill concealed his feelings. Again and again he inquired for his father, and as they replied: "Thy servant our father is in good health; he is yet alive," they again "bowed clown their heads, and made obeisance." But when he fastened his eyes on Benjamin, his own mother's son, and had faltered it out, so unlike an Egyptian: "God be gracious unto thee, my son," he was obliged hastily to withdraw, "for his bowels did

yearn upon his brother." Twenty-two years had passed since he had been parted from his brother, and Benjamin now stood before him - a youth little older than he when his bitter bondage in prison had commenced. Would they who had once sacrificed him on account of jealousy, be ready again to abandon his brother for the sake of selfishness? At the banquet a fresh surprise awaited the sons of Jacob. Of course, after the Egyptian fashion, Joseph ate by himself, and the Egyptians by themselves; he as a member of the highest caste, and they from religious scruples. We know from secular history that the Egyptians abstained from certain kinds of meat, and would not eat with the knives and forks, nor from the cooking utensils which had been used by those of any other nation. But it must have seemed unaccountable, that at the banquet their places were arranged exactly according to their ages. How could the Egyptian have known them, and what mysterious circumstances surrounded them in his presence? Yet another thing must have struck them. In their father's house the youngest of their number, the son of Rachel, had been uniformly preferred before them all. And now it was the same in the Egyptian palace! If the Egyptian ruler "sent messes unto them from before him," "Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs." Why this mark of unusual distinction, as it was regarded in ancient times? <sup>5</sup>

However, the banquet itself passed pleasantly, and early next morning the eleven, gladsome and thankful, were on their way back to Canaan. But the steward of Joseph's house had received special instructions. As before, each "bundle of money" had been restored in every man's sack. But, besides, he had also placed in that of Benjamin, Joseph's own cup, or rather his large silver bowl. The brothers had not traveled far when the steward hastily overtook them. Fixing upon the eleven the stain of base ingratitude, he charged them with stealing the "bowl" out of which "his lord drank, and whereby, indeed, he divined." Of course this statement of the steward by no means proves that Joseph actually did divine by means of this "cup."

On the contrary, such could not have been the case, since it was of course impossible to divine, out of a cup that had been stolen from him, that it was stolen (ver. 15)! But, no doubt, there was in Joseph's house, as in that of all the great sages of Egypt, the silver bowl, commonly employed for divination, in which unknown events were supposed to appear in reflection from the water, sometimes after gems or gold (with or without magical inscriptions and incantations) had been cast into the cup, to increase the sheen of the broken rays of light. Similar practices still prevail in Egypt.

The charge of treachery and of theft so took the brothers by surprise, that, in their conscious innocence, they offered to surrender the life of the guilty and the liberty of all the others, if the cup were found with any of them. But the steward had been otherwise instructed. He was to isolate Benjamin from the rest. With feigned generosity he now refused their proposal, and declared his purpose only to retain the guilty as bondsman. The search was made, and the cup found in the sack of Benjamin. Now the first great trial of their feelings ensued. They were all free to go home to their own wives and children; Benjamin alone was to be a bondsman. The cup had been found in his sack! Granting that, despite appearances, they knew him to be innocent, why should they stand by him? At home he had been set before them as the favorite; nay, for fear of endangering him, their father had well nigh allowed them all, their wives and their children, to perish from hunger. In Egypt, also, he, the youngest, the son of another mother, had been markedly preferred before them. They had formerly got rid of one favorite, why hesitate now, when Providence itself seemed to rid them of another? What need, nay, what business had they to identify themselves with him? Was it not enough that he had been put before them everywhere; must they now destroy their whole family, and suffer their little ones to perish for the sake of one who, to say the best, seemed fated to involve them in misery and ruin? So they might have reasoned. But so they did not reason, nor, indeed, did they reason at all; for in all matters of duty reasoning is ever dangerous, and only absolute, immediate obedience to what is right, is

<sup>5</sup> Among the Spartans a double, among the Cretans a fourfold portion was set before princes and rulers. In Egypt the proportion seems to have been five times.

safe. "They rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."

The first trial was past; the second and final one was to commence. In the presence of Joseph, "they fell before him on the ground" in mute grief. Judah is now the spokesman, and right well does his advocacy prefigure the pleading of his great Descendant. Not a word does he utter in extenuation or in plea. This one thought only is uppermost in his heart: "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." Not guilty indeed on this charge, but guilty before God, who hath avenged their iniquity! How, then, can they leave Benjamin in his undeserved bondage, when not he, but they have really been the cause of this sorrow? But Joseph, as formerly his steward, rejects the proposal as unjust, and offers their liberty to all except Benjamin. This gives to Judah an opening for pleading, in language so tender, graphic, and earnest, that few have been able to resist its pathos. He recounts the simple story, how the great Egyptian lord had at the first inquired whether they had father or brother, and how they had told him of their father at home, and of the child of his old age who was with him, the last remaining pledge of his wedded love, to whom the heart of the old man clave. Then the vizier had asked the youth to be brought, and they had pleaded that his going would cost the life of his father. But the famine had compelled them to ask of their father even this sacrifice. And the old man had reminded them of what they knew only too well: how his wife, the only one whom even now he really considered such, had borne him two sons; one of those had gone out from him, just as it was now proposed Benjamin should go, and he had not seen him since, and he had said: "Surely he is torn in pieces." And now, if they took this one also from him, and mischief befell him, his gray hairs would go down with sorrow to the grave. What the old man apprehended had come to pass, no matter how. But could he, Judah, witness the grief and the death of his old father? Was he not specially to blame, since upon his guarantee he had consented to part with him? Nay, he had been his surety; and he now asked neither pardon nor favor, only this he entreated, to be allowed to remain as bondsman instead of the lad, and to let him go back with his brethren. He besought

slavery as a boon, for how could he "see the evil" that should "come on his father?"

Truly has Luther said: "What would I not give to be able to pray before the Lord as Judah here interceded for Benjamin, for it is a perfect model of prayer, nay, of the strong feeling which must underlie all prayer." And, blessed be God, One has so interceded for us, Who has given Himself as our surety, and become a bondsman for us. (Psalm 40:6, 7; Philippians 2:6-8) His advocacy has been heard; His substitution accepted; and His intercession for us is ever continued, and ever prevails. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," and "hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

The last trial was now past. Indeed, it had been impossible to continue it longer, for Joseph "could not refrain himself." All strangers were hastily removed, and Joseph, with all tenderness of affection and delicacy of feeling, made himself known to them as the brother whom they had sold into Egypt, but whom in reality God had sent before for the purpose not only of saving their lives, but of preserving their posterity, that so His counsel of mercy with the world might be accomplished. Then let them not be grieved, for God had overruled it all. Three times must he speak it, and prove his forgiveness by the most loving marks, before they could credit his words or derive comfort from them. But one object Joseph had now in view: to bring his father and all his family to be near him, that he might nourish them; for as yet only two out of the seven years of famine had passed. And in this purpose he was singularly helped by Divine Providence. Tidings of what had taken place reached Pharaoh, and the generous conduct of his vizier pleased the king. Of his own accord he also proposed what Joseph had intended; accompanying his invitation with a royal promise of ample provision, and sending "wagons" for the transport of the women and children. On his part, Joseph added rich presents for his father. When the eleven returned, first alone, to their father, and told him all, "the heart of Jacob fainted, for he believed them not." Presently, as he saw the Egyptian "wagons" arriving, a great reaction took place. "The spirit of Jacob their father revived."

The past, with its sorrows and its sin, seemed blotted out from his memory. Once more it was not, as before, Jacob who spoke, but "Israel" (the prince with God and man) who said, "It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

## **I\_22 Departure Of Jacob And His Family Into Egypt - Jacob's Interview With Pharaoh - His Last Illness And Command To Be Buried In Canaan - Adoption Of Ephraim And Manasseh Among The Sons Of Israel**

### **Genesis 46 to 48**

A DIFFICULT path lay before the patriarch Jacob. As yet he had had no direct intimation from God that he should remove with his family to Egypt. But, on the other hand, God's dealings with Joseph, the invitation of Pharaoh, and the famine in Canaan served to point it out as the period of which God had spoken to Abram (Genesis 15:13), when his seed should leave Canaan, and become strangers and enslaved in a land that was not theirs. He knew that two things must take place before the return of Israel to, and their final possession of the promised land. "The iniquity of the Amorites" must be "full," and the family of Israel must have grown into a nation. The former was still future, and as for the latter it is easy to see that any further stay in Canaan would have been hindering and not helpful to it. For at the time Canaan was divided among numerous independent tribes, with one or more of whom the sons of Jacob, as they increased in numbers, must either have coalesced or entered into warfare. Still more dangerous to their religion would have been their continuance among and intercourse with the Canaanites. It was quite otherwise in Egypt. Thither they went professedly as sojourners, and for a temporary purpose. The circumstance that they were shepherds, and as such "an abomination to the Egyptians," kept them separate, alike politically, religiously, and socially, from the rest of the people, and, indeed, caused them to be placed in a district by themselves. Yet "the land of Goshen" was the best for the increase of their substance in flocks and herds. These may be designated as the outward reasons for their removal into Egypt at that time; the higher and

spiritual bearings of the event have already been stated.

The assurance which Jacob needed for his comfort was granted him, as he reached Beersheba, the southern boundary of the promised land. There the patriarch offered "sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac," and there the faithful Lord spake to him "in the visions of the night." His words gave Jacob this fourfold assurance, that God was the covenant-God, and that Jacob need not fear to go down into Egypt; that God would there make of him a great nation, in other words, that the transformation from the family to the nation should take place in Egypt; that God would go down with him; and, lastly, that He would surely bring him up again. And each of these four assurances was introduced by an emphatic I, to indicate the personal and direct source of all these blessings. Thus strengthened, Israel pursued his journey in confidence of spirit.

As so often in Scripture, a very important lesson is conveyed to us in this connection, though in a manner to escape superficial observation. It has been repeatedly remarked, that the Bible does not furnish the history of individuals as such, but gives that of the kingdom of God. This appears most clearly in the list, which is introduced at this stage, of "the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt." Manifestly, it is not to be taken as literally the catalogue of those who companied with Jacob on his journey to Egypt. For one thing, some of them, such as Joseph himself, and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and their children, if at the time they had any, were already in Egypt. Then, some of the grandsons and great-grandsons of Jacob, mentioned in this catalogue, must have been born after the sons of Jacob came into Egypt; while, on the other hand, there must have been others who are not mentioned, since it is impossible to imagine that all the families of those whose further descendants are not named became extinct. But if the principle is kept in view, that only what concerns the kingdom of God is recorded, then all becomes plain. We now regard this not as a biographical list, but as a genealogical table, drawn up with a special object in view. That object is, to enumerate first the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and then such of their descendants

as founded the separate and distinct "families" in each tribe. Accordingly this genealogical table contains, besides the names of such descendants of Jacob as literally went with him into Egypt, also those of such as became "heads of houses." This appears quite clearly from a comparison with Numbers 26, where the "families" of Israel are specially enumerated. Among their founders not one single name appears that had not been previously given in the earlier table. Certain names, however, have dropped out in the second table, viz., that of a son of Simeon, and of one of Asher, and those of three sons of Benjamin - no doubt, either because they became extinct, or else because they were removed from their places through some judgment. Nor does it seem strange to find the names of the future heads of families beforehand enumerated in this catalogue. Do we not similarly read, that in Abraham yet unborn generations of Levi had given tithes to Melchizedek? Indeed, Scripture constantly expresses itself on this wise. Thus we read that God said to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob: "I will give thee the land," when, as yet, they were but strangers and pilgrims in it; and, many centuries before the event took place: "In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed;" while to Jacob himself God spake: "I will bring thee up again," from Egypt. For with God nothing is, in the real sense, future. "He seeth the end from the beginning." But when the sacred text sums up the genealogical table with the statement that "all the souls" were "threescore and ten," we think of the significance of the number, seven times ten, seven being the sacred covenant number, and ten that of perfectness.<sup>6</sup>

On his journey Jacob sent Judah in advance, to inform Joseph of his arrival. He hastened to receive his father in the border-land of Goshen.

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<sup>6</sup> The Greek version of the LXX gives the number at seventy-five, and from it, as best known among the Jews at the time, St. Stephen quotes (Acts 7:14). This number results, of course, from a slightly different arrangement of the table. That in the Hebrew text names of Leah: Six sons, twenty-five grandsons, and two great-grandsons, besides Dinah; of Zilpah: Two sons, eleven grandsons, two great-grandsons, and one daughter; of Rachel: Two sons, and twelve grandsons; and of Bilhah: Two sons and five grandsons. The two "daughter" are inserted for special reasons.

Their meeting, after so long a parting, was most affectionate and touching. The Hebrew expression, rendered in our Authorized Version: "Joseph . . . presented himself unto him," implies extraordinary splendor of appearance. But when in the presence of his Hebrew father, the great Egyptian lord was once more only the lad Joseph. He "fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." It now became the duty of Joseph to inform Pharaoh of the actual arrival of his family in Egypt, so as to obtain at the same time a fresh welcome, and a temporary concession of the land of Goshen for their settlement. For this purpose Joseph went first alone to the king, and next introduced five of his brothers. Both he and they laid stress on the fact that by occupation the family were shepherds. This would secure their stay in Goshen, as the district was most suitable for pasturage, and at the same time most remote and most isolated from the great bulk of the people. For the Egyptian monuments show that shepherds were considered as the lowest class or caste, probably because their nomadic habits were so opposed to the settled civilization of the country. Another point which the sons of Jacob were specially to bring out before Pharaoh was this, that they had come only "to sojourn," not to settle in the land, so that, as they had arrived at the first upon the express invitation of the king, they might be at liberty freely to depart when the time for it came. It is of importance to notice this in connection with the wrong afterwards done in the forcible detention of their descendants. It happened as Joseph had expected. Pharaoh assigned to them a dwelling-place "in the best of the land," that is, in the portion most suitable, in fact, in almost the only district suitable for pasturage - in the borderland between Canaan and Egypt, the land of Goshen, or of Ramses, as it is sometimes called from the city of that name. A careful and able scholar has thus expressed himself on the subject: "The land of Goshen lay between the eastern part of the ancient Delta, and the western border of Palestine; it was scarcely a part of Egypt Proper, was inhabited by other foreigners besides the Israelites, and was in its geographical names rather Semitic than Egyptian; it was a pasture-land, especially suited to a shepherd people, and sufficient for the Israelites, who there

prospered, and were separate from the main body of the Egyptians."<sup>7</sup>

Before settling him in Goshen, Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh, who received him with the courtesy of an Eastern monarch, and the respect which the sight of age, far exceeding the ordinary term of life in Egypt, would ensure. In acknowledgment of Pharaoh's kindness, "Jacob blessed" him; and in answer to the question about his age, compared "the days of the years" of his own "pilgrimage" with those of his fathers. Abraham had lived one hundred and seventy-five, Isaac one hundred and eighty years; while Jacob was at the age of only one hundred and thirty, apprehending the approach of death. Compared to theirs, his days had not only been "few" but "evil," full of trial, sorrow, and care, ever since his flight from his father's house. Yet, however differing in outward events, the essential character of their lives was the same. His and theirs were equally a "pilgrimage." For,

"these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country, . . . a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:13, 14, 16)

And in such wise also must each of our lives, whatever its outward history, be to us only a "pilgrimage."

But seventeen more years were granted to Israel in his quiet retirement of Goshen. Feeling that now the time of his departure had really come, he sent for Joseph. It was not to express weak regrets, nor even primarily to take such loving farewell as, under such circumstances, might be proper and fitting. Israel, as he is here again characteristically

named,<sup>8</sup> was preparing for another great act of faith. On his dying bed, he still held fast by the promises of God concerning the possession of Canaan, and all that was connected with it; and he exacted an oath from his son to bury him with his fathers, in the cave of Machpelah. Having obtained this solemn promise, it is said, "he bowed himself in worship over the head of the bed."

One thing still remained to be done. As yet the sons of Joseph had not been formally adopted into the family of Israel. But the two oldest of them, Manasseh and Ephraim, were to become heads of separate tribes; for Joseph was to have this right of the firstborn - two portions in Israel. Therefore, when, shortly after his interview with his father, Joseph was informed that the last fatal sickness had come upon him, he hastened to bring his two sons that they might be installed as co-heirs with the other sons of Jacob. In this Joseph signally showed his faith. Instead of seeking for his sons the honors which the court of Egypt offered them, he distinctly renounced all, to share the lot of the despised shepherd race. For the first time we here find the blessing accompanied with the laying on of hands.<sup>9</sup>

But Jacob's eyes were dim, and when Joseph had brought his two sons close to his father, placing Manasseh, as the eldest, to his father's right hand, and Ephraim, as the younger, to his left, he ascribed it to failure of sight when Israel crossed his hands, laying the right on Ephraim and the left on Manasseh. But Jacob had been "guiding his hands wittingly." In fact, he had done it prophetically. The event proved the truth of this prophecy. At the time of Moses, indeed, Manasseh still counted twenty thousand men more than Ephraim. (Numbers 26:34, 37) But this comparative relationship was reversed in the days of the Judges; and ever afterwards Ephraim continued, next to Judah, the most powerful tribe in Israel. What, however, chiefly impresses us is,

<sup>7</sup> It is well known that one of the Egyptian monuments exhibits so striking an illustration of this entrance of the children of Israel into Egypt, that some have regarded it, though on insufficient grounds, as an actual representation of the event. The strangers are evidently of Semitic race, and came with their wives and children.

<sup>8</sup> It is most instructive to notice in this history the frequent change of the names of Jacob and Israel.

<sup>9</sup> The laying on of hands formed also an essential part in offering sacrifices. The offerer laid his hands on the victim, and confessed his sins, - thus transferring them, and constituting the sacrifice his substitute.



to see how intensely all the feelings, remembrances, and views of the dying man are intertwined with his religion. No longer does he cherish any hard thoughts about his "evil" days in the past. His memory of former days is now only of the gentleness and the goodness of God, Who had led him all through his pilgrimage. His feelings come out most fully in the words of blessing which he spake: "The God, before Whose face walked my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; the God Who pastured <sup>10</sup> me from my existence on unto this day; THE ANGEL Who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, be named upon them, and let them increase to a multitude in the midst of the land." In this threefold reference to God as the covenant-God, the Shepherd and the Angel-Redeemer, we have a distinct anticipation of the truth concerning the blessed Trinity.

The blessing having been spoken, "Jacob gave to his son Joseph," as a special gift, "that parcel of ground" by Sychar (John 4:5), the ancient Shechem, which he had originally bought of "the children of Heth;" (Genesis 33:19) but which, as he prophesied, he - that is, his descendants - would have to take again with sword and bow out of the hand of the Amorite. In this possession of Joseph, many centuries later, rested the Redeemer-Shepherd, when, even in His weariness, He called and pastured His flock. (John 4) But as for Jacob, the last assurance which he gave to his son was emphatically to repeat this confession of his faith: "Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers." For men pass away, but the word and purpose of the Lord abide forever!

### **I\_23 The Last Blessing Of Jacob - Death Of Jacob - Death Of Joseph**

#### **Genesis 49, 50**

THE last scene had now come, and Jacob gathered around his dying couch his twelve sons. The words which he spake to them were of mingled blessing and prediction. Before him, in prophetic

vision, unrolled, as it were, pictures of the tribes of which his sons were to be the ancestors; and what he saw he sketched in grand outlines. It is utterly impossible to regard these prophetic pictures as exact representations of any one definite period or even event in the history of Israel. They are sketches of the tribes in their grand characteristics, rather than predictions, either of special events, or of the history of Israel as a whole. And to them applies especially the description which one has given of prophetic visions generally, that "they are pictures drawn without perspective," - that is, such that you cannot discern the distance from you of the various objects. Two other general remarks may be helpful to the reader. It will be observed that, generally, in the "blessing" spoken, the name of the ancestor seems to unfold the future character and history of the tribe. Secondly, as against all cavilers, it may be said deliberately, that these words of blessing must have been spoken by Jacob himself. When we attempt to imagine them as spoken at any other period in the history of Israel, we find ourselves surrounded by insuperable difficulties. For these words can only apply to the tribes as Jacob viewed them. They could not have been written at any other period, since in that case every later writer would have said something quite inapplicable to one or other of the tribes, so that he could not have used this precise language concerning them all. With these brief prefatory remarks we address ourselves to the words of "blessing:"

Reuben, my firstborn thou,

My might and the firstling of my strength,

Pre-eminence of dignity and pre-eminence of power -

Such should have been the position of Reuben, as the firstborn, had it not been for the "upboiling" of his passions and his consequent sin. Hence Jacob continues:

Upboiling like water,

Thou shalt not have the pre-eminence,

Because thou wentest up thy father's bed,

Then defiledst thou it -

He went up my couch!

<sup>10</sup> Or "shepherded," like Psalms 23:1; 28:9. See also its fullness in John 10:11.



The sons next in age to Reuben were Simeon and Levi. Their wanton cruelty at Shechem, from which Jacob recoiled with horror even on his death-bed, had made them "brethren," or companions in evil. As they had united for evil, so God would scatter them in Israel, so that they should not form independent and compact tribes. In point of fact, we know that even at the second numbering of Israel (Numbers 26:14), Simeon had sunk to be the smallest tribe. In the last blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33), no mention at all is made of Simeon. Nor does this tribe seem to have obtained any well-defined portion in the land, but only to have held certain cities within the possession of Judah. (Joshua 19:1-9) Lastly, we know that such of the families of Simeon as largely increased and became powerful, afterwards left the Holy Land, and settled outside its boundaries. (1 Chronicles 4:38-43) The tribe of Levi also received not any possession in Israel; only that their scattering was changed from a curse into a blessing by their election to the priesthood. This scattering of two tribes was the significant answer which God in His righteous providence made to their ancestors' attempt at vindicating the honor of their race by carnal means and weapons.

Simeon and Levi are brethren;  
 Instruments of violence are their swords;  
 Into their council come not thou, oh my soul,  
 Unto their assembly be not thou united, mine honor;  
 For in their anger they slew men,  
 And in their self-will they hamstrung oxen.  
 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.

The three older brothers being thus dispossessed, and Joseph receiving the twofold territorial portion, the other privileges of the birthright are solemnly transferred to Judah. He is to be the leader, "the lion." As the lion is king of the forest, so was Judah to have royal sway, through David onwards to the Son of David, the Shiloh, unto Whom, as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," all nations should render homage and obedience.

Similarly, fullness of earthly riches was to distinguish the lot of Judah, these earthly blessings being themselves emblems of the spiritual riches dispensed in the portion of Judah. The whole description here is full of Messianic allusions, which were afterwards taken up in the prophecy of Balaam (Numbers 23:24; 24:9, 17); then applied to David (Psalm 89:20-37); and from him carried forward in prophecy, through Psalm 72, Isaiah 9, 11, to Ezekiel 21:27, and Zechariah 9:9, till they were finally realized in Jesus Christ, "sprung out of Juda," (Hebrews 7:14) "our peace, who hath made both one," (Ephesians 2:14) and who "must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet," (1 Corinthians 15:25) "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," Who "hath prevailed." (Revelation 5:5)

In the blessing upon Judah we note, for the first time, how the prophetic significance of the name unfolds and appears:

Judah thou! Thy brethren shall praise thee!  
 Thy hand in the neck of thine enemies,  
 Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee.  
 A lion's whelp <sup>11</sup> is Judah;  
 From the prey, my son, thou art gone up:  
 He stoopeth down, he coucheth like a lion ,  
 And like a lioness - who shall rouse him?  
 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
 Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
 Until Shiloh <sup>12</sup> come,  
 And to Him willing obedience of the nations!  
 He bindeth unto the vine his foal,  
 And unto the choice vine his ass's colt;  
 He washeth his garments in wine,  
 And in the blood of grapes his raiment;  
 Sparkling his eyes from wine,

<sup>11</sup> A young lion for agility and grace; a full-grown lion for strength and majesty; a lioness whose fierceness defends her offspring.

<sup>12</sup> This is not the place for critical discussion; but we state it as our deliberate conviction, that the term Shiloh can only refer to a personal designation of the Messiah, whatever the derivative meaning of the word may be.

And white his teeth from milk.

As local illustrations of this richness of the portion of Judah, the reader will remember that the best wine in Palestine grew near Hebron and Engedi (Numbers 13:23, etc.; Song of Solomon 1:14), and that some of the best pasture-land was south of Hebron, about Tekoa and Carmel. (1 Samuel 25:2; 2 Chronicles 26:10; Amos 1:1)

The next blessing also connects itself with the name of Zebulun, or "dwelling," although it requires to be borne in mind, in further illustration of the fact that it was not intended as a literal prediction, that the possessions of the tribe of Zebulun, so far as we can judge from Joshua 19:10-16, never actually touched the Mediterranean nor the Sea of Galilee, nor yet literally bordered on Zidon:

Zebulun - by the coast of seas shall he dwell,  
And that, by the coast of ships,  
And his side towards Zidon.

The name of Issachar, "reward," or "hire," is also emblematical of the character of the tribe, as, in its rich portion of Lower Galilee, it preferred labor with quietude, to power and domination:

Issachar is a bony ass,  
Crouching between the folds.  
He saw rest, that it was a boon,  
And the land, that it was pleasant,  
And he bent his shoulder to bear,  
And became a tributary servant.

The allusion in the case of Dan, or "judgment," is again to the name. Although Dan was only the son of a bondmaid, he should not be behind his brethren, but "give judgment" to his people, that is, to Israel - the reference being possibly to such men as Samson, though also generally to the character of the tribe. There is another mysterious and most important allusion here, to which we shall immediately advert:

Dan shall give judgment to his people,  
As one of the tribes of Israel.  
Dan shall be a serpent by the way,  
An adder in the path,

Which biteth the heels of the horse

So that backwards falleth his rider.

We shall not presume to offer an authoritative explanation of this comparison of Dan to a serpent, and to that kind of adder which, being of the color of the sand, remains unobserved till it has given its deadly bite. We only put it as a suggestion, whether this may not contain an allusion to apostasy or to the Antichrist <sup>13</sup>, at the same time noting that the name of Dan is omitted from the list of the tribes in Revelation 7:5-8.

It is also significant that, immediately after the mention of these contests in connection with Dan, Jacob bursts forth in a prayer, intended, as says Calvin, not only to express his own personal faith and hope, but his confidence for his descendants. Quite the oldest Jewish commentary, or rather paraphrase, puts it this way: "My soul waiteth not for the deliverance of Gideon, the son of Joash, for it was only temporal; nor for that of Samson, for it was but transient; but for the redemption by the Messiah, the Son of David, which in Thy word Thou hast promised to send to Thy people, the children of Israel; for this, Thy salvation, my soul waiteth."

For Thy salvation wait I, oh Jehovah!

In reference to Gad, we have a threefold allusion to a kindred word, signifying oppression. To the prediction itself we cannot attach any definite historical fulfillment:

Gad - a press presseth upon him,  
But he presseth on their heel.

In the case of Asher, the reference is evidently to the most fertile possession of that tribe, extending from Mount Carmel to the land of Tyre, the district richest in corn and oil (1 Kings 5:11):

Out of Asher fatness: his bread -  
And he yieldeth royal dainties.

The allusion as to Naphtali is to the graceful agility and fleetness of the people, and also to their mental ability and quickness:

Naphtali is a hind let loose -

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<sup>13</sup> Many of the Fathers have regarded this "serpent" as referring to Antichrist.

He uttereth words of beauty.

At last Jacob comes to the name of his loved son Joseph. Then it seems as if his whole heart were indeed overflowing. First, he sketches his fruitfulness, like that of a fruit-free "planted by rivers of water," (Psalm 1:3) whose boughs run over the wall (Comp. Psalm 80:8-11); then he describes his strength, as derived from God Himself; and, lastly, he pours forth richest blessings, richer far than any his ancestors had bestowed:

Son of a fruit-tree (a fruitful bough) is Joseph,

Son of a fruit-tree by a well,

Whose daughters (branches) spread over the wall.

The archers harass him,

They shoot at him, and hate him;

But his bow abideth in firmness,

And the arms of his hands remain supple

From the Hands of the Strong One of Jacob,

From thence, from the Shepherd, from the Rock of Israel,

From the God of thy father - may He help thee!

And from the Almighty -

may He bless thee!

Blessings of heaven from above!

Blessings of the deep that lieth beneath!

Blessings of the breasts and of the womb!

The blessings of thy father exceed

The blessings of my ancestors

Unto the bound of the everlasting hills <sup>14</sup> -

May they come on the head of Joseph,

And on the crown of the head of him who is separated among his brethren!

The allusions to Benjamin will be understood by a reference to Ehud (Judges 3:15), to Judges 5:14;

<sup>14</sup> That is, as far as the mountains overtop the plains, so the blessings which Joseph now receives exceed those which any of Jacob's ancestors had bestowed.

20:16; 1 Chronicles 8:40; 12:2; 2 Chronicles 14:8; 17:17, and to the history of Saul and of Jonathan:

Benjamin - a wolf who ravins:

In the morning he devoureth prey,

And at even he divideth spoil!

And now, having spoken these his last blessings, Jacob once more charged his sons to bury him in the cave of Machpelah. Then he gathered up his feet into the bed, laid him peacefully down, and without sigh or struggle yielded up the ghost, and was "gathered unto his people."

Such was the end of Jacob - the most pilgrim-like of the pilgrim fathers. His last wishes were obeyed to the letter. The first natural outburst of grief on the part of Joseph past, he "commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father" - either to do the work themselves or to superintend it. Forty days the process lasted, <sup>15</sup> and seventy days, as was their wont, the Egyptians mourned.

At the end of that period Joseph, as in duty bound, applied to Pharaoh, though not personally, since he could not appear before the king in the garb of mourning, craving permission for himself and his retinue to go up and bury his father in the land of Canaan. The funeral procession included, besides Joseph and "all his house," "his brethren, and his father's house," also "all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the

<sup>15</sup> Everything here is truly Egyptian: the number of physicians in Joseph's service, since in Egypt every physician treated only one special kind of disease; the mourning, which always lasted seventy days; and the process of embalming, which took from forty to seventy days. There were two modes of embalming, besides that for the poor - the most elaborate costing about two hundred and fifty pounds, and a simpler one about eighty-one pounds. The brain was first taken out through the nostrils; then an incision made in the left side, and all the intestines extracted, except the kidneys and the heart. The body was next filled with various spices - except frankincense, - sewed up, and steeped in natrum, which is found in the natrum lakes of Egypt, and consists of carbonate, sulphate, and muriate of soda. We here purposely omit a great number of particulars, such as the use of palm-wine in washing the internal parts, the occasional staining of the nails, the elaborate wrapping of the body in byssus, and other varying details. It is remarkable how well all parts of the body, and even the features, were preserved by this process. The body was laid either in an oblong case, or more frequently in one that had the shape of the mummy itself. Our description applies chiefly to the costliest mode of embalming.

land of Egypt," - that is, the principal state and court officials, under a guard of both "chariots and horsemen." So influential and "very great a company" would naturally avoid, for fear of any collisions, the territory of the Philistines, through which the direct road from Egypt lay. They took the circuitous route through the desert and around the Dead Sea - significantly, the same which Israel afterwards followed on their return from Egypt - and halted on the Eastern bank of Jordan, at Goren-ha-Atad, "the buckthorn threshing-floor," or perhaps "the threshing-floor of Atad." The account of the funeral, as that of the embalming, and indeed every other allusion, is strictly in accordance with what we learn from Egyptian monuments and history. The custom of funeral processions existed in every province of Egypt, and representations of such are seen in the oldest tombs. As a German scholar remarks: "When we look at the representations upon the monuments, we can almost imagine that we actually see the funeral train of Jacob." At Goren-ha-Atad other mourning rites were performed during seven days. The attention of the inhabitants of the district was naturally attracted to this "grievous mourning of the Egyptians," and the locality henceforth bore the name of Abel Mizraim, literally "meadow of the Egyptians," but, by slightly altering the pronunciation: "mourning of the Egyptians." Here the Egyptians remained behind, and none but the sons and the household of Jacob stood around his grave at Machpelah.

On their return to Egypt an unworthy suspicion seems to have crossed the minds of Joseph's brethren. What if, now that their father was dead, Joseph were to avenge the wrong he had sustained at their hands? But they little knew his heart, or appreciated his motives. The bare idea of their cherishing such thoughts moved Joseph to tears. Even if bitter feelings had been in his heart, was he "in the place of God" to interfere with His guidance of things? Had it not clearly appeared that, whatever evil they might have thought to do him, "God meant it unto good?" With such declarations, and the assurance that he would lovingly care for them and their little ones, he appeased their fears.

Other fifty-four years did Joseph live in Egypt. He had the joy of seeing his father's blessing commence to be fulfilled. Ephraim's children of the third generation, and Manasseh's grandchildren "were brought up upon his knees." At the good old age of one hundred and ten years, as he felt death approaching, he gathered "his brethren" about him. Joseph was full of honors in Egypt; he had founded a family, than which none was more highly placed. Yet his last act was to disown Egypt, and to choose the lot of Israel - poverty, contempt, and pilgrimage: to renounce the present, in order to cleave unto the future. It was a noble act of faith, true like that of his fathers! His last words were these: "I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." And his last deed was to take a solemn oath of the children of Israel, to carry up his bones with them into the land of promise. In obedience to his wishes they embalmed his body, and laid it in one of those Egyptian coffins, generally made of sycamore wood, which resembled the shape of the human body. And there, through ages of suffering and bondage, stood the figure-like coffin of Joseph, ready to be lifted and carried thence when the sure hour of deliverance had come. Thus Joseph, being dead, yet spake to Israel, telling them that they were only temporary sojourners in Egypt, that their eyes must be turned away from Egypt unto the land of promise, and that in patience of faith they must wait for that hour when God would certainly and graciously fulfill His own promise.

When at the close of this first period of the Covenant-history we look around, we feel as if now indeed "the horror of great darkness" were fast falling upon Israel, which Abraham had experienced as he was shown the future of his descendants. (Genesis 15:12) Already personal intercourse between heaven and earth had ceased. From the time that Jacob had paid his vow in Bethel (Genesis 35:15), no personal manifestation of God, such as had often gladdened his fathers and him, was any more vouchsafed, except on his entrance into Egypt (Genesis 46:2-4), and then for a special purpose. Nor do we read of any such during the whole eventful and trying life of Joseph. And now long centuries of utter silence

were to follow. During all that weary period, with the misery of their bondage and the temptation of idolatry around constantly increasing, there was neither voice from heaven nor visible manifestation to warn or to cheer the children of Israel in Egypt. One mode of guidance was for a time withdrawn. Israel had now only the past to sustain and direct them. But that past, in its history and with its promises, was sufficient. Besides, the torch of prophecy, which the hands of dying Jacob had held, cast its light into the otherwise dark future. Nay, the fact that Joseph's life, which formed the great turning-point in Israel history, had been allowed to pass without visible Divine manifestations to him and to them was in itself significant. For even as his unburied body seemed to preach and to prophesy, so his whole life would appear like a yet unopened or only partially opened book, - a grand unread prophecy, which the future would unfold. And not merely the immediate future, as it concerned Israel; but the more distant future as it concerns the whole Church of God. For, although not the person of Joseph <sup>16</sup>, yet the leading events of his life are typical of the great facts connected with the life and the work of Him who was betrayed and sold by His brethren, but whom "God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior."

## Volume II. The Exodus and the Wanderings in the Wilderness

### Preface

THE period covered by the central books of the Pentateuch is, in many respects, the most important in Old Testament history, not only so far as regards Israel, but the Church at all times. Opening with centuries of silence and seeking Divine forgetfulness during the bondage of Egypt, the pride and power of Pharaoh are suddenly broken by a series of miracles, culminating in the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of Egypt's host.

<sup>16</sup> It deserves notice that the person of Joseph is not mentioned in the Old or the New Testament as a type of Christ. This, of course, does not apply to the facts of his life in their bearing on the future, as these were unquestionably typical.

In that Paschal night and under the blood-sprinkling, Israel as a nation is born of God, and the redeemed people are then led forth to be consecrated at the Mount by ordinances, laws, and judgments. Finally, we are shown the manner in which Jehovah deals with His people, both in judgment and in mercy, till at the last He safely brings them to the promised inheritance.

In all this we see not only the history of the ancient people of God, but also a grand type of the redemption and the sanctification of the Church. There is yet another aspect of it, since this narrative exhibits the foundation of the Church in the Covenant of God, and also the principles of Jehovah's government for all time. For, however great the difference in the development, the essence and character of the covenant of grace are ever the same. The Old and New Testaments are essentially one - not two covenants but one, gradually unfolding into full perfectness, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" of the foundation which is alike that of the apostles and prophets. (Ephesians 2:20)

There is yet a further consideration besides the intrinsic importance of this history. It has, especially of late, been so boldly misrepresented, and so frequently misunderstood, or else it is so often cursorily read - neither to understanding nor yet to profit - that it seemed desirable to submit it anew to special investigation, following the sacred narrative consecutively from Chapter to Chapter, and almost from Section to Section. In so doing, I have endeavored to make careful study of the original text, with the help of the best critical appliances. So far as I am conscious, I have not passed by any real difficulty, nor yet left unheeded any question that had a reasonable claim to be answered. If this implied a more detailed treatment, I hope it may also, with God's blessing, render the volume more permanently useful. Further, it has been my aim, by the aid of kindred studies, to shed additional light upon the narrative, so as to render it vivid and pictorial, enabling readers to realize for themselves the circumstances under which an event took place. Thus I have in the first two chapters sought to read the history of Israel in Egypt by the light of its monuments, and also to portray the political, social, and religious

state of the people prior to the Exodus. Similarly, when following the wanderings of Israel up to the eastern bank of the Jordan, I have availed myself of the best recent geographical investigations, that so the reader might, as it were, see before him the route followed by Israel, the scenery, and all other accessories.

It need scarcely be said, that in studying this narrative the open Bible should always be at hand. But I may remind myself and others, that the only real understanding of any portion of Holy Scripture is that conveyed to the heart by the Spirit of God. And, indeed, throughout, my great object has been, not to supersede the constant and prayerful use of the Bible itself, but rather to lead to those Scriptures, which alone "are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus?"

## **II\_01 Egypt and its History during the Stay of the Children of Israel, as Illustrated by the Bible and Ancient Monuments.**

### **Exodus 1:1-7**

THE devout student of history cannot fail to recognize it as a wonderful arrangement of Providence, that the beginning and the close of Divine revelation to mankind were both connected with the highest intellectual culture of the world. When the apostles went forth into the Roman world, they could avail themselves of the Greek language, then universally spoken, of Grecian culture and modes of thinking. And what Greece was to the world at the time of Christ, that and much more had Egypt been when the children of Israel became a God-chosen nation. Not that in either case the truth of God needed help from the wisdom of this world. On the contrary, in one sense, it stood opposed to it. And yet while history pursued seemingly its independent course, and philosophy, science, and the arts advanced apparently without any reference to revelation, all were in the end made subservient to the furtherance of the kingdom of God. And so it always is. God marvelously uses natural means for supernatural ends, and maketh all things work together to His glory as well as for the good of His people.

It was, indeed, as we now see it, most important that the children of Israel should have been brought into Egypt, and settled there for centuries before becoming an independent nation. The early history of the sons of Jacob must have shown the need alike of their removal from contact with the people of Canaan, and of their being fused in the furnace of affliction, to prepare them for inheriting the land promised unto their fathers. This, however, might have taken place in any other country than Egypt. Not so their training for a nation. For that, Egypt offered the best, or rather, at the time, the only suitable opportunities. True, the stay there involved also peculiar dangers, as their after history proved. But these would have been equally encountered under any other circumstances, while the benefits they derived through intercourse with the Egyptians were peculiar and unique. There is yet another aspect of the matter. When standing before King Agrippa, St. Paul could confidently appeal to the publicity of the history of Christ, as enacted not in some obscure corner of a barbarous land, but in full view of the Roman world "For this thing was not done in a corner." (Acts 26:26) And so Israel's bondage also and God's marvelous deliverance took place on no less conspicuous a scene than that of the ancient world-empire of Egypt.

Indeed, so close was the connection between Israel and Egypt, that it is impossible properly to understand the history of the former without knowing something of the latter. We shall therefore devote this preliminary chapter to a brief description of Egypt. In general, however historians may differ as to the periods when particular events had taken place, the land itself is full of reminiscences of Israel's story. These have been brought to light by recent researches, which almost year by year add to our stock of knowledge. And here it is specially remarkable, that every fresh historical discovery tends to shed light upon, and to confirm the Biblical narratives.

Yet some of the principal arguments against the Bible were at one time derived from the supposed history of Egypt! Thus while men continually raise fresh objections against Holy Scripture, those formerly so confidently relied upon have been removed by further researches, made quite



independently of the Bible, just as an enlarged knowledge will sweep away those urged in our days. Already the Assyrian monuments, the stone which records the story of Moab, (2 Kings 3) the temples, the graves, and the ancient papyri of Egypt have been made successively to tell each its own tale, and each marvelously bears out the truth of the Scripture narrative. Let us see what we can learn from such sources of the ancient state of Egypt, so far as it may serve to illustrate the history of Israel.

The connection between Israel and Egypt may be said to have begun with the visit of Abram to that country. On his arrival there he must have found the people already in a high state of civilization. The history of the patriarch gains fresh light from monuments and old papyri. Thus a papyrus (now in the British Museum), known as The Two Brothers, and which is probably the oldest work of fiction in existence, proves that Abram had occasion for fear on account of Sarai. It tells of a Pharaoh, who sent two armies to take a fair woman from her husband and then to murder him. Another papyrus (at present in Berlin) records how the wife and children of a foreigner were taken from him by a Pharaoh. Curiously enough, this papyrus dates from nearly the time when the patriarch was in Egypt. From this period also we have a picture in one of the tombs, representing the arrival of a nomad chief, like Abram, with his family and dependents, who seek the protection of the prince. The newcomer is received as a person of distinction. To make the coincidence the more striking - though this chief is not thought to have been Abram, he is evidently of Semitic descent, wears a "coat of many colors," is designated Hyk, or prince, the equivalent of the modern Sheich, or chief of a tribe, and even bears the name of, Ab-shah, "father of sand," a term resembling that of, Abraham, the "father of a multitude."

Another Egyptian story - that of Sancha, "the son of the sycamore," - reminds us so far of that of Joseph, that its hero is a foreign nomad, who rises to the highest rank at Pharaoh's court and becomes his chief counselor. These are instances how Egyptian history illustrates and confirms that of the Bible. Of the forced employment of the children of Israel in building and repairing certain

cities, we have, as will presently be shown, sufficient confirmation in an Egyptian inscription lately discovered. We have also a pictorial representation of Semitic captives, probably Israelites, making bricks in the manner described in the Bible; and yet another, dating from a later reign, in which Israelites - either captives of war, or, as has been recently suggested, mercenaries who had stayed behind after the Exodus - are employed for Pharaoh in drawing stones, or cutting them in the quarries, and in completing or enlarging the fortified city of Ramses, which their fathers had formerly built. The builders delineated in the second of these representations are expressly called Aperu, the close correspondence of the name with the designation Hebrew, even in its English form, being apparent. Though these two sets of representations date, in all probability, from a period later than the Exodus, they remarkably illustrate what we read of the state and the occupations of the children of Israel during the period of their oppression. Nor does this exhaust the bearing of the Egyptian monuments on the early history of Israel. In fact, we can trace the two histories almost contemporaneously - and see how remarkably the one sheds light upon the other.

In general, our knowledge of Egyptian history is derived from the monuments, of which we have already spoken, from certain references in Greek historians, which are not of much value, and especially from the historical work of Manetho, an Egyptian priest who wrote about the year 250 B.C. At that time the monuments of Egypt were still almost intact. Manetho had access to them all; he was thoroughly conversant with the ancient literature of his country, and he wrote under the direction and patronage of the then monarch of the land. Unfortunately, however, his work has been lost, and the fragments of it preserved exist only in the distorted form which Josephus has given them for his own purposes, and in a chronicle, written by a learned Christian convert of the third century (Julius Africanus). But this latter also has been lost, and we know it only from a similar work written a century later (by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea), in which the researches of Africanus are embodied. Such are the difficulties before the student! On the other hand, both Africanus and Eusebius gathered their materials in Egypt itself,



and were competent for their task; Africanus, at least, had the work of Manetho before him; and, lastly, by universal consent, the monuments of Egypt remarkably confirm what were the undoubted statements of Manetho. Like most heathen chronologies, Manetho's catalogue of kings begins with gods, after which he enumerates thirty dynasties, bringing the history down to the year 343 B.C.

Now some of these dynasties were evidently not successive, but contemporary, that is, they present various lines of kings who at one and the same time ruled over different portions of Egypt. This especially applies to the so-called 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th dynasties. It is wholly impossible to conjecture what period of time these may have occupied. After that we have more solid ground. We know that under the 12th dynasty the whole of Egypt was united under one sway. As we gather from the monuments, the country was in a very high state of prosperity and civilization. At the beginning of this dynasty we suppose the visit of Abram to have taken place. The reign of this 12th dynasty lasted more than two centuries, and either at its close or at the beginning of the 13th dynasty we place the accession and rule of Joseph.

From the fourth king of the 13th to the accession of the 18th dynasty Egyptian history is almost a blank. That period was occupied by the rule of the so-called Hyksos, or Shepherd kings, a foreign and barbarous race of invaders, hated and opposed by the people, and hostile to their ancient civilization and religion. Although Josephus represents Manetho as assigning a very long period to the reign of "the Shepherds," he gives only six names. These and these only are corroborated by Egyptian monuments, and we are warranted in inferring that these alone had really ruled over Egypt. The period occupied by their reign might thus amount to between two and three centuries, which agrees with the Scripture chronology. "The Shepherds" were evidently an eastern race, and probably of Phoenician origin. Thus the names of the two first kings in their list are decidedly Semitic (Salatis, "mighty," "ruler," and Beon, or Benon, "the son of the eye," or, the "beloved one"), and there is evidence that the race brought with it the worship of Baal and the practice of human sacrifices - both

of Phoenician origin. It is important to keep this in mind, as we shall see that there had been almost continual warfare between the Phoenicians along the west coast of Palestine and the Hittites, and the native Egyptian kings, who, while they ruled, held them in subjection. This constant animosity also explains why, not without good reason, "every shepherd was an abomination" unto the real native Egyptians. (Genesis 46:34) - It also explains why the Shepherd kings left the Israelitish shepherds unmolested in the land of Goshen, where they found them. Thus a comparison of Scripture chronology with the history of Egypt, and the evidently peaceful, prosperous state of the country, united under the rule of one king, as described in the Bible, lead us to the conclusion that Joseph's stay there must have taken place at the close of the 12th, or, at latest, at the commencement of the 13th dynasty. He could not have come during the rule of the Hyksos, for then Egypt was in a distracted, divided, and chaotic state; and it could not have been later, for after the Shepherd kings had been expelled and native rulers restored, no "new king," no new dynasty, "arose up over Egypt." On the other hand, the latter description exactly applies to a king who, on his restoration, expelled the Hyksos. And here the monuments of Egypt again afford remarkable confirmation of the history of Joseph. For one thing, the names of three of the Pharaohs of the 13th dynasty bear a striking resemblance to that given by the Pharaoh of the Bible to Joseph (Zaphnath-paaneah). Then we know that the Pharaohs of the 12th dynasty stood in a very special relationship to the priest city of On, (Genesis 41:45) and that its high-priest was most probably always a near relative of Pharaoh. Thus the monuments of that period enable us to understand the history of Joseph's marriage. But they also throw light on a question of far greater importance - how so devout and pious a servant of the Lord as Joseph could have entered into such close relationship with the priesthood of Egypt. Here our knowledge of the most ancient religion of Egypt enables us to furnish a complete answer.

Undoubtedly, all mankind had at first some knowledge of the one true God, and a pure religion inherited from Paradise. This primeval religion seems to have been longest preserved in

Egypt. Every age indeed witnessed fresh corruptions, until at last that of Egypt became the most abject superstition. But the earliest Egyptian religious records, as preserved in that remarkable work, *The Ritual for the Dead*, disclose a different state of things. There can be no doubt that, divested of all later glosses, they embodied belief in "the unity, eternity, and self-existence of the unknown Deity," in the immortality of the soul, and in future rewards and punishments, and that they inculcated the highest duties of morality. The more closely we study these ancient records of Egypt, the more deeply are we impressed with the high and pure character of its primeval religion and legislation. And when the children of Israel went into the wilderness, they took, in this respect also, with them from Egypt many lessons which had not to be learned anew, though this one grand fundamental truth had to be acquired, that the Deity unknown to the Egyptians was, Jehovah, the living and the true God. We can therefore understand how such close connection between Joseph and the Egyptian priesthood was both possible and likely.

But this is not all. Only under a powerful native ruler could the redivision of the land and the rearrangement of taxation, which Joseph proposed, have taken place. Moreover, we know that under the rule of the last great king of this native dynasty (the 13th) a completely new system of Nile-irrigation was introduced, such as we may well believe would have been devised to avoid another period of famine, and, strangest of all, a place by the artificial lake made at that time bears the name Pi-aneh, "the house of life," which is singularly like that given by Pharaoh to Joseph. If we now pass over the brief 14th dynasty and the Hyksos period, when we may readily believe Israel remained undisturbed in Goshen, we come to the restoration of a new native dynasty (the so-called 18th). After the "Shepherds" (Exodus 1:9, 10) had been expelled, the Israelitish population, remaining behind in the borderland of Goshen, would naturally seem dangerously large to the "new king," the more so as the Israelites were kindred in descent and occupation to the "Shepherds," and had been befriended by them. Under these circumstances a wise monarch might seek to weaken such a population by forced labor.

For this purpose he employed them in building fortress-cities, such as Pithom and Ramses, (Exodus 1:11) Ramses bears the name of the district in which it is situated, but Pithom means "the fortress of foreigners," thus indicating its origin. Moreover, we learn from the monuments that this "new king" (Aahmes I.) employed in building his fortresses what are called the Fenchu - a word meaning "bearers of the shepherd's staff," and which therefore would exactly describe the Israelites.

The period between the "new king" of the Bible (Aahmes I.) and Thothmes II. (the second in succession to him), when we suppose the Exodus to have taken place, quite agrees with the reckoning of Scripture. Now this Thothmes II. began his reign very brilliantly. But after a while there is a perfect blank in the monumental records about him. But we read of a general revolt after his death among the nations whom his father had conquered. Of course, one could not expect to find on Egyptian monuments an account of the disasters which the nation sustained at the Exodus, nor how Pharaoh and his host had perished in the Red Sea. But we do find in his reign the conditions which we should have expected under such circumstances, viz., a brief, prosperous reign, then a sudden collapse; the king dead; no son to succeed him; the throne occupied by the widow of the Pharaoh, and for twenty years no attempt to recover the supremacy of Egypt over the revolted nations in Canaan and east of the Jordan. Lastly, the character of his queen, as it appears on the monuments, is that of a proud and bitterly superstitious woman, just such as we would have expected to encourage Pharaoh in "hardening his heart" against Jehovah. But the chain of coincidences does not break even here. From the Egyptian documents we learn that in the preceding reign - that is, just before the children of Israel entered the desert of Sinai - the Egyptians ceased to occupy the mines which they had until then worked in that peninsula. Further, we learn that, during the latter part of Israel's stay in the wilderness, the Egyptian king, Thothmes III., carried on and completed his wars in Canaan, and that just immediately before the entry of Israel into Palestine the great confederacy of Canaanitish kings against him was quite broken up. This

explains the state in which Joshua found the country, so different from that compact power which forty years before had inspired the spies with such terror; and also helps us to understand how, at the time of Joshua, each petty king just held his own city and district, and how easily the fear of a nation, by which even the dreaded Pharaoh and his host had perished, would fall upon the inhabitants of the land (compare also Balaam's words in Numbers 23:22; 24:8). We may not here follow this connection between the two histories any farther. But all through the troubled period of the early Judges down to Barak and Deborah, Egyptian history, as deciphered from the monuments, affords constant illustration and confirmation of the state of Canaan and the history of Israel, as described in the Bible. Thus did Providence work for the carrying out of God's purposes, and so remarkably does He in our days raise up witnesses for His Word, where their testimony might least have been expected.

We remember that Abram was at the first driven by famine into Egypt. The same cause also led the brothers of Joseph to seek there corn for their sustenance. For, from the earliest times, Egypt was the great granary of the old world. The extraordinary fertility of the country depends, as is well known, on the annual overflow of the Nile, caused in its turn by rains in the highlands of Abyssinia and Central Africa. So far as the waters of the Nile cover the soil, the land is like a fruitful garden; beyond it all is desolate wilderness. Even in that "land of wonders," as Egypt has been termed, the Nile is one of the grand outstanding peculiarities. Another, as we have seen, consists in its monuments. These two landmarks may conveniently serve to group together what our space will still allow us to say of the country and its people.

The name of the country, Egypt (in Greek Aigyptos), exactly corresponds to the Egyptian designation Kah-Ptah, "the land of Ptah" - one of their gods - and from it the name of Copts seems also derived. In the Hebrew Scriptures its name is Mizraim, that is, "the two Mazors," which again corresponds with another Egyptian name for the country, Chem (the same as "the land of Ham" Psalm 105:23, 27), both Mazor and Chem

meaning in their respective languages the red mud or dark soil of which the cultivated part of the country consisted. It was called "the two Mazors," probably because of its ancient division into Upper and Lower Egypt. The king of Upper Egypt was designated by a title whose initial sign was a bent reed, which illustrates such passages as 2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 36:6; Ezekiel 29:6; while the rulers of Lower Egypt bore the title of "bee," which may be referred to in Isaiah 7:18. The country occupies less than 10,000 square geographical miles, of which about 5,600 are at present, and about 8,000 were anciently, fit for cultivation. Scripture history has chiefly to do with Lower Egypt, which is the northern part of the country, while the most magnificent of the monuments are in Upper, or Southern, Egypt.

As already stated, the fertility of the land depends on the overflowing of the Nile, which commences to rise about the middle of June, and reaches its greatest height about the end of September, when it again begins to decrease. As measured at Cairo, if the Nile does not rise twenty-four feet, the harvest will not be very good; anything under eighteen threatens famine. About the middle of August the red, turbid waters of the rising river are distributed by canals over the country, and carry fruitfulness with them. On receding, the Nile leaves behind it a thick red soil, which its waters had carried from Central Africa, and over this rich deposit the seed is sown. Rain there is none, nor is there need for it to fertilize the land. The Nile also furnishes the most pleasant and even nourishing water for drinking, and some physicians have ascribed to it healing virtues. It is scarcely necessary to add that the river teems with fish. Luxuriously rich and green, amidst surrounding desolation, the banks of the Nile and of its numerous canals are like a well-watered garden under a tropical sky. Where climate and soil are the best conceivable, the fertility must be unparalleled.

The ancient Egyptians seem to have also bestowed great attention on their fruit and flower gardens, which, like ours, were attached to their villas. On the monuments we see gardeners presenting handsome bouquets; gardens traversed by alleys, and adorned with pavilions and colonnades;

orchards stocked with palms, figs, pomegranates, citrons, oranges, plums, mulberries, apricots, etc.; while in the vineyards, as in Italy, the vines were trained to meet across wooden rods, and hang down in rich festoons. Such was the land on which, in the desolate dreariness and famine of the wilderness, Israel was tempted to look back with sinful longing! When Abram entered Egypt, his attention, like that of the modern traveler, must have been riveted by the Great Pyramids. Of these about sixty have been counted, but the largest are those near the ancient Memphis, which lay about ten miles above Cairo. Memphis - in Scripture Noph (Isaiah 19:13; Jeremiah 2:16; 46:14, 19; Ezekiel 30:13, 16) was the capital of Lower, as Thebes that of Upper, Egypt, the latter being the Pathros of Scripture. (Isaiah 11:11; Jeremiah 44:1, 15) It is scarcely possible to convey an adequate idea of the pyramids. Imagine a structure covering at the base an area of some 65,000 feet, and slanting upwards for 600 feet;<sup>17</sup> or, to give a better idea than these figures convey "more than half as long on every side as Westminster Abbey, eighty feet higher than the top of St. Paul's, covering thirteen acres of ground, and computed to have contained nearly seven million tons of solid masonry?

We cannot here enter on the various purposes intended by these wonderful structures, some of which, at any rate, were scientific. Not far from the great pyramids was the ancient On, connected with the history of Joseph, and where Moses probably got his early training. But all hereabout is full of deepest interest - sepulchers, monuments, historical records, and sites of ancient cities. We are in a land of dreams, and all the surroundings bear dreamy outlines; gigantic in their proportions, and rendered even more gigantic by the manner in which they are disposed. Probably the most magnificent of these monuments in Upper Egypt, the Pathros of Scripture - are those of its capital, Thebes, the No, or No Amon of the Bible. (Jeremiah 46:25; Ezekiel 30:14-16; Nahum 3:8) It were impossible in brief space to describe its temple. The sanctuary itself was small, but opposite to it a court opened upon a hall into

which the great cathedral of Paris might be placed, without touching the walls on either side! One hundred and forty columns support this hall, the central pillars being sixty-six feet high, and so wide that it would take six men with extended arms to embrace one of them. The mind gets almost bewildered by such proportions. All around, the walls bear representations, inscriptions, and records - among others, those of Shishak, who captured Jerusalem during the reign of Rehoboam. But the temple itself is almost insignificant when compared with the approach to it, which was through a double row of sixty or seventy ram-headed sphinxes, placed about eleven feet apart from each other. Another avenue led to a temple which enclosed a lake for funeral rites; and yet a third avenue of sphinxes extended a distance of 6,000 feet to a palace. These notices are selected to give some faint idea of the magnificence of Egypt.

It would be difficult to form too high an estimate of the old-world culture and civilization, here laid open before us. The laws of Egypt seem to have been moderate and wise; its manners simple and domestic; its people contented, prosperous, and cultured. Woman occupied a very high place, and polygamy was almost the exception. Science, literature, and the arts were cultivated; commerce and navigation carried on, while a brave army and an efficient fleet maintained the power of the Pharaohs. Altogether the country seems old in its civilization, when alike the earliest sages of Greece and the lawgivers of Israel learned of its wisdom. But how different the use which Israel was to make of it from that to which the philosophers put their lore! What was true, good, and serviceable was to enter as an element into the life of Israel. But this life was formed and molded quite differently from that of Egypt. Israel as a nation was born of God; redeemed by God; brought forth by God victorious on the other side the flood; taught of God; trained by God; and separated for the service of God. And this God was to be known to them as Jehovah, the living and the true God. The ideas they had gained, the knowledge they had acquired, the life they had learned, even the truths they had heard in Egypt, might be taken with them, but, as it were, to be

<sup>17</sup> The perpendicular height is 479 feet.

baptized in the Red Sea, and consecrated at the foot of Sinai.

Quite behind them in the far distance lay the Egypt they had quitted, with its dreamy, gigantic outlines. As the sand carried from the desert would cover the land, so did the dust of superstition gradually bury the old truths. We are ready to admit that Israel profited by what they had seen and learned. But all the more striking is the final contrast between Egyptian superstition, which ultimately degraded itself to make gods of almost everything in nature, and the glorious, spiritual worship of the Israel of God. That contrast meets us side by side with the resemblance to what was in Egypt, and becomes all the more evident by the juxtaposition. Never is the religion of Israel more strikingly the opposite to that of Egypt than where we discover resemblances between the two; and never are their laws and institutions more really dissimilar than when we trace an analogy between them. Israel may have adopted and adapted much from Egypt, but it learned only from the Lord God, who, in every sense of the expression, brought out His people with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm!

#### NOTE ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

For a clearer understanding, a general outline of the Book of Exodus may here be given. Like Genesis (see Hist. of the Patriarchs, Introd. p. 15.), it consists of two great parts, the first describing the redemption of Israel, and the second the consecration of Israel as the People of God. The first part (ch. 1-15:21) appropriately ends with "the Song of Moses;" while, similarly, the second part closes with the erection and consecration of the Tabernacle, in which Jehovah was to dwell in the midst of His people, and to hold fellowship with them. Again, each of these two parts may be arranged into seven sections (seven being the covenant number), as follows:

#### PART I:

Preparatory: Israel increases, and is oppressed in Egypt (Chap. 1.); birth and preservation of a deliverer (Chap. 2.);

The calling and training of Moses (Chap. 3, 4.);

His mission to Pharaoh (Chap. 5-7:7 );

The signs and wonders (Chap. 7:8-Chap. 11.);

Israel is set apart by the Passover, and led forth (Chap. 12-13:16);

Passage of the Red Sea and destruction of Pharaoh (Chap. 13:17-Chap. 14);

Song of triumph on the other side (Chap. 15:1-21).

#### THE SEVEN SECTIONS OF PART II ARE AS FOLLOWS:

March of the children of Israel to the Mount of God (Chap. 15:22-17:7);

Twofold attitude of the Gentile nations towards Israel: the enmity of Amalek, and the friendship of Jethro (Chap. 17:8-Chap. 18);

The covenant at Sinai (Chap. 19:24:11);

Divine directions about making the Tabernacle (Chap. 24:12-Chap.31);

Apostasy of Israel, and their restoration to be the people of God (Chap. 32-34.);

Actual construction of the Tabernacle and of its vessels (Chap. 35-39);

The setting up and consecration of the Tabernacle (Chap. 40), the latter corresponding, as closing section of Part II., to the Song of Moses (Chap. 45), with which the first part had ended (see Keil, Bible Com., vol. i., pp. 302-311).

The reader will note these parts and sections in his Bible, and mark what grandeur and unity there is in the plan of the Book of Exodus, and how fully it realizes the idea of telling the story of the kingdom of God.

#### **II\_02 The Children of Israel in Egypt - Their Residences, Occupations, Social Arrangements, Constitution, and Religion - A new King who knew not Joseph.**

##### **Exodus 1**

THREE centuries and a half intervened between the close of the Book of Genesis and the events with which that of Exodus opens. But during that long period the history of the children of Israel is almost an entire blank.

The names of their families have come down to us, but without any chronicle of their history; their

final condition at the time of the Exodus is marked, but without any notice of their social or national development. Except for a few brief allusions scattered through the Old Testament, we should know absolutely nothing of their state, their life, or their religion, during all that interval. This silence of three and a half centuries is almost awful in its grandeur, like the loneliness of Sinai, the mount of God. Two things had been foretold as marking this period, and these two alone appear as outstanding facts in the Biblical narrative. On the boundary of the Holy Land the Lord had encouraged Israel:

"Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation." (Genesis 46:3)

And the Book of Exodus opens with the record that this promise had been fulfilled, for

"the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." (Exodus 1:7)

Yet another prediction, made centuries before to Abram, was to be fulfilled. His seed was to be "a stranger in a land not theirs," to be enslaved and afflicted. (Genesis 15:13-16) And as the appointed centuries were drawing to a close, there "arose up a new king over Egypt," who "evil entreated our fathers." (Acts 7:19) Thus, in the darkest period of their bondage, Israel might have understood that, as surely as these two predictions had been literally fulfilled, so would the twofold promise also prove true, "I will bring thee up again," and that "with great substance." And here we see a close analogy to the present condition of the Jews. In both cases the promised future stands in marked contrast to the actual state of things. But, like Israel of old, we also have the "more sure word of prophecy," as a "light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn." The closing years of the three and a half centuries since their entrance into Egypt found Israel peaceful, prosperous, and probably, in many respects, assimilated to the Egyptians around. "The fathers" had fallen asleep, but their children still held undisturbed possession of the district originally granted them. The land of Goshen, in which they were located, is to this day considered the richest province of Egypt, and

could, even now, easily support a million more inhabitants than it numbers.

Goshen extended between the most eastern of the ancient seven mouths of the Nile and Palestine. The borderland was probably occupied by the more nomadic branches of the family of Israel, to whose flocks its wide tracts would afford excellent pasturage; while the rich banks along the Nile and its canals were the chosen residence of those who pursued agriculture. Most likely such would also soon swarm across to the western banks of the Nile, where we find traces of them in various cities (Exodus 12) of the land. There they would acquire a knowledge of the arts and industries of the Egyptians. It seems quite natural that, in a country which held out such inducements for it, the majority of the Israelites should have forsaken their original pursuits of shepherds, and become agriculturists. To this day a similar change has been noticed in the nomads who settle in Egypt. Nor was their new life entirely foreign to their history. Their ancestor, Isaac, had, during his stay among the Philistines, sowed and reaped. (Genesis 26:12) Besides, at their settlement in Egypt, the grant of land - and that the best in the country - had been made to them "for a possession," a term implying fixed and hereditary proprietorship. (Genesis 47:11, 27) Their later reminiscences of Egypt accord with this view. In the wilderness they looked back with sinful longing to the time when they had cast their nets into the Nile, and drawn them in weighted with fish; and when their gardens and fields by the waterside had yielded rich crops - "the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." (Numbers 11:5)

And afterwards, when Moses described to them the land which they were to inherit, he contrasted its cultivation with their past experience of Egypt, "where thou sowedst thy seed, and watered it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs." (Deuteronomy 11:10) As further evidence of this change from pastoral to agricultural pursuits, it has also been remarked that, whereas the patriarchs had possessed camels, no allusion is made to them in the narrative of their descendants. No doubt this change of occupation served a higher purpose. For settlement and agriculture imply civilization, such

as was needed to prepare Israel for becoming a nation.

In point of fact, we have evidence that they had acquired most of the arts and industries of ancient Egypt. The preparation of the various materials for the Tabernacle, as well as its construction, imply this. Again, we have such direct statements, as, for example, that some of the families of Judah were "carpenters" <sup>18</sup> (1 Chronicles 4:14), "weavers of fine Egyptian linen" (ver. 21), and "potters" (ver. 23). These must, of course, be regarded as only instances of the various trades learned in Egypt. Nor was the separation between Israel and the Egyptians such as to amount to isolation. Goshen would, of course, be chiefly, but not exclusively, inhabited by Israelites. These would mingle even in the agricultural districts, but, naturally, much more in the towns, with their Egyptian neighbors. Accordingly, it needed the Paschal provision of the blood to distinguish the houses of the Israelites from those of the Egyptians; (Exodus 12:13) while Exodus 3:22 seems to imply that they were not only neighbors, but perhaps, occasionally, residents in the same houses. This also accounts for the "mixed multitude" that accompanied Israel at the Exodus, and, later on, in the wilderness, for the presence in the congregation of offspring from marriages between Jewish women and Egyptian husbands. (Leviticus 24:10)

While the greater part of Israel had thus acquired the settled habits of a nation, the inhabitants of the border-district between Goshen and Canaan continued their nomadic life. This explains how the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh possessed so much larger flocks than their brethren, as afterwards to claim the wide pasture-lands to the east of Jordan. (Numbers 32:1-4) We have, also, among the records of "ancient stories," (1 Chronicles 4:22) a notice of some of the descendants of Judah exercising lordship in Moab, and we read of a predatory incursion into Gath on the part of some of the descendants of Ephraim, which terminated fatally. It is but fair to assume that these are only instances, mentioned, the one

on account of its signal success, the other on that of its failure, and that both imply nomadic habits and incursions into Canaan on the part of those who inhabited the border-land.

But whether nomadic or settled, Israel preserved its ancient constitution and religion, though here also we notice modifications and adaptations, arising from their long settlement in Egypt. The original division of Israel was into twelve tribes, after the twelve sons of Jacob, an arrangement which continued, although the sons of Joseph became two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh), since the priestly tribe of Levi had no independent political standing. These twelve tribes were again subdivided into families (or rather clans), mostly founded by the grandsons of Jacob, of which we find a record in Numbers 26., and which amounted in all to sixty. From Joshua 7:14 we learn that those "families" had at that time, if not earlier, branched into "households," and these again into what is described by the expression "man by man" (in the Hebrew, *Gevarim*). The latter term, however, is really equivalent to our "family," as appears from a comparison of Joshua 7:14 with vers. 17, 18. Thus we have in the oldest times tribes and clans, and in those of Joshua, if not earlier, the clans again branching into households (kin) and families. The "heads" of those clans and families were their chiefs; those of the tribes, "the princes." (Numbers 1:4, 16, 44; 2:3; etc.; 7:10) These twelve princes were "the rulers of the congregation." (Exodus 34:31; Numbers 7:2; 30:1; 31:13; 32:2; 34:18) By the side of these rulers, who formed a hereditary aristocracy, we find two classes of elective officials, (Deuteronomy 1:9-14) as "representatives" of "the congregation." (Numbers 27:2) These are designated in Deuteronomy 29:10 as the "elders" and the "officers," or, rather, "scribes." Thus the rule of the people was jointly committed to the "princes," the "elders," and the "officers." <sup>19</sup> The institution

<sup>18</sup> The reference is probably to "guilds," such as in Egypt. The word rendered in our Authorized Version "craftsmen," means "carpenters."

<sup>19</sup> See also Deuteronomy 31:28. In the wilderness a meeting of these three classes of rulers seems to have been called by blowing the two silver trumpets, while blasts from one summoned only a council of the princes (Numbers 10:3, 4). It deserves special notice that this mixed rule of hereditary and elective officials continued the constitutional government of the people, not only during the period of the Judges, but under the Kings. We find its analogy also in the rule of the Synagogue.



of "elders" and of "scribes" had already existed among the children of Israel in Egypt before the time of Moses. For Moses "gathered the elders of Israel together," to announce to them his Divine commission, (Exodus 3:16; 4:29) and through them he afterwards communicated to the people the ordinance of the Passover. (Exodus 12:21) The mention of "scribes" as "officers" occurs even earlier than that of elders, and to them, as the lettered class, the Egyptian taskmasters seem to have entrusted the superintendence of the appointed labors of the people. (Exodus 5:6, 14, 15, 19)

From the monuments of Egypt we know what an important part "the scribes" played in that country, and how constantly their mention recurs. Possibly, the order of scribes may have been thus introduced among Israel. As the lettered class, the scribes would naturally be the intermediaries between their brethren and the Egyptians. We may, therefore, regard them also as the representatives of learning, alike Israelitish and Egyptian. That the art of writing was known to the Israelites at the time of Moses is now generally admitted. Indeed, Egyptian learning had penetrated into Canaan itself, and Joshua found its inhabitants mostly in a very advanced state of civilization, one of the towns bearing even the name of Kirjath-sepher, the city of books, or Kirjath-sannah, which might almost be rendered "university town." (Joshua 15:15, 49) In reference to the religion of Israel, it is important to be in mind that, during the three and a half centuries since the death of Jacob, all direct communication from Heaven, whether by prophecy or in vision, had so far as we know, wholly ceased. Even the birth of Moses was not Divinely intimated. In these circumstances the children of Israel were cast upon that knowledge which they had acquired from "the fathers," and which, undoubtedly, was preserved among them. It need scarcely be explained, although it shows the wisdom of God's providential arrangements, that the simple patriarchal forms of worship would suit the circumstances in Egypt much better than those which the religion of Israel afterwards received. Three great observances here stand out prominently. Around them the faith and the worship alike of the ancient patriarchs, and afterwards of Israel, may be said to have clustered.

They are: circumcision, sacrifices, and the Sabbath. We have direct testimony that the rite of circumcision was observed by Israel in Egypt. (Exodus 4:24-26; Joshua 5:5) As to sacrifices, even the proposal to celebrate a great sacrificial feast in the wilderness, (Exodus 8:25-28) implies that sacrificial worship had maintained its hold upon the people. Lastly, the direction to gather on the Friday two days provision of manna, (Exodus 16:22) and the introduction of the Sabbath command by the word "Remember," (Exodus 20:8) convey the impression of previous Sabbath observance on the part of Israel. Indeed, the manner in which many things, as, for example, the practice of vows, are spoken of in the law, seems to point back to previous religious rites among Israel.

Thus far for those outward observances, which indicate how, even during those centuries of silence and loneliness in Egypt, Israel still cherished the fundamental truths of their ancestral religion. But there is yet another matter, bearing reference not to their articles of belief or their observances, but to the religious life of the family and of individuals in Israel. This appears in the names given by parents to their children during the long and hard bondage of Egypt. It is well known what significance attaches in the Old Testament to names. Every spiritually important event gave it a new and characteristic name to a person or locality. Sometimes - as in the case of Abram, Sarai, and Jacob - it was God Himself Who gave such new name; at others, it was the expression of hearts that recognized the special and decisive interposition of God, or else breathed out their hopes and experiences, as in the case of Moses' sons. But anyone who considers such frequently recurring names among "the princes" of Israel, as Eliasaph (my God that gathers), Elizur (my God a rock), and others of kindred import, will gather how deep the hope of Israel had struck its roots in the hearts and convictions of the people. This point will be further referred to in the sequel. Meantime, we only call attention to the names of the chiefs of the three families of the Levites: Eliasaph (my God that gathers), Elizaphan (my God that watcheth all, around), and Zuriel (my rock is God) - the Divine Name (El) being the

same by which God had revealed Himself to the fathers.

Besides their own inherited rites, the children of Israel may have learned many things from the Egyptians, or been strengthened in them. And here, by the side of resemblance, we also observe marked contrast between them. We have already seen that, originally, the religion of the Egyptians had contained much of truth, which, however, was gradually perverted to superstition. The Egyptians and Israel might hold the same truths, but with the difference of understanding and application between dim tradition and clear Divine revelation. Thus, both Israel and the Egyptians believed in the great doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of future rewards and punishments. But, in connection with this, Israel was taught another lesson, far more difficult to our faith, and which the ancient Egyptians had never learned, that God is the God of the present as well as of the future, and that even here on earth He reigneth, dispensing good and evil. And perhaps it was owing to this that the temporal consequences of sin were so much insisted upon in the Mosaic law. There was no special need to refer to the consequences in another life. The Egyptians, as well as Israel, acknowledged the latter, but the Egyptians knew not the former. Yet this new truth would teach Israel constantly to realize Jehovah as the living and the true God. On the other hand, the resemblances between certain institutions of Israel and of Egypt clearly prove that the Law was not given at a later period, but to those who came out from Egypt, and immediately upon their leaving it. At the same time, much evil was also acquired by intercourse with the Egyptians. In certain provisions of the Pentateuch we discover allusions, not only to the moral corruptions witnessed, and perhaps learned, in Egypt, but also to the idolatrous practices common there. Possibly, it was not the gorgeous ritual of Egypt which made such deep impression, but the services constantly there witnessed may have gradually accustomed the mind to the worship of nature. As instances of this tendency among Israel, we remember the worship of the golden calf, (Exodus 32) the warning against sacrificing unto the "he-

goat," (Leviticus 17:7) <sup>20</sup> and the express admonition, even of Joshua (24:14), to "put away the strange gods" which their "fathers served on the other side of the flood." To the same effect is the retrospect in Ezekiel 20:5-8, in Amos 5:26, and in the address of Stephen before the Jewish council. (Acts 7:43) Yet it is remarkable that, although the forms of idolatry here referred to were all practiced in Egypt, there is good reason for believing that they were not, so to speak, strictly Egyptian in their origin, but rather foreign rites imported, probably from the Phoenicians. Such then was the political, social, and religious state of Israel, when, their long peace was suddenly interrupted by tidings that Aahmes I. was successfully making war against the foreign dynasty of the Hyksos. Advancing victoriously, he at last took Avaris, the great stronghold and capital of the Shepherd kings, and expelled them and their adherents from the country. He then continued his progress to the borders of Canaan, taking many cities by storm. The memorials of the disastrous rule of the Shepherds were speedily removed; the worship which they had introduced was abolished, and the old Egyptian forms were restored. A reign of great prosperity now ensued.

Although there is difference of opinion on the subject, yet every likelihood (as shown in the previous chapter) seems to attach to the belief that the accession of this new dynasty was the period when the "king arose who knew not Joseph." For reasons already explained, one of the first and most important measures of his internal administration would necessarily be to weaken the power of the foreign settlers, who were in such vast majority in the border province of Goshen. He dreaded lest, in case of foreign war, they might join the enemy, "and get them up out of the land." The latter apprehension also shows that the king must have known the circumstances under which they had at first settled in the land. Again, from the monuments of Egypt, it appears to have been at all times the policy of the Pharaohs to bring an immense number of captives into Egypt, and to retain them there in servitude for forced labors. A somewhat similar policy was now pursued towards

<sup>20</sup> Erroneously rendered in our Authorized Version "devils."

Israel. Although allowed to retain their flocks and fields, they were set to hard labor for the king. Egyptian "taskmasters" were appointed over them, who "made the children of Israel serve with rigor," and did "afflict them with their burdens." A remarkable illustration of this is seen in one of the Egyptian monuments. Laborers, who are evidently foreigners, and supposed to represent Israelites, are engaged in the various stages of brick making, under the superintendence of four Egyptians, two of whom are apparently superior officers, while the other two are overseers armed with heavy lashes, who cry out, "Work without fainting!" The work in which the Israelites were employed consisted of brick making, artificial irrigation of the land, including, probably, also the digging or restoring of canals, and the building, or restoring and enlarging of the two "magazine-cities"<sup>8</sup> of Pithom and Ramses, whose localities have been traced in Goshen, and which served as depots both for commerce and for the army. According to Greek historians it was the boast of the Egyptians that, in their great works, they only employed captives and slaves, never their own people. But Aahmes I had special need of Israelitish labor, since we learn from an inscription, dating from his twenty-second year, that he was largely engaged in restoring the temples and buildings destroyed by the "Shepherds."

But this first measure of the Pharaohs against Israel produced the opposite result from what had been expected. So far from diminishing, their previous vast growth went on in increased ratio, so that the Egyptians "were sorely afraid<sup>9</sup> (alarmed) because of the children of Israel." (Exodus 1:12) Accordingly Pharaoh resorted to a second measure, by which all male children, as they were born, were to be destroyed, probably unknown to their parents. But the two Hebrew women, who, as we suppose, were at the head of "the guild" of midwives, do not seem to have communicated the

king's order to their subordinates. At any rate, the command was not executed. Scripture has preserved the names of these courageous women, and told us that their motive was "fear of God" (in the Hebrew with the article, "the God," as denoting the living and true God). And as they were the means of "making" or upbuilding the houses of Israel, so God "made them houses." It is true that, when challenged by the king, they failed to speak out their true motive; but, as St. Augustine remarks, "God forgave the evil on account of the good, and rewarded their piety, though not, their deceit."

How little indeed any merely human device could have averted the ruin of Israel, appears from the third measure which Pharaoh now adopted. Putting aside every restraint, and forgetting, in his determination, even his interests, the king issued a general order to cast every Jewish male child, as it was born, into the Nile. Whether this command, perhaps given in anger, was not enforced for any length of time, or the Egyptians were unwilling permanently to lend themselves to such cruelty, or the Israelites found means of preserving their children from this danger, certain it is, that, while many must have suffered, and all needed to use the greatest precautions, this last ruthless attempt to exterminate Israel also proved vain. Thus the two prophecies had been fulfilled. Even under the most adverse circumstances Israel had so increased as to fill the Egyptians with alarm; and the "affliction" of Israel had reached its highest point. And now the promised deliverance was also to appear. As in so many instances, it came in what men would call the most unlikely manner.