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COMMENTARY

**JAMIESON, FAUSSET,
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TESTAMENT**

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THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED.

GENESIS

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

GENESIS 1:1, 2.

THE CREATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

1. *In the beginning* — a period of remote and unknown antiquity, hid in the depths of eternal ages; and so the phrase is used in ^{<1082>}Proverbs 8:22,23.

God — the name of the Supreme Being, signifying in *Hebrew*, “Strong,” “Mighty.” It is expressive of omnipotent power; and by its use here in the plural form, is obscurely taught at the opening of the Bible, a doctrine clearly revealed in other parts of it, namely, that though God is one, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead — Father, Son, and Spirit, who were engaged in the creative work (^{<1082>}Proverbs 8:27 ^{<1008>}John 1:3,10 ^{<1008>}Ephesians 3:9 ^{<1008>}Hebrews 1:2 ^{<1082>}Job 26:13).

Created — not formed from any pre-existing materials, but made out of nothing.

the heaven and the earth — the universe. This first verse is a general introduction to the inspired volume, declaring the great and important truth that all things had a beginning; that nothing throughout the wide extent of nature existed from eternity, originated by chance, or from the skill of any inferior agent; but that the whole universe was produced by

the creative power of God (^{<4172>}Acts 17:24 ^{<513>}Romans 11:36). After this preface, the narrative is confined to the earth.

2. *the earth was without form and void* — or in “confusion and emptiness,” as the words are rendered in ^{<2341>}Isaiah 34:11. This globe, at some undescribed period, having been convulsed and broken up, was a dark and watery waste for ages perhaps, till out of this chaotic state, the present fabric of the world was made to arise.

the Spirit of God moved — literally, continued brooding over it, as a fowl does, when hatching eggs. The immediate agency of the Spirit, by working on the dead and discordant elements, combined, arranged, and ripened them into a state adapted for being the scene of a new creation. The account of this new creation properly begins at the end of this second verse; and the details of the process are described in the natural way an onlooker would have done, who beheld the changes that successively took place.

^{<100>}GENESIS 1:3-5.

THE FIRST DAY.

3. *God said* — This phrase, which occurs so repeatedly in the account means: willed, decreed, appointed; and the determining will of God was followed in every instance by an immediate result. Whether the sun was created at the same time with, or long before, the earth, the dense accumulation of fogs and vapors which enveloped the chaos had covered the globe with a settled gloom. But by the command of God, light was rendered visible; the thick murky clouds were dispersed, broken, or rarefied, and light diffused over the expanse of waters. The effect is described in the name “day,” which in *Hebrew* signifies “warmth,” “heat”; while the name “night” signifies a “rolling up,” as night wraps all things in a shady mantle.

4. *divided the light from darkness* — refers to the alternation or succession of the one to the other, produced by the daily revolution of the earth round its axis.

5. *first day* — a natural day, as the mention of its two parts clearly determines; and Moses reckons, according to Oriental usage, from sunset to sunset, saying not day and night as we do, but evening and morning.

GENESIS 1:6-8.

SECOND DAY.

6. *firmament* — an expanse — a beating out as a plate of metal: a name given to the atmosphere from its appearing to an observer to be the *vault* of heaven, supporting the weight of the *watery clouds*. By the creation of an atmosphere, the lighter parts of the waters which overspread the earth's surface were drawn up and suspended in the visible heavens, while the larger and heavier mass remained below. The air was thus “in the midst of the waters,” that is, separated them; and this being the apparent use of it, is the only one mentioned, although the atmosphere serves other uses, as a medium of life and light.

GENESIS 1:9-13.

THIRD DAY.

9. *let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place* — The world was to be rendered a terraqueous globe, and this was effected by a volcanic convulsion on its surface, the upheaving of some parts, the sinking of others, and the formation of vast hollows, into which the waters impetuously rushed, as is graphically described (^{PSALM} Psalm 104:6-9) [HITCHCOCK]. Thus a large part of the earth was left “dry land,” and thus were formed oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers which, though each having its own bed, or channel, are all connected with the sea (^{JOB} Job 38:10 ^{ECCLESIASTES} Ecclesiastes 1:7).

11. *let the earth bring forth* — The bare soil was clothed with verdure, and it is noticeable that the trees, plants, and grasses — the three great divisions of the vegetable kingdom here mentioned — were not called into existence in the same way as the light and the air; they were made to grow,

and they grew as they do still out of the ground — not, however, by the slow process of vegetation, but through the divine power, without rain, dew, or any process of labor — sprouting up and flourishing in a single day.

GENESIS 1:14-19.

FOURTH DAY.

14. *let there be lights in the firmament* — The atmosphere being completely purified, the sun, moon, and stars were for the first time unveiled in all their glory in the cloudless sky; and they are described as “in the firmament” which to the eye they appear to be, though we know they are really at vast distances from it.

16. *two great lights* — In consequence of the day being reckoned as commencing at sunset — the moon, which would be seen first in the horizon, would appear “a great light,” compared with the little twinkling stars; while its pale benign radiance would be eclipsed by the dazzling splendor of the sun; when his resplendent orb rose in the morning and gradually attained its meridian blaze of glory, it would appear “the greater light” that ruled the day. Both these lights may be said to be “made” on the fourth day — not created, indeed, for it is a different word that is here used, but constituted, appointed to the important and necessary office of serving as luminaries to the world, and regulating by their motions and their influence the progress and divisions of time.

GENESIS 1:20-23.

FIFTH DAY. THE SIGNS OF ANIMAL LIFE APPEARED IN THE WATERS AND IN THE AIR.

20. *moving creature* — all oviparous animals, both among the finny and the feathery tribes — remarkable for their rapid and prodigious increase.

fowl — means every flying thing: The word rendered “whales,” includes also sharks, crocodiles, etc.; so that from the countless shoals of small fish to the great sea monsters, from the tiny insect to the king of birds, the waters and the air were suddenly made to swarm with creatures formed to live and sport in their respective elements.

GENESIS 1:24-31.

SIXTH DAY.

A farther advance was made by the creation of terrestrial animals, all the various species of which are included in three classes:

(1) cattle, the herbivorous kind capable of labor or domestication.

24. *beasts of the earth* —

(2) wild animals, whose ravenous natures were then kept in check, and

(3) all the various forms of

creeping things — from the huge reptiles to the insignificant caterpillars.

26. The last stage in the progress of creation being now reached — *God said, Let us make man* — words which show the peculiar importance of the work to be done, the formation of a creature, who was to be God’s representative, clothed with authority and rule as visible head and monarch of the world.

In our image, after our likeness — This was a peculiar distinction, the value attached to which appears in the words being twice mentioned. And in what did this image of God consist? Not in the erect form or features of man, not in his intellect, for the devil and his angels are, in this respect, far superior; not in his immortality, for he has not, like God, a past as well as a future eternity of being; but in the moral dispositions of his soul, commonly called *original righteousness* (⁽²⁰¹²⁾ Ecclesiastes 7:29). As the new creation is only a restoration of this image, the history of the one throws light on the other; and we are informed that it is renewed after the image of

God in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness (^{<518C>}Colossians 3:10
^{<402E>}Ephesians 4:24).

28. *Be fruitful*, etc. — The human race in every country and age has been the offspring of the first pair. Amid all the varieties found among men, some black, some copper-colored, others white, the researches of modern science lead to a conclusion, fully accordant with the sacred history, that they are all of one species and of one family (^{<44725>}Acts 17:26). What power in the word of God! “He spake and it was done. He commanded and all things stood fast” [^{<330D>}Psalm 33:9]. “Great and manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty! in wisdom hast thou made them all” [^{<3A4D>}Psalm 104:24]. We admire that wisdom, not only in the regular progress of creation, but in its perfect adaptation to the end. God is represented as pausing at every stage to look at His work. No wonder He contemplated it with complacency. Every object was in its right place, every vegetable process going on in season, every animal in its structure and instincts suited to its mode of life and its use in the economy of the world. He saw everything that He had made answering the plan which His eternal wisdom had conceived; and, “Behold it was very good” [^{<4003>}Genesis 1:31].

CHAPTER 2

GENESIS 2:1.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE SIX DAYS' CREATION CONTINUED.

The course of the narrative is improperly broken by the division of the chapter.

1. *the heavens* — the firmament or atmosphere.

host — a multitude, a numerous array, usually connected in Scripture with heaven only, but here with the earth also, meaning all that they contain.

were finished — brought to completion. No permanent change has ever since been made in the course of the world, no new species of animals been formed, no law of nature repealed or added to. They could have been finished in a moment as well as in six days, but the work of creation was gradual for the instruction of man, as well, perhaps, as of higher creatures (³⁸⁰⁷Job 38:7).

GENESIS 2:2-7.

THE FIRST SABBATH.

2. *and he rested on the seventh day* — not to repose from exhaustion with labor (see ²⁴¹⁸Isaiah 40:28), but ceased from working, an example equivalent to a command that we also should cease from labor of every kind.

3. *blessed and sanctified the seventh day* — a peculiar distinction put upon it above the other six days, and showing it was devoted to sacred purposes. The institution of the Sabbath is as old as creation, giving rise to that weekly division of time which prevailed in the earliest ages. It is a wise and beneficent law, affording that regular interval of rest which the physical nature of man and the animals employed in his service requires,

and the neglect of which brings both to premature decay. Moreover, it secures an appointed season for religious worship, and if it was necessary in a state of primeval innocence, how much more so now, when mankind has a strong tendency to forget God and His claims?

4. *These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth* — the history or account of their production. Whence did Moses obtain this account so different from the puerile and absurd fictions of the heathen? Not from any human source, for man was not in existence to witness it; not from the light of nature or reason, for though they proclaim the eternal power and Godhead by the things which are made, they cannot tell *how* they were made. None but the Creator Himself could give this information, and therefore it is through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God (^{<S10>}Hebrews 11:3).

5, 6. *rain, mist* — (See on ^{<0011>}Genesis 1:11).

7. Here the sacred writer supplies a few more particulars about the first pair.

formed — had FORMED MAN OUT OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND. Science has proved that the substance of his flesh, sinews, and bones, consists of the very same elements as the soil which forms the crust of the earth and the limestone that lies embedded in its bowels. But from that mean material what an admirable structure has been reared in the human body (^{<D3>}Psalm 139:14).

the breath of life — literally, of lives, not only animal but spiritual life. If the body is so admirable, how much more the soul with all its varied faculties.

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life — not that the Creator literally performed this act, but respiration being the medium and sign of life, this phrase is used to show that man's life originated in a different way from his body — being implanted directly by God (^{<2107>}Ecclesiastes 12:7), and hence in the new creation of the soul Christ breathed on His disciples (^{<R12>}John 20:22).

GENESIS 8-17.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

8. *Eden* — was probably a very extensive region in Mesopotamia, distinguished for its natural beauty and the richness and variety of its produce. Hence its name, signifying “pleasantness.” God planted a garden eastward, an extensive park, a paradise, in which the man was put to be trained under the paternal care of his Maker to piety and usefulness.

9. *tree of life* — so called from its symbolic character as a sign and seal of immortal life. Its prominent position where it must have been an object of daily observation and interest, was admirably fitted to keep man habitually in mind of God and futurity.

tree of the knowledge of good and evil — so called because it was a *test* of obedience by which our first parents were to be tried, whether they would be good or bad, obey God or break His commands.

15. *put the man into the garden of Eden to dress it* — not only to give him a pleasant employment, but to place him on his probation, and as the title of this garden, the garden of the Lord (⁴¹³⁰Genesis 13:10 ³⁵⁸³Ezekiel 28:13), indicates, it was in fact a temple in which he worshipped God, and was daily employed in offering the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise.

17. *thou shalt not eat of it ... thou shalt surely die* — no reason assigned for the prohibition, but death was to be the punishment of disobedience. A positive command like this was not only the simplest and easiest, but the only trial to which their fidelity could be exposed.

GENESIS 2:18-25.

THE MAKING OF WOMAN, AND INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE.

18. *it is not good for the man to be alone* — In the midst of plenty and delights, he was conscious of feelings he could not gratify. To make him sensible of his wants,

19. *God brought unto Adam* — not all the animals in existence, but those chiefly in his immediate neighborhood to be subservient to his use.

whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof — His powers of perception and intelligence were supernaturally enlarged to know the characters, habits, and uses of each species that was brought to him.

20. *but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him* — The design of this singular scene was to show him that none of the living creatures he saw were on an equal footing with himself, and that while each class came with its mate of the same nature, form, and habits, he alone had no companion. Besides, in giving names to them he was led to exercise his powers of speech and to prepare for social intercourse with his partner, a creature yet to be formed.

21. *deep sleep* — probably an ecstasy or trance like that of the prophets, when they had visions and revelations of the Lord, for the whole scene was probably visible to the mental eye of Adam, and hence his rapturous exclamation.

took one of his ribs — “She was not made out of his head to surpass him, nor from his feet to be trampled on, but from his side to be equal to him, and near his heart to be dear to him.”

23. *Woman* — in *Hebrew*, “man-ess.”

24. *one flesh* — The human pair differed from all other pairs, that by peculiar formation of Eve, they were one. And this passage is appealed to by our Lord as the divine institution of marriage (^{<4090>}Matthew 19:4,5 ^{<4183>}Ephesians 5:28). Thus Adam appears as a creature formed after the image of God — showing his *knowledge* by giving names to the animals, his *righteousness* by his approval of the marriage relation, and his *holiness* by his principles and feelings, and finding gratification in the service and enjoyment of God.

CHAPTER 3

GENESIS 3:1-5.

THE TEMPTATION.

1. *the serpent* — The fall of man was effected by the seductions of a serpent. That it was a real serpent is evident from the plain and artless style of the history and from the many allusions made to it in the New Testament. But the material serpent was the instrument or tool of a higher agent, Satan or the devil, to whom the sacred writers apply from this incident the reproachful name of “the dragon, that old serpent” [⁶⁰⁰Revelation 20:2]. Though Moses makes no mention of this wicked spirit — giving only the history of the visible world — yet in the fuller discoveries of the Gospel, it is distinctly intimated that Satan was the author of the plot (⁶⁰⁴John 8:44 ⁶¹⁰2 Corinthians 11:3 ⁶⁰⁸1 John 3:8 ⁶⁰⁴Timothy 2:14 ⁶⁰⁰Revelation 20:2).

more subtle — Serpents are proverbial for wisdom (⁶⁰⁶Matthew 10:16). But these reptiles were at first, probably, far superior in beauty as well as in sagacity to what they are in their present state.

He said — There being in the pure bosoms of the first pair no principle of evil to work upon, a solicitation to sin could come only from “without,” as in the analogous case of Jesus Christ (⁶⁰³Matthew 4:3); and as the tempter could not assume the human form, there being only Adam and Eve in the world, the agency of an inferior creature had to be employed. The dragon-serpent [BOCHART] seemed the fittest for the vile purpose; and the devil was allowed by Him who permitted the trial, to bring articulate sounds from its mouth.

unto the woman — the object of attack, from his knowledge of her frailty, of her having been but a short time in the world, her limited experience of the animal tribes, and, above all, her being alone, unfortified by the presence and counsels of her husband. Though sinless and holy, she was a free agent, liable to be tempted and seduced.

yea, hath God said? — Is it true that He has restricted you in using the fruits of this delightful place? This is not like one so good and kind. Surely there is some mistake. He insinuated a doubt as to her sense of the divine will and appeared as an angel of light (^{<47114>}2 Corinthians 11:14), offering to lead her to the true interpretation. It was evidently from her regarding him as specially sent on that errand, that, instead of being startled by the reptile's speaking, she received him as a heavenly messenger.

2. *the woman said, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden* — In her answer, Eve extolled the large extent of liberty they enjoyed in ranging at will amongst all the trees — one only excepted, with respect to which, she declared there was no doubt, either of the prohibition or the penalty. But there is reason to think that she had already received an injurious impression; for in using the words “lest ye die,” instead of “ye shall surely die” [^{<40017>}Genesis 2:17], she spoke as if the tree had been forbidden because of some poisonous quality of its fruit. The tempter, perceiving this, became bolder in his assertions.

4. *Ye shall not surely die* — He proceeded, not only to assure her of perfect impunity, but to promise great benefits from partaking of it.

5. *your eyes shall be opened* — His words meant more than met the ear. In one sense her eyes were opened; for she acquired a direful experience of “good and evil” — of the happiness of a holy, and the misery of a sinful, condition. But he studiously concealed this result from Eve, who, fired with a generous desire for knowledge, thought only of rising to the rank and privileges of her angelic visitants.

^{<40017>}GENESIS 3:6-9.

THE FALL.

6. *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food* — Her imagination and feelings were completely won; and the fall of Eve was soon followed by that of Adam. The history of every temptation, and of every sin, is the same; the outward object of attraction, the inward commotion of mind, the increase and triumph of passionate desire; ending

in the degradation, slavery, and ruin of the soul (³⁰¹⁵James 1:15 ⁶¹²⁶1 John 2:16).

8. *they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden* — The divine Being appeared in the same manner as formerly — uttering the well-known tones of kindness, walking in some visible form (not running hastily, as one impelled by the influence of angry feelings). How beautifully expressive are these words of the familiar and condescending manner in which He had hitherto held intercourse with the first pair.

in the cool of the day — literally, “the breeze of the day,” the evening.

hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden — Shame, remorse, fear — a sense of guilt — feelings to which they had hitherto been strangers — disordered their minds and led them to shun Him whose approach they used to welcome. How foolish to think of eluding His notice (⁶¹³⁰Psalm 139:1-12).

⁶¹³⁰GENESIS 3:10-13.

THE EXAMINATION.

10. *afraid, because ... naked* — apparently, a confession — the language of sorrow; but it was evasive — no signs of true humility and penitence — each tries to throw the blame on another.

12. *The woman ... gave me* — He blames God [CALVIN]. As the woman had been given him for his companion and help, he had eaten of the tree from love to her; and perceiving she was ruined, was determined not to survive her [M'KNIGHT].

13. *beguiled* — cajoled by flattering lies. This sin of the first pair was heinous and aggravated — it was not simply eating an apple, but a love of self, dishonor to God, ingratitude to a benefactor, disobedience to the best of Masters — a preference of the creature to the Creator.

~~GEN~~ GENESIS 3:14-24.

THE SENTENCE.

14. *And the Lord God said unto the serpent* — The Judge pronounces a doom: first, on the material serpent, which is cursed above all creatures. From being a model of grace and elegance in form, it has become the type of all that is odious, disgusting, and low [LE CLERC, ROSENMULLER]; or the curse has converted its natural condition into a punishment; it is now branded with infamy and avoided with horror; next, on the spiritual serpent, the seducer. Already fallen, he was to be still more degraded and his power wholly destroyed by the offspring of those he had deceived.

15. *thy seed* — not only evil spirits, but wicked men.

seed of the woman — the Messiah, or His Church [CALVIN, HENGSTENBERG].

I will put enmity between thee and the woman — God can only be said to do so by leaving “the serpent and his seed to the influence of their own corruption; and by those measures which, pursued for the salvation of men, fill Satan and his angels with envy and rage.”

thou shalt bruise his heel — The serpent wounds the heel that crushes him; and so Satan would be permitted to afflict the humanity of Christ and bring suffering and persecution on His people.

it shall bruise thy head — The serpent’s poison is lodged in its head; and a bruise on that part is fatal. Thus, fatal shall be the stroke which Satan shall receive from Christ, though it is probable he did not at first understand the nature and extent of his doom.

16. *unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow* — She was doomed as a wife and mother to suffer pain of body and distress of mind. From being the help meet of man and the partner of his affections [~~GEN~~ Genesis 2:18,23], her condition would henceforth be that of humble subjection.

17-19. *unto Adam he said* — made to gain his livelihood by tilling the ground; but what before his fall he did with ease and pleasure, was not to be accomplished after it without painful and persevering exertion.

19. *till thou return unto the ground* — Man became mortal; although he did not die the moment he ate the forbidden fruit, his body underwent a change, and that would lead to dissolution; the union subsisting between his soul and God having already been dissolved, he had become liable to all the miseries of this life and to the pains of hell for ever. What a mournful chapter this is in the history of man! It gives the only true account of the origin of all the physical and moral evils that are in the world; upholds the moral character of God; shows that man, made upright, fell from not being able to resist a slight temptation; and becoming guilty and miserable, plunged all his posterity into the same abyss (^{<481>}Romans 5:12). How astonishing the grace which at that moment gave promise of a Savior and conferred on her who had the disgrace of introducing sin the future honor of introducing that Deliverer (^{<512>}1 Timothy 2:15).

20. *Adam called his wife's name Eve* — probably in reference to her being a mother of the promised Savior, as well as of all mankind.

21. *God made coats of skins* — taught them to make these for themselves. This implies the institution of animal sacrifice, which was undoubtedly of divine appointment, and instruction in the only acceptable mode of worship for sinful creatures, through faith in a Redeemer (^{<312>}Hebrews 9:22).

22. *And God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us* — not spoken in irony as is generally supposed, but in deep compassion. The words should be rendered, “Behold, what has become [by sin] of the man who was as one of us”! Formed, at first, in our image to know good and evil — how sad his condition now.

and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life — This tree being a pledge of that immortal life with which obedience should be rewarded, man lost, on his fall, all claim to this tree; and therefore, that he might not eat of it or delude himself with the idea that eating of it would restore what he had forfeited, the Lord sent him forth from the garden.

24. *placed ... cherbim* — The passage should be rendered thus: “And he dwelt between the cherubim at the East of the Garden of Eden and a fierce fire, or Shekinah, unfolding itself to preserve the way of the tree of life.” This was the mode of worship now established to show God’s anger at sin and teach the mediation of a promised Savior as the way of life, as well as of access to God. They were the same figures as were afterwards in the tabernacle and temple; and now, as then, God said, “I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims” (⁽⁴²⁵²⁾Exodus 25:22).

CHAPTER 4

GENESIS 4:1-26.

BIRTH OF CAIN AND ABEL.

1. *Eve said, I have gotten a man from the Lord* — that is, “by the help of the Lord” — an expression of pious gratitude — and she called him Cain, that is, “a possession,” as if valued above everything else; while the arrival of another son reminding Eve of the misery she had entailed on her offspring, led to the name Abel, that is, either weakness, vanity (¹³⁹Psalm 39:5), or grief, lamentation. Cain and Abel were probably twins; and it is thought that, at this early period, children were born in pairs (¹⁴⁰Genesis 5:4) [CALVIN].

2. *Abel was a keeper of sheep* — literally, “a feeder of a flock,” which, in Oriental countries, always includes goats as well as sheep. Abel, though the younger, is mentioned first, probably on account of the pre-eminence of his religious character.

3. *in process of time* — *Hebrew*, “at the end of days,” probably on the Sabbath.

brought ... an offering unto the Lord — Both manifested, by the very act of offering, their faith in the being of God and in His claims to their reverence and worship; and had the kind of offering been left to themselves, what more natural than that the one should bring “of the fruits of the ground,” and that the other should bring “of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof” [¹⁴¹Genesis 4:4].

4. *the Lord had respect unto Abel, not unto Cain*, etc. — The words, “had respect to,” signify in *Hebrew*, — “to look at any thing with a keen earnest glance,” which has been translated, “kindle into a fire,” so that the divine approval of Abel’s offering was shown in its being consumed by fire (see ¹⁴²Genesis 15:17 ¹⁴³Judges 13:20).

7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* — A better rendering is, “Shalt thou not have the excellency?” which is the true sense of the words referring to the high privileges and authority belonging to the first-born in patriarchal times.

sin lieth at the door — sin, that is, a sin offering — a common meaning of the word in Scripture (as in ^{<300>}Hosea 4:8 ^{<475>}2 Corinthians 5:21 ^{<302>}Hebrews 9:28). The purport of the divine rebuke to Cain was this, “Why art thou angry, as if unjustly treated? If thou doest well (that is, wert innocent and sinless) a thank offering would have been accepted as a token of thy dependence as a creature. But as thou doest not well (that is, art a sinner), a sin offering is necessary, by bringing which thou wouldest have met with acceptance and retained the honors of thy birthright.” This language implies that previous instructions had been given as to the mode of worship; Abel offered through faith (^{<510>}Hebrews 11:4).

unto thee shall be his desire — The high distinction conferred by priority of birth is described (^{<122>}Genesis 27:29); and it was Cain’s conviction, that this honor had been withdrawn from him, by the rejection of his sacrifice, and conferred on his younger brother — hence the secret flame of jealousy, which kindled into a settled hatred and fell revenge.

8. *And Cain talked with Abel his brother* — Under the guise of brotherly familiarity, he concealed his premeditated purpose till a convenient time and place occurred for the murder (^{<612>}1 John 3:12 ^{<611>}Jude 1:11).

9. *I know not* — a falsehood. One sin leads to another.

10. *the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me* — Cain, to lull suspicion, had probably been engaging in the solemnities of religion when he was challenged directly from the Shekinah itself.

11, 12. *now art thou cursed from the earth* — a curse superadded to the general one denounced on the ground for Adam’s sin.

12. *a fugitive* — condemned to perpetual exile; a degraded outcast; the miserable victim of an accusing conscience.

13, 14. *And Cain said ... My punishment is greater than I can bear* — What an overwhelming sense of misery; but no sign of penitence, nor cry for pardon.

14. *every one that findeth me shall slay me* — This shows that the population of the world was now considerably increased.

15. *whosoever slayeth Cain* — By a special act of divine forbearance, the *life* of Cain was to be spared in the then small state of the human race.

set a mark — not any visible mark or brand on his forehead, but some *sign* or *token* of assurance that his life would be preserved. This sign is thought by the best writers to have been a wild ferocity of aspect that rendered him an object of universal horror and avoidance.

16. *presence of the Lord* — the appointed place of worship at Eden. Leaving it, he not only severed himself from his relatives but forsook the ordinances of religion, probably casting off all fear of God from his eyes so that the last end of this man is worse than the first (^{<4026>}Matthew 12:45).

land of Nod — of flight or exile — thought by many to have been Arabia-Petræa — which was cursed to sterility on his account.

17-22. *builded a city* — It has been in cities that the human race has ever made the greatest social progress; and several of Cain's descendants distinguished themselves by their inventive genius in the arts.

19. *Lamech took unto him two wives* — This is the first transgression of the law of marriage on record, and the practice of polygamy, like all other breaches of God's institutions, has been a fruitful source of corruption and misery.

23, 24. *Lamech said unto his wives* — This speech is in a poetical form, probably the fragment of an old poem, transmitted to the time of Moses. It seems to indicate that Lamech had slain a man in self-defense, and its drift is to assure his wives, by the preservation of Cain, that an *unintentional* homicide, as he was, could be in no danger.

26. *men began to call upon the name of the Lord* — rather, by the name of the Lord. God's people, a name probably applied to them in contempt by the world.

CHAPTER 5

GENESIS 5:1-32.

GENEALOGY OF THE PATRIARCHS.

1. *book of the generations* — (See Genesis 11:4).

Adam — used here either as the name of the first man, or of the human race generally.

5. *all the days ... Adam lived* — The most striking feature in this catalogue is the longevity of Adam and his immediate descendants. Ten are enumerated (Genesis 5:5-32) in direct succession whose lives far exceed the ordinary limits with which we are familiar — the shortest being three hundred sixty-five, [Genesis 5:23] and the longest nine hundred sixty-nine years [Genesis 5:27]. It is useless to inquire whether and what secondary causes may have contributed to this protracted longevity — vigorous constitutions, the nature of their diet, the temperature and salubrity of the climate; or, finally — as this list comprises only the true worshippers of God — whether their great age might be owing to the better government of their passions and the quiet, even tenor of their lives. Since we cannot obtain satisfactory evidence on these points, it is wise to resolve the fact into the sovereign will of God. We can, however, trace some of the important uses to which, in the early economy of Providence, it was subservient. It was the chief means of reserving a knowledge of God, of the great truths of religion, as well as the influence of genuine piety. So that, as their knowledge was obtained by tradition, they would be in a condition to preserve it in the greatest purity.

21. *Enoch ... begat Methuselah* — This name signifies, “He dieth, and the sending forth,” so that Enoch gave it as prophetic of the flood. It is computed that Methuselah died in the year of that catastrophe.

24. *And Enoch walked with God* — a common phrase in Eastern countries denoting constant and familiar intercourse.

was not; for God took him — In ^{<8108>}Hebrews 11:5, we are informed that he was translated to heaven — a mighty miracle, designed to effect what ordinary means of instruction had failed to accomplish, gave a palpable proof to an age of almost universal unbelief that the doctrines which he had taught (^{<6114>}Jude 1:14,15) were true and that his devotedness to the cause of God and righteousness in the midst of opposition was highly pleasing to the mind of God.

26. *Lamech* — a different person from the one mentioned in the preceding chapter [^{<0085>}Genesis 4:18]. Like his namesake, however, he also spoke in numbers on occasion of the birth of Noah — that is, “rest” or “comfort” [^{<0059>}Genesis 5:29, *Margin*]. “The allusion is, undoubtedly, to the penal consequences of the fall in earthly toils and sufferings, and to the hope of a Deliverer, excited by the promise made to Eve. That this expectation was founded on a divine communication we infer from the importance attached to it and the confidence of its expression” [PETER SMITH].

32. *Noah was five hundred years old: and ... begat* — That he and the other patriarchs were advanced in life before children were born to them is a difficulty accounted for probably from the circumstance that Moses does not here record their first-born sons, but only the succession from Adam through Seth to Abraham.

CHAPTER 6

GENESIS 6:1-22.

WICKEDNESS OF THE WORLD.

2. *the sons of God saw the daughters of men* — By the former is meant the family of Seth, who were professedly religious; by the latter, the descendants of apostate Cain. Mixed marriages between parties of opposite principles and practice were necessarily sources of extensive corruption. The women, religious themselves, would as wives and mothers exert an influence fatal to the existence of religion in their household, and consequently the people of that later age sank to the lowest depravity.

3. *flesh* — utterly, hopelessly debased.

And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive — Christ, as God, had by His Spirit inspiring Enoch, Noah, and perhaps other prophets (⁽³⁰¹⁾1 Peter 3:20 ⁽³⁰²⁾2 Peter 2:5 ⁽³⁰³⁾Jude 1:14), preached repentance to the antediluvians; but they were incorrigible.

yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years — It is probable that the corruption of the world, which had now reached its height, had been long and *gradually* increasing, and this idea receives support from the long respite granted.

4. *giants* — The term in *Hebrew* implies not so much the idea of great stature as of reckless ferocity, impious and daring characters, who spread devastation and carnage far and wide.

5, 6. *God saw it ... repented ... grieved* — God cannot change (⁽³⁰⁴⁾Malachi 3:6 ⁽³⁰⁵⁾James 1:17); but, by language *suited to our nature and experience*, He is described as about to alter His visible procedure towards mankind — from being merciful and long-suffering, He was about to show Himself a God of judgment; and, as that impious race had filled up the measure of

their iniquities, He was about to introduce a terrible display of His justice (^{<201E}Ecclesiastes 8:11).

8. *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord* — favor. What an awful state of things when only one man or one family of piety and virtue was now existing among the professed sons of God!

9. *Noah ... just ... and perfect* — not absolutely; for since the fall of Adam no man has been free from sin except Jesus Christ. But as living by faith he was just (^{<80E}Galatians 3:2 ^{<810E}Hebrews 11:7) and perfect — that is, sincere in his desire to do God's will.

11. *the earth was filled with violence* — In the absence of any well-regulated government it is easy to imagine what evils would arise. Men did what was right in their own eyes, and, having no fear of God, destruction and misery were in their ways.

13. *And God said unto Noah* — How startling must have been the announcement of the threatened destruction! There was no outward indication of it. The course of nature and experience seemed against the probability of its occurrence. The public opinion of mankind would ridicule it. The whole world would be ranged against him. Yet, persuaded the communication was from God, through faith (^{<810E}Hebrews 11:7), he set about preparing the means for preserving himself and family from the impending calamity.

14. *Make thee an ark* — ark, a hollow chest (^{<10E}Exodus 2:3).

gopher wood — probably cypress, remarkable for its durability and abounding on the Armenian mountains.

pitch it within and without — mineral pitch, asphalt, naphtha, or some bituminous substance, which, when smeared over and become hardened, would make it perfectly watertight.

15. *And this is the fashion* — According to the description, the ark was not a ship, but an immense house in form and structure like the houses in the East, designed not to sail, but only to float. Assuming the cubit to be 21.888 inches, the ark would be five hundred forty-seven feet long, ninety-one feet two inches wide, and forty-seven feet two inches high.

16. *A window* — probably a skylight, formed of some transparent substance unknown.

in a cubit shalt thou finish it above — a direction to raise the roof in the middle, seemingly to form a gentle slope for letting the water run off.

17-22. *And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood* — The repetition of the announcement was to establish its certainty (^{<0413>}Genesis 41:32). Whatever opinion may be entertained as to the operation of natural laws and agencies in the deluge, it was brought on the world by God as a punishment for the enormous wickedness of its inhabitants.

18. *But with thee will I establish my covenant* — a special promise of deliverance, called a covenant, to convince him of the confidence to be reposed in it. The substance and terms of this covenant are related at ^{<008>}Genesis 6:19-21.

22. *Thus did Noah* — He began without delay to prepare the colossal fabric, and in every step of his progress faithfully followed the divine directions he had received.

CHAPTER 7

GENESIS 7:1-24.

ENTRANCE INTO THE ARK.

1. *And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark* — The ark was finished; and Noah now, in the spirit of implicit faith, which had influenced his whole conduct, waited for directions from God.

2,3. *Of every clean beast ... fowls* — Pairs of every species of animals, except the tenants of the deep, were to be taken for the preservation of their respective kinds. This was the general rule of admission, only with regard to those animals which are styled “clean,” three pairs were to be taken, whether of beasts or birds; and the reason was that their rapid multiplication was a matter of the highest importance, when the earth should be renovated, for their utility either as articles of food or as employed in the service of man. But what was the use of the seventh? It was manifestly reserved for sacrifice; and so that both during Noah’s residence in the ark, and after his return to dry land, provision was made for celebrating the rites of worship according to the religion of fallen man. He did not, like many, leave religion behind. He provided for it during his protracted voyage.

4. *For yet seven days* — A week for a world to repent! What a solemn pause! Did they laugh and ridicule his folly still? He whose eyes saw and whose heart felt the full amount of human iniquity and perverseness has told us of their reckless disregard (⁴⁰⁷²Luke 17:27).

9. *There went in two and two* — Doubtless they were led by a divine impulse. The number would not be so large as at first sight one is apt to imagine. It has been calculated that there are not more than three hundred distinct species of beasts and birds, the immense varieties in regard to form, size, and color being traceable to the influence of climate and other circumstances.

16. *and the Lord shut him in* — literally, “covered him round about.” The “shutting him in” intimated that Noah had become the special object of divine care and protection, and that to those without the season of grace was over (⁴¹⁵⁰Matthew 25:10).

17. *the waters increased, and bare up the ark* — It seems to have been raised so gradually as to be scarcely perceptible to its occupants.

20. *Fifteen cubits upward ... and the mountains were covered* — twenty-two and a half feet above the summits of the highest hills. The language is not consistent with the theory of a partial deluge.

21. *all flesh died ... fowl ... cattle, and ... creeping thing* — It has been a uniform principle in the divine procedure, when judgments were abroad on the earth, to include every thing connected with the sinful objects of His wrath (⁴¹²⁵Genesis 19:25 ⁴¹⁰⁶Exodus 9:6). Besides, now that the human race was reduced to one single family, it was necessary that the beasts should be proportionally diminished, otherwise by their numbers they would have acquired the ascendancy and overmastered the few that were to repopulate the world. Thus goodness was mingled with severity; the Lord exercises judgment in wisdom and in wrath remembers mercy.

24. *an hundred and fifty days* — a period of five months. Though long before that every living creature must have been drowned, such a lengthened continuance of the flood was designed to manifest God’s stern displeasure at sin and sinners. Think of Noah during such a crisis. We learn (³³⁴⁴Ezekiel 14:14) that he was a man who lived and breathed habitually in an atmosphere of devotion; and having in the exercise of this high-toned faith made God his refuge, he did not fear “though the waters roared and were troubled; though the mountains shook with the swelling thereof” [³⁴⁶³Psalms 46:3].

CHAPTER 8

GENESIS 8:1-14.

ASSUAGING OF THE WATERS.

1. *And God remembered Noah* — The divine purpose in this awful dispensation had been accomplished, and the world had undergone those changes necessary to fit it for becoming the residence of man under a new economy of Providence.

and every living thing ... in the ark — a beautiful illustration of ^{<100B>}Matthew 10:29.

and God made a wind to pass over the earth — Though the divine will could have dried up the liquid mass in an instant, the agency of a wind was employed (^{<104D>}Psalm 104:4) — probably a hot wind, which, by rapid evaporation, would again absorb one portion of the waters into the atmosphere; and by which, the other would be gradually drained off by outlets beneath.

4. *seventh month* — of the year — not of the flood — which lasted only five months.

rested — evidently indicating a calm and gentle motion.

upon the mountains of Ararat — or Armenia, as the word is rendered (^{<193B>}2 Kings 19:37 ^{<237B>}Isaiah 37:38). The mountain which tradition points to as the one on which the ark rested is now called Ara Dagh, the “finger mountain.” Its summit consists of two peaks, the higher of which is 17,750 feet and the other 13,420 above the level of the sea.

5. *And the waters decreased continually* — The decrease of the waters was for wise reasons exceedingly slow and gradual — the period of their return being nearly twice as long as that of their rise.

6. *at the end of forty days* — It is easy to imagine the ardent longing Noah and his family must have felt to enjoy again the sight of land as well as breathe the fresh air; and it was perfectly consistent with faith and patience to make inquiries whether the earth was yet ready.

7. *And he sent forth a raven* — The smell of carrion would allure it to remain if the earth were in a habitable state. But it kept hovering about the spot, and, being a solitary bird, probably perched on the covering.

8-11. *Also he sent forth a dove* — a bird flying low and naturally disposed to return to the place of her abode.

10. *again he sent forth the dove* — Her flight, judging by the time she was abroad, was pursued to a great distance, and the newly plucked olive leaf, she no doubt by supernatural impulse brought in her bill, afforded a welcome proof that the declivities of the hills were clear.

12. *he ... sent forth the dove: which returned not ... any more* — In these results, we perceive a wisdom and prudence far superior to the inspiration of instinct — we discern the agency of God guiding all the movements of this bird for the instruction of Noah, and reviving the hopes of his household.

other seven days — a strong presumptive proof that Noah observed the Sabbath during his residence in the ark.

13, 14. *Noah removed the covering of the ark* — probably only as much of it as would afford him a prospect of the earth around. Yet for about two months he never stirred from his appointed abode till he had received the express permission of God. We should watch the leading of Providence to direct us in every step of the journey of life.

~~CHAP.~~ GENESIS 8:15-22.

DEPARTURE FROM THE ARK.

15, 16. *And God spake ... Go forth* — They went forth in the most orderly manner — the human occupants first, then each species “after

their kinds” [^{GEN}Genesis 8:19], literally, “according to their families,” implying that there had been an increase in the ark.

20. *Noah builded an altar* — literally, “a high place” — probably a mound of earth, on which a sacrifice was offered. There is something exceedingly beautiful and interesting to know that the first care of this devout patriarch was to return thanks for the signal instance of mercy and goodness which he and his family had experienced.

took of every clean beast ... fowl — For so unparalleled a deliverance, a special acknowledgment was due.

21. *And the Lord smelled a sweet savor* — The sacrifice offered by a righteous man like Noah in faith was acceptable as the most fragrant incense.

Lord said in his heart — same as “I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth” (^{ISA}Isaiah 54:9).

for — that is, “though the imagination is evil”; instead of inflicting another destructive flood, I shall spare them — to enjoy the blessings of grace, through a Savior.

22. *While the earth remaineth* — The consummation, as intimated in ^{PET}2 Peter 3:7, does not frustrate a promise which held good only during the continuance of that system. There will be no flood between this and that day, when the earth therein shall be burnt up [CHALMERS].

CHAPTER 9

GENESIS 9:1-7.

COVENANT.

1. *And God blessed Noah* — Here is republished the law of nature that was announced to Adam, consisting as it originally did of several parts.

Be fruitful, etc. — The first part relates to the transmission of life, the original blessing being reannounced in the very same words in which it had been promised at first [^{<002>}Genesis 1:28].

2. *And the fear of you and the dread of you* — The second part re-establishes man's dominion over the inferior animals; it was now founded not as at first in love and kindness, but in terror; this dread of man prevails among all the stronger as well as the weaker members of the animal tribes and keeps away from his haunts all but those employed in his service.

3. *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you* — The third part concerns the means of sustaining life; man was for the first time, it would seem, allowed the use of animal food, but the grant was accompanied with one restriction.

4. *But flesh ... the blood ... shall ye not eat* — The sole intention of this prohibition was to prevent these excesses of cannibal ferocity in eating flesh of living animals, to which men in the earlier ages of the world were liable.

5. *surely your blood of your lives will I require* — The fourth part establishes a new power for *protecting* life — the institution of the civil magistrate (^{<613>}Romans 13:4), armed with public and official authority to repress the commission of violence and crime. Such a power had not previously existed in patriarchal society.

6. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood ... for in the image of God made he man* — It is true that image has been injured by the fall, but it is not lost. In

this view, a high value is attached to the life of every man, even the poorest and humblest, and an awful criminality is involved in the destruction of it.

GENESIS 9:8-29.

RAINBOW.

13. *I do set my bow in the cloud* — set, that is, constitute or appoint. This common and familiar phenomenon being made the pledge of peace, its appearance when showers began to fall would be welcomed with the liveliest feelings of joy.

20. *And Noah ... planted a vineyard* — Noah had been probably bred to the culture of the soil, and resumed that employment on leaving the ark.

21. *And he drank of the wine, and was drunken* — perhaps at the festivities of the vintage season. This solitary stain on the character of so eminently pious a man must, it is believed, have been the result of age or inadvertency.

24. This incident could scarcely have happened till twenty years after the flood; for Canaan, whose conduct was more offensive than that even of his father, was not born till after that event. It is probable that there is a long interval included between these verses and that this prophecy, like that of Jacob on his sons, was not uttered till near the close of Noah's life when the prophetic spirit came upon him; this presumption is strengthened by the mention of his death immediately after.

25. *Cursed be Canaan* — This doom has been fulfilled in the destruction of the Canaanites — in the degradation of Egypt and the slavery of the Africans, the descendants of Ham.

26. *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem* — rather, “Blessed of Jehovah, my God, be Shem,” — an intimation that the descendants of Shem should be peculiarly honored in the service of the true God, His Church being for ages established among them (the Jews), and of them, concerning the flesh, Christ came. They got possession of Canaan, the people of that land being

made their “servants” either by conquest, or, like the Gibeonites, by submission [⁶⁰²⁵Joshua 9:25].

27. *God shall enlarge Japheth* — pointing to a vast increase in posterity and possessions. Accordingly his descendants have been the most active and enterprising, spread over the best and largest portion of the world, all Europe and a considerable part of Asia.

he shall dwell in the tents of Shem — a prophecy being fulfilled at the present day, as in India British Government is established and the Anglo-Saxons being in the ascendancy from Europe to India, from India over the American continent. What a wonderful prophecy in a few verses (²³⁴⁰Isaiah 46:10 ⁶⁰²⁵1 Peter 1:25)!

CHAPTER 10

GENESIS 10:1-32.

GENEALOGIES.

1. *sons of Noah* — The historian has not arranged this catalogue according to seniority of birth; for the account begins with the descendants of Japheth, and the line of Ham is given before that of Shem though he is expressly said to be the youngest or younger son of Noah; and Shem was the elder brother of Japheth (^{10:21}Genesis 10:21), the true rendering of that passage.

generations, etc. — the narrative of the settlement of nations existing in the time of Moses, perhaps only the principal ones; for though the list comprises the sons of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, *all their descendants* are not enumerated. Those descendants, with one or two exceptions, are described by names indicative of tribes and nations and ending in the *Hebrew im*, or the English “-ite.”

5. *the isles of the Gentiles* — a phrase by which the Hebrews described all countries which were accessible by sea (^{11:11}Isaiah 11:11 ^{20:6}Jeremiah 20:6 ^{25:22}Jeremiah 25:22). Such in relation to them were the countries of Europe, the peninsula of Lesser Asia, and the region lying on the east of the Euxine. Accordingly, it was in these quarters the early descendants of Japheth had their settlements.

6. *sons of Ham* — emigrated southward, and their settlements were: Cush in Arabia, Canaan in the country known by his name, and Mizraim in Egypt, Upper and Lower. It is generally thought that his father accompanied him and personally superintended the formation of the settlement, whence Egypt was called “the land of Ham” [^{105:23,27}Psalms 105:23,27 ^{106:22}Psalms 106:22].

8. *Nimrod* — mentioned as eclipsing all his family in renown. He early distinguished himself by his daring and successful prowess in hunting wild

beasts. By those useful services he earned a title to public gratitude; and, having established a permanent ascendancy over the people, he founded the first kingdom in the world [^{<1000>}Genesis 10:10].

10. *the beginning of his kingdom* — This kingdom, of course, though then considered great, would be comparatively limited in extent, and the towns but small forts.

11. *Out of that land went forth Asshur* — or, as the *Margin* has it, “He [Nimrod] at the head of his army went forth into Assyria,” that is, he pushed his conquests into that country.

and builded Nineveh — opposite the town of Mosul, on the Tigris, and the other towns near it. This raid into Assyria was an invasion of the territories of Shem, and hence the name “Nimrod,” signifying “rebel,” is supposed to have been conferred on him from his daring revolt against the divine distribution.

21. *Unto Shem* — The historian introduces him with marked distinction as “the father of Eber,” the ancestor of the Hebrews.

23. *Aram* — In the general division of the earth, the countries of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Syria, fell to his descendants.

24. *Arphaxad* — The settlement of his posterity was in the extensive valley of Shinar, on the Tigris, towards the southern extremity of Mesopotamia, including the country of Eden and the region on the east side of the river.

25. *Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided* — After the flood (^{<1110>}Genesis 11:10-16) the descendants of Noah settled at pleasure and enjoyed the produce of the undivided soil. But according to divine instruction, made probably through Eber, who seems to have been distinguished for piety or a prophetic character, the earth was divided and his son’s name, “Peleg,” was given in memory of that event (see ^{<6318>}Deuteronomy 32:8 ^{<41725>}Acts 17:26).

32. *These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations*, etc. — This division was made in the most orderly manner; and the inspired historian evidently intimates that the sons of Noah were

ranged according to their nations, and every nation ranked by its families, so that every nation had its assigned territory, and in every nation the tribes, and in every tribe the families, were located by themselves.

CHAPTER 11

GENESIS 11:1-32.

CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

1. *the whole earth was of one language*. The descendants of Noah, united by the strong bond of a common language, had not separated, and notwithstanding the divine command to replenish the earth, were unwilling to separate. The more pious and well-disposed would of course obey the divine will; but a numerous body, seemingly the aggressive horde mentioned (^{CHD}Genesis 10:10), determined to please themselves by occupying the fairest region they came to.

2. *land of Shinar* — The fertile valley watered by the Euphrates and Tigris was chosen as the center of their union and the seat of their power.

3. *brick* — There being no stone in that quarter, brick is, and was, the only material used for building, as appears in the mass of ruins which at the Birs Nimroud may have been the very town formed by those ancient rebels. Some of these are sun-dried — others burnt in the kiln and of different colors.

slime — bitumen, a mineral pitch, which, when hardened, forms a strong cement, commonly used in Assyria to this day, and forming the mortar found on the burnt brick remains of antiquity.

4. *a tower whose top may reach unto heaven* — a common figurative expression for great height (^{CHD}Deuteronomy 1:28 9:1-6).

lest we be scattered — To build a city and a town was no crime; but to do this to defeat the counsels of heaven by attempting to prevent emigration was foolish, wicked, and justly offensive to God.

6. *and now nothing will be restrained from them* — an apparent admission that the design was practicable, and would have been executed but for the divine interposition.

7. *confound their language* — literally, “their lip”; it was a failure in utterance, occasioning a difference in dialect which was intelligible only to those of the same tribe. Thus easily by God their purpose was defeated, and they were compelled to the dispersion they had combined to prevent. It is only from the Scriptures we learn the true origin of the different nations and languages of the world. By one miracle of tongues men were dispersed and gradually fell from true religion. By another, national barriers were broken down — that all men might be brought back to the family of God.

28. *Ur* — now Orfa; that is, “light, or “fire.” Its name probably derived from its being devoted to the rites of fire-worship. Terah and his family were equally infected with that idolatry as the rest of the inhabitants (^[1215]Joshua 24:15).

31. *Sarai his daughter-in-law* — the same as Iscah [^[1113]Genesis 11:29], granddaughter of Terah, probably by a second wife, and by early usages considered marriageable to her uncle, Abraham.

they came unto Haran — two days’ journey south-southeast from Ur, on the direct road to the ford of the Euphrates at Rakka, the nearest and most convenient route to Palestine.

CHAPTER 12

GENESIS 12:1-20.

CALL TO ABRAM.

1. *Now the Lord had said unto Abram* — It pleased God, who has often been found of them who sought Him not, to reveal Himself to Abraham perhaps by a miracle; and the conversion of Abraham is one of the most remarkable in Bible history.

Get thee out of thy country — His being brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God had probably been a considerable time before. This call included two promises: the first, showing the land of his future posterity; and the second, that in his posterity all the earth was to be blessed (⁴¹¹²Genesis 12:2). Abraham obeyed, and it is frequently mentioned in the New Testament as a striking instance of his faith (³¹¹⁹Hebrews 11:8).

5. *into the land of Canaan ... they came* — with his wife and an orphan nephew. Abram reached his destination in safety, and thus the first promise was made good.

6. *the place of Sichem* — or Shechem, a pastoral valley then unoccupied (compare ⁴³³⁸Genesis 33:18).

plain of Moreh — rather, the “terebinth tree” of Moreh, very common in Palestine, remarkable for its wide-spreading branches and its dark green foliage. It is probable that in Moreh there was a grove of these trees, whose inviting shade led Abram to choose it for an encampment.

7. *Unto thy seed will I give this land* — God was dealing with Abram not in his private and personal capacity merely, but with a view to high and important interests in future ages. That land his posterity was for centuries to inhabit as a peculiar people; the seeds of divine knowledge were to be sown there for the benefit of all mankind; and considered in its geographical situation, it was chosen in divine wisdom as the fittest of all

lands to serve as the cradle of a divine revelation designed for the whole world.

and there builded he an altar unto the Lord — By this solemn act of devotion Abram made an open profession of his religion, established the worship of the true God, and declared his faith in the promise.

10. *there was a famine ... and Abram went down into Egypt* — He did not go back to the place of his nativity, as regretting his pilgrimage and despising the promised land (^{GEN}Hebrews 11:15), but withdrew for a while into a neighboring country.

11-13. Sarai's complexion, coming from a mountainous country, would be fresh and fair compared with the faces of Egyptian women which were sallow. The counsel of Abram to her was true in words, but it was a deception, intended to give an impression that she was no more than his sister. His conduct was culpable and inconsistent with his character as a servant of God: it showed a reliance on worldly policy more than a trust in the promise; and he not only sinned himself, but tempted Sarai to sin also.

14. *when Abram was come into Egypt* — It appears from the monuments of that country that at the time of Abram's visit a monarchy had existed for several centuries. The seat of government was in the Delta, the most northern part of the country, the very quarter in which Abram must have arrived. They were a race of shepherd-kings, in close alliance with the people of Canaan.

15. *the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house* — Eastern kings have for ages claimed the privilege of taking to their harem an unmarried woman whom they like. The father or brother may deplore the removal as a calamity, but the royal right is never resisted nor questioned.

16. *he entreated Abram well for her sake* — The presents are just what one pastoral chief would give to another.

18-20. Here is a most humiliating rebuke, and Abram deserved it. Had not God interfered, he might have been tempted to stay in Egypt and forget the promise (^{PSALM}Psalm 105:13,15). Often still does God rebuke His people and remind them through enemies that this world is not their rest.

CHAPTER 13

GENESIS 13:1-18.

RETURN FROM EGYPT.

1. *went up ... south* — Palestine being a highland country, the entrance from Egypt by its southern boundary is a continual ascent.
 2. *very rich* — compared with the pastoral tribes to which Abraham belonged. An Arab sheik is considered rich who has a hundred or two hundred tents, from sixty to a hundred camels, a thousand sheep and goats respectively. And Abram being very rich, must have far exceeded that amount of pastoral property. “Gold and silver” being rare among these peoples, his probably arose from the sale of his produce in Egypt.
 3. *went on his journeys* — His progress would be by slow marches and frequent encampments as Abram had to regulate his movements by the prospect of water and pasturage.
- unto the place ... between Beth-el and Hai* — “a conspicuous hill — its topmost summit resting on the rocky slopes below, and distinguished by its olive groves — offering a natural base for the altar and a fitting shade for the tent of the patriarch” [STANLEY].
4. *there Abram called on the name of the Lord* — He felt a strong desire to reanimate his faith and piety on the scene of his former worship: it might be to express humility and penitence for his misconduct in Egypt or thankfulness for deliverance from perils — to embrace the first opportunity on returning to Canaan of leading his family to renew allegiance to God and offer the typical sacrifices which pointed to the blessings of the promise.

7. *And there was a strife* — Abraham’s character appears here in a most amiable light. Having a strong sense of religion, he was afraid of doing anything that might tend to injure its character or bring discredit on its

name, and he rightly judged that such unhappy effects would be produced if two persons whom nature and grace had so closely connected should come to a rupture [^{<0138>}Genesis 13:8]. Waiving his right to dictate, he gave the freedom of choice to Lot. The conduct of Abraham was not only disinterested and peaceable, but generous and condescending in an extraordinary degree, exemplifying the Scripture precepts (^{<0153>}Matthew 6:32 ^{<520>}Romans 12:10,11 ^{<1109>}Philippians 2:4).

10. *Lot lifted up his eyes* — Travellers say that from the top of this hill, a little “to the east of Beth-el” [^{<0138>}Genesis 12:8], they can see the Jordan, the broad meadows on either bank, and the waving line of verdure which marks the course of the stream.

11. *Then Lot chose him all the plain* — a choice excellent from a worldly point of view, but most inexpedient for his best interests. He seems, though a good man, to have been too much under the influence of a selfish and covetous spirit: and how many, alas! imperil the good of their souls for the prospect of worldly advantage.

14, 15. *Lift up now thine eyes ... all the land which thou seest* — So extensive a survey of the country, *in all directions*, can be obtained from no other point in the neighborhood; and those plains and hills, then lying desolate before the eyes of the solitary patriarch, were to be peopled with a mighty nation “like the dust of the earth in number,” as they were in Solomon’s time (^{<1001>}1 Kings 4:20).

18. *the plain of Mamre ... built ... an altar* — the renewal of the promise was acknowledged by Abram by a fresh tribute of devout gratitude.

CHAPTER 14

GENESIS 14:1-24.

WAR.

1. *And it came to pass* — This chapter presents Abram in the unexpected character of a warrior. The occasion was this: The king of Sodom and the kings of the adjoining cities, after having been tributaries for twelve years to the king of Elam, combined to throw off his yoke. To chastise their rebellion, as he deemed it, Chedorlaomer, with the aid of three allies, invaded the territories of the refractory princes, defeated them in a pitched battle where the nature of the ground favored his army (^{CHH}Genesis 14:10), and hastened in triumph on his homeward march, with a large amount of captives and booty, though merely a stranger.

12. *they took Lot ... and his goods, and departed* — How would the conscience of that young man now upbraid him for his selfish folly and ingratitude in withdrawing from his kind and pious relative! Whenever we go out of the path of duty, we put ourselves away from God's protection, and cannot expect that the choice we make will be for our lasting good.

13. *there came one that had escaped* — Abram might have excused himself from taking any active concern in his "brother," that is, nephew, who little deserved that he should incur trouble or danger on *his* account. But Abram, far from rendering evil for evil, resolved to take immediate measures for the rescue of Lot.

14. *And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants* — domestic slaves, such as are common in Eastern countries still and are considered and treated as members of the family. If Abram could spare three hundred and eighteen slaves and leave a sufficient number to take care of the flocks, what a large establishment he must have had.

15, 16. *he divided himself ... by night* — This war between the petty princes of ancient Canaan is exactly the same as the frays and skirmishes between Arab chiefs in the present day. When a defeated party resolves to pursue the enemy, they wait till they are fast asleep; then, as they have no idea of posting sentinels, they rush upon them from different directions, strike down the tent poles — if there is any fight at all, it is the fray of a tumultuous mob — a panic commonly ensues, and the whole contest is ended with little or no loss on either side.

18. *Melchizedek* — This victory conferred a public benefit on that part of the country; and Abram, on his return, was treated with high respect and consideration, particularly by the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, who seems to have been one of the few native princes, if not the only one, who knew and worshipped, “the most high God,” whom Abram served. This king who was a type of the Savior (^{<300>}Hebrews 7:1), came to bless God for the victory which had been won, and in the name of God to bless Abram, by whose arms it had been achieved — a pious acknowledgment which we should imitate on succeeding in any lawful enterprise.

20. *he gave him tithes of all* — Here is an evidence of Abram’s piety, as well as of his valor; for it was to a priest or official mediator between God and him that Abram gave a tenth of the spoil — a token of his gratitude and in honor of a divine ordinance (^{<1000>}Proverbs 3:9).

21. *the king of Sodom said ... Give me the persons* — According to the war customs still existing among the Arab tribes, Abram might have retained the recovered goods, and his right was acknowledged by the king of Sodom. But with honest pride, and a generosity unknown in that part of the world, he replied with strong phraseology common to the East, “I have lifted up mine hand” [that is, I have sworn] unto the Lord that I will not take from a thread even to a sandal-thong, and that that I will not take any thing that [is] thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich” [^{<1142>}Genesis 14:22,23].

CHAPTER 15

GENESIS 15:1-21.

DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT.

1. *After these things* — the conquest of the invading kings.

the word of the Lord — a phrase used, when connected with a vision, to denote a prophetic message.

Fear not, Abram — When the excitement of the enterprise was over, he had become a prey to despondency and terror at the probable revenge that might be meditated against him. To dispel his fear, he was favored with this gracious announcement. Having such a promise, how well did it become him (and all God's people who have the same promise) to dismiss fears, and cast all burdens on the Lord (^{327B}Psalm 27:3).

2. *Lord God, what wilt thou give?* — To his mind the declaration, "I am thy exceeding great reward" [^{415B}Genesis 15:1], had but one meaning, or was viewed but in one particular light, as bearing on the fulfillment of the promise, and he was still experiencing the sickness of hope deferred.

3. *Eliezer of Damascus ... one born in my house is mine heir* — According to the usage of nomadic tribes, his chief confidential servant, would be heir to his possessions and honors. But this man could have become his son only by adoption; and how sadly would that have come short of the parental hopes he had been encouraged to entertain! His language betrayed a latent spirit of fretfulness or perhaps a temporary failure in the very virtue for which he is so renowned — and absolute submission to God's time, as well as way, of accomplishing His promise.

4. *This shall not be thine heir* — To the first part of his address no reply was given; but having renewed it in a spirit of more becoming submission, "whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it" [^{415B}Genesis 15:8], he was

delighted by a most explicit promise of Canaan, which was immediately confirmed by a remarkable ceremony.

9-21. *Take me an heifer*, etc. — On occasions of great importance, when two or more parties join in a compact, they either observe precisely the same rites as Abram did, or, where they do not, they invoke the lamp as their witness. According to these ideas, which have been from time immemorial engraven on the minds of Eastern people, the Lord Himself condescended to enter into covenant with Abram. The patriarch did not pass between the sacrifice and the reason was that in this transaction he was bound to nothing. He asked a sign, and God was pleased to give him a sign, by which, according to Eastern ideas, He bound Himself. In like manner God has entered into covenant with us; and in the glory of the only-begotten Son, who passed through between God and us, all who believe have, like Abram, a sign or pledge in the gift of the Spirit, whereby they may know that they shall inherit the heavenly Canaan.

CHAPTER 16

GENESIS 16:1-16.

BESTOWMENT OF HAGAR.

1. *Now, Sarai ... had a handmaid* — a female slave — one of those obtained in Egypt.

3. *Sarai ... gave her to ... Abram to be his wife* — “Wife” is here used to describe an inferior, though not degrading, relation, in countries where polygamy prevails. In the case of these female slaves, who are the personal property of his lady, being purchased before her marriage or given as a special present to her, no one can become the husband’s secondary wife without her mistress consent or permission. This usage seems to have prevailed in patriarchal times; and Hagar, Sarai’s slave, of whom she had the entire right of disposing, was given by her mistress’ spontaneous offer, to be the secondary wife of Abram, in the hope of obtaining the long-looked-for heir. It was a wrong step — indicating a want of simple reliance on God — and Sarai was the first to reap the bitter fruits of her device.

5. *And Sarai said ... My wrong be upon thee* — Bursts of temper, or blows, as the original may bear, took place till at length Hagar, perceiving the hopelessness of maintaining the unequal strife, resolved to escape from what had become to her in reality, as well as in name, a house of bondage.

7. *And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain* — This well, pointed out by tradition, lay on the side of the caravan road, in the midst of Shur, a sandy desert on the west of Arabia-Petræa, to the extent of a hundred fifty miles, between Palestine and Egypt. By taking that direction, she seems to have intended to return to her relatives in that country. Nothing but pride, passion, and sullen obstinacy, could have driven any solitary person to brave the dangers of such an inhospitable wild; and she would have died, had not the timely appearance and words of the angel recalled her to reflection and duty.

11. *Ishmael* — Like other Hebrew names, this had a signification, and it is made up of two words — “God hears.” The reason is explained.

12. *he will be a wild man* — literally, “a wild ass man,” expressing how the wildness of Ishmael and his descendants resembles that of the wild ass.

his hand will be against every man — descriptive of the rude, turbulent, and plundering character of the Arabs.

dwell in the presence of all his brethren — dwell, that is, pitch tents; and the meaning is that they maintain their independence in spite of all attempts to extirpate or subdue them.

13. *called the name* — common in ancient times to name places from circumstances; and the name given to this well was a grateful recognition of God’s gracious appearance in the hour of Hagar’s distress.

CHAPTER 17

GENESIS 17:1-27.

RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT.

1. ***Abram ... ninety years old and nine*** — thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael [^{<0146>}Genesis 16:16]. During that interval he had enjoyed the comforts of communion with God but had been favored with no special revelation as formerly, probably on account of his hasty and blameable marriage with Hagar.

the Lord appeared — some visible manifestation of the divine presence, probably the Shekinah or radiant glory of overpowering effulgence.

I am the Almighty God — the name by which He made Himself known to the patriarchs (^{<0148>}Exodus 6:3), designed to convey the sense of “all-sufficient” (^{<0149>}Psalms 16:5,6 ^{<0150>}73:25).

walk ... and ... perfect — upright, or sincere (^{<0151>}Psalms 51:6) in heart, speech, and behavior.

3. ***Abram fell on his face*** — the attitude of profoundest reverence assumed by Eastern people. It consists in the prostrate body resting on the hands and knees, with the face bent till the forehead touches the ground. It is an expression of conscious humility and profound reverence.

4. ***my covenant is with thee*** — Renewed mention is made of it as the foundation of the communication that follows. It is the covenant of grace made with all who believe in the Savior.

5. ***but thy name shall be Abraham*** — In Eastern countries a change of name is an advertisement of some new circumstance in the history, rank, or religion of the individual who bears it. The change is made variously, by the old name being entirely dropped for the new, or by conjoining the new with the old; or sometimes only a few letters are inserted, so that the altered form may express the difference in the owner’s state or prospects.

It is surprising how soon a new name is known and its import spread through the country. In dealing with Abraham and Sarai, God was pleased to adapt His procedure to the ideas and customs of the country and age. Instead of Abram, “a high father,” he was to be called Abraham, “father of a multitude of nations” (see ^{<4017>}Revelation 2:17).

8. *I will give unto thee ... the land* — It had been previously promised to Abraham and his posterity (^{<4158>}Genesis 15:18). Here it is promised as an “everlasting possession,” and was, therefore, a type of heaven, “the better country” (^{<3116>}Hebrews 11:16).

10. *Every man child among you shall be circumcised* — This was the sign in the Old Testament Church as baptism is in the New, and hence the covenant is called “covenant of circumcision” (^{<4108>}Acts 7:8 ^{<4011>}Romans 4:11). The terms of the covenant were these: on the one hand Abraham and his seed were to observe the right of circumcision; and on the other, God promised, in the event of such observance, to give them Canaan for a perpetual possession, to be a God to him and his posterity, and that in him and his seed all nations should be blessed.

15, 16. *As for Sarai ... I will ... give thee a son also of her* — God’s purposes are gradually made known. A son had been long ago promised to Abraham. Now, at length, for the first time he is informed that it was to be a child of Sarai.

17. *Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed* — It was not the sneer of unbelief, but a smile of delight at the improbability of the event (^{<4017>}Romans 4:20).

18. *O that Ishmael might live before thee* — natural solicitude of a parent. But God’s thoughts are not as man’s thoughts [^{<2574>}Isaiah 55:8].

19, 20. The blessings of the covenant are reserved for Isaac, but common blessings were abundantly promised to Ishmael; and though the visible Church did not descend from his family, yet personally he might, and it is to be hoped *did*, enjoy its benefits.

CHAPTER 18

GENESIS 18:1-8.

ENTERTAINMENT OF ANGELS.

1. *the Lord appeared* — another manifestation of the divine presence, more familiar than any yet narrated; and more like that in the fullness of time, when the Word was made flesh.

plains of Mamre — rather, terebinth or oak of Mamre; a tall-spreading tree or grove of trees.

sat in the tent door — The tent itself being too close and sultry at noon, the shaded open front is usually resorted to for the air that may be stirring.

2. *lift up his eyes ... and, lo, three men* — Travellers in that quarter start at sunrise and continue till midday when they look out for some resting-place.

he ran to meet them — When the visitor is an ordinary person, the host merely rises; but if of superior rank, the custom is to advance a little towards the stranger, and after a very low bow, turn and lead him to the tent, putting an arm round his waist, or tapping him on the shoulder as they go, to assure him of welcome.

3. *My Lord, if now I have found favor* — The hospitalities offered are just of the kind that are necessary and most grateful, the refreshment of water, for feet exposed to dust and heat by the sandals, being still the first observed among the pastoral people of Hebron.

5. *for therefore are ye come* — No questions were asked. But Abraham knew their object by the course they took — approaching directly in *front* of the chief sheik's tent, which is always distinguishable from the rest and thus showing their wish to be his guests.

6. *Abraham hastened ... unto Sarah ... make cakes upon the hearth* — Bread is baked daily, no more than is required for family use, and always by the women, commonly the wife. It is a short process. Flour mixed with water is made into dough, and being rolled out into cakes, it is placed on the earthen floor, previously heated by a fire. The fire being removed, the cakes are laid on the ground, and being covered over with hot embers, are soon baked, and eaten the moment they are taken off.

7. *Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf* — Animal food is never provided, except for visitors of a superior rank when a kid or lamb is killed. A calf is still a higher stretch of hospitality, and it would probably be cooked as is usually done when haste is required — either by roasting it whole or by cutting it up into small pieces and broiling them on skewers over the fire. It is always eaten along with boiled corn swimming in butter or melted fat, into which every morsel of meat, laid upon a piece of bread, is dipped, before being conveyed by the fingers to the mouth.

8. *milk* — A bowl of camel's milk ends the repast.

he stood by them under the tree — The host himself, even though he has a number of servants, deems it a necessary act of politeness to *stand* while his guests are at their food, and Abraham evidently did this before he was aware of the real character of his visitors.

GENESIS 18:9-15.

REPROOF OF SARAH.

An inquiry about his wife, so surprising in strangers, the subject of conversation, and the fulfillment of the fondly cherished promise within a specified time, showed Abraham that he had been entertaining more than ordinary travelers (^{381D} Hebrews 13:2).

10. *Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him* — The women's apartment is in the back of the tent, divided by a thin partition from the men's.

12. *Therefore Sarah laughed within herself* — Long delay seems to have weakened faith. Sarah treated the announcement as incredible, and when taxed with the silent sneer, she added falsehood to distrust. It was an aggravated offense (^{<4404>}Acts 5:4), and nothing but grace saved her (^{<4104>}Romans 9:18).

^{<0186>}GENESIS 18:16-22.

DISCLOSURE OF SODOM'S DOOM.

16. *the men rose ... Abraham went with them* — It is customary for a host to escort his guests a little way.

17. *the Lord said, Shall I hide* — The chief stranger, no other than the Lord, disclosed to Abraham the awful doom about to be inflicted on Sodom and the cities of the plain for their enormous wickedness.

21. *I will go down ... and see* — language used after the manner of men. These cities were to be made examples to all future ages of God's severity; and therefore ample proof given that the judgment was neither rash nor excessive (^{<2682>}Ezekiel 18:23 ^{<2407>}Jeremiah 18:7).

^{<0182>}GENESIS 18:23-33.

ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION.

23. *Abraham drew near, and said*, etc. — The scene described is full of interest and instruction — showing in an unmistakable manner the efficacy of prayer and intercession. (See also ^{<0185>}Proverbs 18:15:8 ^{<3016>}James 5:16). Abraham reasoned justly as to the rectitude of the divine procedure (^{<4105>}Romans 3:5,6), and many guilty cities and nations have been spared on account of God's people (^{<0183>}Matthew 5:13 24:22).

33. *the Lord ... left communing ... and Abraham returned unto his place* — Why did Abraham cease to carry his intercessions farther? Either because he fondly thought that he was now sure of the cities being preserved (^{<0139>}Luke 13:9), or because the Lord restrained his mind from

further intercession (²⁰⁷⁶Jeremiah 7:16 11:14). But there were not ten “righteous persons.” There was only one, and he might without injustice have perished in the general overthrow (²⁰⁸⁰Ecclesiastes 9:2). But a difference is sometimes made, and on this occasion the grace of God was manifested in a signal manner for the sake of Abraham. What a blessing to be connected with a saint of God!

CHAPTER 19

^{<GRB>}GENESIS 19:1-38.

LOT'S ENTERTAINMENT.

1. *there came two angels* — most probably two of those that had been with Abraham, commissioned to execute the divine judgment against Sodom.

Lot sat in the gate of Sodom — In Eastern cities it is the market, the seat of justice, of social intercourse and amusement, especially a favorite lounge in the evenings, the arched roof affording a pleasant shade.

2. *turn in, I pray you ... tarry all night* — offer of the same generous hospitalities as described in ^{<GRB>}Genesis 18:2-8, and which are still spontaneously practiced in the small towns.

And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night — Where there are no inns and no acquaintance, it is not uncommon for travelers to sleep in the street wrapped up in their cloaks.

3. *entered into his house* — On removing to the plain, Lot intended at first to live in his tent apart from the people [^{<GRB>}Genesis 13:12]. But he was gradually drawn in, dwelt in the city, and he and his family were connected with the citizens by marriage ties.

4. *men of Sodom, compassed the house* — Appalling proofs are here given of their wickedness. It is evident that evil communications had corrupted good manners; otherwise Lot would never have acted as he did.

12, 13. *Hast thou here any besides? ... we will destroy this place* — Apostolic authority has declared Lot was “a righteous man” (^{<GRB>}2 Peter 2:8), at bottom good, though he contented himself with lamenting the sins that he saw, instead of acting on his own convictions, and withdrawing himself and family from such a sink of corruption. But favor was shown

him: and even his bad relatives had, for his sake, an offer of deliverance, which was ridiculed and spurned (^{<600>}2 Peter 3:4).

15-17. The kindly interest the angels took in the preservation of Lot is beautifully displayed. But he “lingered.” Was it from sorrow at the prospect of losing all his property, the acquisition of many years? Or was it that his benevolent heart was paralyzed by thoughts of the awful crisis? This is the charitable way of accounting for a delay that would have been fatal but for the friendly urgency of the angel.

18, 19. *Lot said ... Oh, not so, my Lord ... I cannot escape to the mountain* — What a strange want of faith and fortitude, as if He who had interfered for his rescue would not have protected Lot in the mountain solitude.

21. *See, I have accepted thee concerning this ... also* — His request was granted him, the prayer of faith availed, and to convince him, from his own experience, that it would have been best and safest at once to follow implicitly the divine directions.

22. *Haste ... for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither* — The ruin of Sodom was suspended till he was secure. What care God does take of His people (^{<600>}Revelation 7:3)! What a proof of the love which God bore to a good though weak man!

24. *Then the Lord rained ... brimstone and fire from ... heaven* — God, in accomplishing His purposes, acts immediately or mediately through the agency of means; and there are strong grounds for believing that it was in the latter way He effected the overthrow of the cities of the plain — that it was, in fact, by a volcanic eruption. The raining down of fire and brimstone from heaven is perfectly accordant with this idea since those very substances, being raised into the air by the force of the volcano, would fall in a fiery shower on the surrounding region. This view seems countenanced by Job [^{<8016>}Job 1:16 ^{<885>}18:15]. Whether it was miraculously produced, or the natural operation employed by God, it is not of much consequence to determine: it was a divine judgment, foretold and designed for the punishment of those who were sinners exceedingly.

26. Lot was accompanied by his wife and two daughters. But whether it was from irresistible curiosity or perturbation of feeling, or that she was about to return to save something, his wife lingered, and while thus disobeying the parting counsel, “to look not back, nor stay in all the plain” [^{<1997>}Genesis 19:17], the torrent of liquid lava enveloped her so that she became the victim of her supine indolence or sinful rashness.

27. *Abraham gat up early in the morning*, etc. — Abraham was at this time in Mamre, near Hebron, and a traveler last year verified the truth of this passage. “From the height which overlooks Hebron, where the patriarch stood, the observer at the present day has an extensive view spread out before him towards the Dead Sea. A cloud of smoke rising from the plain would be visible to a person at Hebron now, and could have been, therefore, to Abraham as he looked toward Sodom on the morning of its destruction by God” [HACKETT]. It must have been an awful sight, and is frequently alluded to in Scripture (^{<1822>}Deuteronomy 29:23 ^{<2319>}Isaiah 13:19 ^{<6007>}Jude 1:7). “The plain which is now covered by the Salt or Dead Sea shows in the great difference of level between the bottoms of the northern and southern ends of the lake — the latter being thirteen feet and the former thirteen hundred — that the southern end was of recent formation, and submerged at the time of the fall of the cities” [LYNCH].

29. *when God destroyed the cities*, etc. — This is most welcome and instructive after so painful a narrative. It shows if God is a “consuming fire” to the wicked [^{<1842>}Deuteronomy 4:24 ^{<3822>}Hebrews 12:29], He is the friend of the righteous. He “remembered” the intercessions of Abraham, and what confidence should not this give us that He will remember the intercessions of a greater than Abraham in our behalf.

CHAPTER 20

GENESIS 20:1-18.

ABRAHAM'S DENIAL OF HIS WIFE.

1. ***Abraham journeyed from thence ... and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur*** — Leaving the encampment, he migrated to the southern border of Canaan. In the neighborhood of Gerar was a very rich and well-watered pasture land.
 2. ***Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister*** — Fear of the people among whom he was, tempted him to equivocate. His conduct was highly culpable. It was deceit, deliberate and premeditated — there was no sudden pressure upon him — it was the second offense of the kind [see on ^{<0123>}Genesis 12:13] — it was a distrust of God every way surprising, and it was calculated to produce injurious effects on the heathen around. Its mischievous tendency was not long in being developed.
- Abimelech*** (father-king) ... ***sent and took Sarah*** — to be one of his wives, in the exercise of a privilege claimed by Eastern sovereigns, already explained (see on ^{<0125>}Genesis 12:15).
3. ***But God came to Abimelech in a dream*** — In early times a dream was often made the medium of communicating important truths; and this method was adopted for the preservation of Sarah.
 9. ***Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said ... What hast thou done?*** — In what a humiliating plight does the patriarch now appear — he, a servant of the true God, rebuked by a heathen prince. Who would not rather be in the place of Abimelech than of the honored but sadly offending patriarch! What a dignified attitude is that of the king — calmly and justly reproving the sin of the patriarch, but respecting his person and heaping coals of fire on his head by the liberal presents made to him.

11. *And Abraham said ... I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place* — From the horrible vices of Sodom he seems to have taken up the impression that all other cities of Canaan were equally corrupt. There might have been few or none who feared God, but what a sad thing when men of the world show a higher sense of honor and a greater abhorrence of crimes than a true worshipper!

12. *yet indeed she is my sister* — (See on ^{<0113>}Genesis 11:31). What a poor defense Abraham made. The statement absolved him from the charge of direct and absolute falsehood, but he had told a moral untruth because there was an intention to deceive (compare ^{<0121>}Genesis 12:11-13). “Honesty is always the best policy.” Abraham’s life would have been as well protected without the fraud as with it: and what shame to himself, what distrust to God, what dishonor to religion might have been prevented! “Let us speak truth every man to his neighbor” [^{<3816>}Zechariah 8:16 ^{<4025>}Ephesians 4:25].

CHAPTER 21

GENESIS 21:1-13.

BIRTH OF ISAAC.

1. *the Lord visited Sarah* — The language of the historian seems designedly chosen to magnify the power of God as well as His faithfulness to His promise. It was God's grace that brought about that event, as well as the raising of spiritual children to Abraham, of which the birth of this son was typical [CALVIN].

3, 4. *Abraham called the name of his son ... Isaac ... and circumcised* — God was acknowledged in the name which, by divine command, was given for a memorial (compare ^{<0178>}Genesis 17:19), and also in the dedication of the child by administering the seal of the covenant (compare ^{<0170>}Genesis 17:10-12).

8. *the child grew, and was weaned* — children are suckled longer in the East than in the Occident — boys usually for two or three years.

Abraham made a great feast, etc. — In Eastern countries this is always a season of domestic festivity, and the newly weaned child is formally brought, in presence of the assembled relatives and friends, to partake of some simple viands. Isaac, attired in the symbolic robe, the badge of birthright, was then admitted heir of the tribe [ROSENMULLER].

9. *Sarah saw the son of Hagar ... mocking* — Ishmael was aware of the great change in his prospects, and under the impulse of irritated or resentful feelings, in which he was probably joined by his mother, treated the young heir with derision and probably some violence (^{<802>}Galatians 4:29).

10. *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman* — Nothing but the expulsion of both could now preserve harmony in the household. Abraham's perplexity was relieved by an announcement of the

divine will, which in everything, however painful to flesh and blood, all who fear God and are walking in His ways will, like him, promptly obey. This story, as the apostle tells us, in “an allegory” [^{<R024>}Galatians 4:24], and the “persecution” by the son of the *Egyptian* was the commencement of the four hundred years’ affliction of Abraham’s seed by the *Egyptians*.

12. *in all that Sarah hath said* — it is called the Scripture (^{<R025>}Galatians 4:30).

13. *also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation* — Thus Providence overruled a family brawl to give rise to two great and extraordinary peoples.

^{<O214>}GENESIS 21:14-21.

EXPULSION OF ISHMAEL.

14. *Abraham rose up early*, etc. — early, that the wanderers might reach an asylum before noon. Bread includes all sorts of victuals — bottle, a leathern vessel, formed of the entire skin of a lamb or kid sewed up, with the legs for handles, usually carried over the shoulder. Ishmael was a lad of seventeen years, and it is quite customary for Arab chiefs to send out their sons at such an age to do for themselves: often with nothing but a few days’ provisions in a bag.

wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba — in the southern border of Palestine, but out of the common direction, a wide extending desert, where they lost their way.

15. *the water was spent*, etc. — Ishmael sank exhausted from fatigue and thirst — his mother laid his head under one of the bushes to smell the damp while she herself, unable to witness his distress, sat down at a little distance in hopeless sorrow.

19. *God opened her eyes* — Had she forgotten the promise (^{<O141>}Genesis 16:11)? Whether she looked to God or not, He regarded her and directed her to a fountain close beside her, but probably hid amid brushwood, by the waters of which her almost expiring son was revived.

20, 21. *God was with the lad*, etc. — Paran (that is, Arabia), where his posterity has ever dwelt (compare ^{<0162>}Genesis 16:12; also ^{<2389>}Isaiah 48:19 ^{<0125>}1 Peter 1:25).

his mother took him a wife — On a father's death, the mother looks out for a wife for her son, however young; and as Ishmael was now virtually deprived of his father, his mother set about forming a marriage connection for him, it would seem, among her relatives.

^{<0122>}GENESIS 21:22-34.

COVENANT.

22. *Abimelech and Phichol* — Here a proof of the promise (^{<0113>}Genesis 12:2) being fulfilled, in a native prince wishing to form a solemn league with Abraham. The proposal was reasonable, and agreed to [^{<0124>}Genesis 21:24].

25-31. *And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well* — Wells were of great importance to a pastoral chief and on the successful operation of sinking a new one, the owner was solemnly informed in person. If, however, they were allowed to get out of repair, the restorer acquired a right to them. In unoccupied lands the possession of wells gave a right of property in the land, and dread of this had caused the offense for which Abraham reproved Abimelech. Some describe four, others five, wells in Beer-sheba.

33. *Abraham planted a grove* — *Hebrew*, “of tamarisks,” in which sacrificial worship was offered, as in a roofless temple.

34. *Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land* — a picture of pastoral and an emblem of Christian life.

CHAPTER 22

GENESIS 22:1-19.

OFFERING ISAAC.

1. **God did tempt Abraham** — not incite to sin (^{<501B>}James 1:13), but try, prove — give occasion for the development of his faith (^{<600E>}1 Peter 1:7).

and he said, ... Here I am — ready at a moment's warning for God's service.

2. **Take now thy son**, etc. — Every circumstance mentioned was calculated to give a deeper stab to the parental bosom. To lose his only son, and by an act of his own hand, too! — what a host of conflicting feelings must the order have raised! But he heard and obeyed without a murmur (^{<801E>}Galatians 1:16 ^{<014E>}Luke 14:26).

3. **Abraham rose ... early**, etc. — That there might be no appearance of delay or reluctance on his part, he made every preparation for the sacrifice before setting out — the materials, the knife, and the servants to convey them. From Beer-sheba to Moriah, a journey of two days, he had the painful secret pent up in his bosom. So distant a place must have been chosen for some important reason. It is generally thought that this was one the hills of Jerusalem, on which the Great Sacrifice was afterwards offered.

4. **on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes**, etc. — Leaving the servants at the foot [^{<021E>}Genesis 22:5], the father and son ascended the hill, the one bearing the knife, and the other the wood for consuming the sacrifice [^{<021E>}Genesis 22:6]. But there was no victim; and to the question so naturally put by Isaac [^{<021E>}Genesis 22:7], Abraham contented himself by replying, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." It has been supposed that the design of this extraordinary transaction was to show him, by action instead of words, the way in which all the families of the earth should be blessed; and that in his answer to Isaac, he anticipated some substitution. It is more likely that his words were

spoken evasively to his son in ignorance of the issue, yet in unbounded confidence that that son, though sacrificed, would, in some miraculous way, be restored (^{<8119>}Hebrews 11:19).

9. *Abraham built an altar*, etc. — Had not the patriarch been sustained by the full consciousness of acting in obedience to God's will, the effort would have been too great for human endurance; and had not Isaac, then upwards of twenty years of age displayed equal faith in submitting, this great trial could not have gone through.

11, 12. *the angel ... called*, etc. — The sacrifice was virtually offered — the intention, the purpose to do it, was shown in all sincerity and fullness. The Omniscient witness likewise declared His acceptance in the highest terms of approval; and the apostle speaks of it as actually made (^{<8117>}Hebrews 11:17 ^{<8121>}James 2:21).

13-19. *Abraham lifted up his eyes ... and behold ... a ram*, etc. — No method was more admirably calculated to give the patriarch a distinct idea of the purpose of grace than this scenic representation: and hence our Lord's allusion to it (^{<8156>}John 8:56).

CHAPTER 23

GENESIS 23:1,2.

AGE AND DEATH OF SARAH.

1. *Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old*, etc. — Sarah is the only woman in Scripture whose age, death, and burial are mentioned, probably to do honor to the venerable mother of the Hebrew people.

2. *Abraham came to mourn for Sarah*, etc. — He came from his own tent to take his station at the door of Sarah's. The "mourning" describes his conformity to the customary usage of sitting on the ground for a time; while the "weeping" indicates the natural outburst of his sorrow.

GENESIS 23:3-20.

PURCHASE OF A BURYING-PLACE.

3. *Abraham stood up*, etc. — Eastern people are always provided with family burying-places; but Abraham's life of faith — his pilgrim state — had prevented him acquiring even so small a possession (^{40B}Acts 7:5).

spake unto the sons of Heth — He bespoke their kind offices to aid him in obtaining possession of a cave that belonged to Ephron — a wealthy neighbor.

9. *Machpelah* — the "double case."

10. *Ephron dwelt* — literally, was "sitting" among the children of Heth in the gate of the city where all business was transacted. But, though a chief man among them, he was probably unknown to Abraham.

11-15. *Ephron answered, Nay, my lord*, etc. — Here is a great show of generosity, but it was only a show; for while Abraham wanted only the cave, he joins "the field and the cave"; and though he offered them both as

free gifts, he, of course, expected some costly presents in return, without which, he would not have been satisfied. The patriarch, knowing this, wished to make a purchase and asked the terms.

15. *the land is worth four hundred shekels*, etc. — as if Ephron had said, “Since you wish to know the value of the property, it is so and so; but that is a trifle, which you may pay or not as it suits you.” They spoke in the common forms of Arab civility, and this indifference was mere affectation.

16. *Abraham weighed ... the silver* — The money, amounting to œ50 (about \$1,000) was paid in presence of the assembled witnesses; and it was weighed. The practice of weighing money, which is often in lumps or rings, each stamped with their weight, is still common in many parts of the East; and every merchant at the gates or the bazaar has his scales at his girdle.

19. *Abraham buried Sarah* — Thus he got possession of Machpelah and deposited the remains of his lamented partner in a family vault which was the only spot of ground he owned.

CHAPTER 24

GENESIS 24:1-9.

A MARRIAGE COMMISSION.

1. *And Abraham was old ... take a wife* — His anxiety to see his son married was natural to his position as a pastoral chief interested in preserving the honor of his tribe, and still more as a patriarch who had regard to the divine promise of a numerous posterity.
2. *said unto his eldest servant* — Abraham being too old, and as the heir of the promise not being at liberty to make even a temporary visit to his native land, was obliged to intrust this delicate mission to Eliezer, whom, although putting entire confidence in him, he on this occasion bound by a solemn oath. A pastoral chief in the present day would follow the same course if he could not go himself.
3. *thou shalt not take a wife*, etc. — Among pastoral tribes the matrimonial arrangements are made by the parents, and a youth must marry, not among strangers, but in his own tribe — custom giving him a claim, which is seldom or never resisted, to the hand of his first cousin. But Abraham had a far higher motive — a fear lest, if his son married into a Canaanitish family, he might be gradually led away from the true God.

GENESIS 24:10-67.

THE JOURNEY.

10. *the servant took ten camels*, etc. — So great an equipage was to give the embassy an appearance worthy of the rank and wealth of Abraham; to carry provisions; to bear the marriage presents, which as usual would be distributed over several beasts; besides one or two spare camels in case of emergency.

went to Mesopotamia, etc. — A stranger in those regions, who wishes to obtain information, stations himself at one of the wells in the neighborhood of a town, and he is sure to learn all the news of the place from the women who frequent them every morning and evening. Eliezer followed this course, and letting his camels rest, he waited till the evening time of water drawing.

12. *And he said, O Lord God of my master* — The servant appears worthy of the master he served. He resolves to follow the leading of Providence; and while he shows good sense in the tokens he fixes upon of ascertaining the temper and character of the future bride, he never doubts but that in such a case God will direct him.

15-21. *before he had done speaking ... behold, Rebekah came out* — As he anticipated, a young woman unveiled, as in pastoral regions, appeared with her pitcher on her shoulder. Her comely appearance, her affable manners, her obliging courtesy in going down the steps to fetch water not only to him but to pour in into the trough for his camels, afforded him the most agreeable surprise. She was the very person his imagination had pictured, and he proceeded to reward her civility.

22. *the man took a golden earring*, etc. — The ring was not for the ear, but the nose; the armlets, such as young women in Syria and Arabia still appear daily at wells decked in. They are worn from the elbow to the wrist, commonly made of silver, copper, brass, or horn.

23-27. *And said, Whose daughter art thou?* — After telling her name and family, the kind-hearted damsel hastened home to give notice of a stranger's arrival.

28. *and told them of her mother's house these things* — the female apartments. This family was in an advanced stage of pastoral life, dwelling in a settled place and a fixed habitation.

29-31. *Rebekah had a brother ... Laban ran out* — From what we know of his character, there is reason to believe that the sight of the dazzling presents increased both his haste and his invitation.

32-49. *the man came into the house*, etc. — What a beautiful picture of piety, fidelity, and disinterestedness in a servant! He declined all attention to his own comforts till he had told his name and his errand.

50. *Then Laban and Bethuel answered* — The brothers conduct all the marriage negotiations, their father being probably dead, and without consulting their sister. Their language seems to indicate they were worshippers of the true God.

53. *And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and ... gold* — These are the usual articles, with money, that form a woman's dowry among the pastoral tribes. Rebekah was betrothed and accompanied the servant to Canaan.

64. *she lighted off the camel* — If Isaac were walking, it would have been most unmannerly for her to have continued seated; an inferior, if riding, always alights in presence of a person of rank, no exception being made for women.

65. *she took a veil, and covered herself* — The veil is an essential part of female dress. In country places it is often thrown aside, but on the appearance of a stranger, it is drawn over the face, as to conceal all but the eyes. In a bride it was a token of her reverence and subjection to her husband.

67. *And Isaac brought her into his mother's ... tent* — thus establishing her at once in the rights and honors of a wife before he had seen her features. Disappointments often take place, but when Isaac saw his wife, "he loved her."

CHAPTER 25

GENESIS 25:1-6.

SONS OF ABRAHAM.

1. *Abraham took a wife* — rather, “had taken”; for Keturah is called Abraham’s concubine, or secondary wife (^{<1013>}1 Chronicles 1:32); and as, from her bearing six sons to him, it is improbable that he married after Sarah’s death; and also as he sent them all out to seek their own independence, during his lifetime, it is clear that this marriage is related here out of its chronological order, merely to form a proper winding up of the patriarch’s history.

5, 6. *Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac ... unto the sons of the concubines ... Abraham gave gifts* — While the chief part of the inheritance went to Isaac; the other sons (Ishmael included) migrated to “the East country,” that is, Arabia, but received each a portion of the patrimony, perhaps in cattle and other things; and this settlement of Abraham’s must have given satisfaction, since it is still the rule followed among the pastoral tribes.

GENESIS 25:7-11.

DEATH OF ABRAHAM.

7. *these are the days of ... Abraham* — His death is here related, though he lived till Jacob and Esau were fifteen years, just one hundred years after coming to Canaan; “the father of the faithful,” “the friend of God” [^{<1023>}James 2:23], died; and even in his death, the promises were fulfilled (compare ^{<1155>}Genesis 15:15). We might have wished some memorials of his deathbed experience; but the Spirit of God has withheld them — nor was it necessary; for (see ^{<1076>}Matthew 7:16) from earth he passed into heaven (^{<1062>}Luke 16:22). Though dead he yet liveth (^{<1023>}Matthew 22:32).

9, 10. *his sons ... buried him* — Death often puts an end to strife, reconciles those who have been alienated, and brings rival relations, as in this instance, to mingle tears over a father's grave.

GENESIS 25:12-18.

DESCENDANTS OF ISHMAEL.

Before passing to the line of the promised seed, the historian gives a brief notice of Ishmael, to show that the promises respecting that son of Abraham were fulfilled — first, in the greatness of his posterity (compare ^{<0172>}Genesis 17:20); and, secondly, in their independence.

18. *he died* — rather, “it [their lot] fell” in the presence of his brethren (compare ^{<0162>}Genesis 16:12).

GENESIS 25:19-35.

HISTORY OF ISAAC.

19. *these are the generations* — account of the leading events in his life.

21. *Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife* — Though tried in a similar way to his father, he did not follow the same crooked policy. Twenty years he continued unblest with offspring, whose seed was to be “as the stars” (^{<0260>}Genesis 26:4). But in answer to their mutual prayers (^{<0187>}1 Peter 3:7), Rebekah was divinely informed that she was to be the mother of twins, who should be the progenitors of two independent nations; that the descendants of the younger should be the more powerful and subdue those of the other (^{<0302>}Romans 9:12 ^{<0208>}2 Chronicles 21:8).

27. *the boys grew* — from the first, opposite to each other in character, manners, and habits.

28. The parents were divided in their affection; and while the grounds, at least of the father's partiality, were weak, the distinction made between the children led, as such conduct always does, to unhappy consequences.

29. *Jacob sod pottage* — made of lentils or small beans, which are common in Egypt and Syria. It is probable that it was made of Egyptian beans, which Jacob had procured as a dainty; for Esau was a stranger to it. It is very palatable; and to the weary hunter, faint with hunger, its odor must have been irresistibly tempting.

31. *Jacob said, Sell me ... thy birthright* — that is, the rights and privileges of the first-born, which were very important, the chief being that they were the family priests (^{<BIB2>}Exodus 4:22) and had a double portion of the inheritance (^{<BIB17>}Deuteronomy 21:17).

32. *Esau said ... I am at the point to die* — that is, I am running daily risk of my life; and of what use will the birthright be to me: so he despised or cared little about it, in comparison with gratifying his appetite — he threw away his religious privileges for a trifle; and thence he is styled “a profane person” (^{<BIB26>}Hebrews 12:16; also ^{<BIB17>}Job 31:7,16 ^{<BIB13>}6:13 ^{<BIB9>}Philippians 3:19). “There was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dear bought, as this broth of Jacob” [BISHOP HALL].

CHAPTER 26

GENESIS 26:1-35.

SOJOURN IN GERAR.

1. *And there was a famine in the land ... And Isaac went unto ... Gerar*

— The pressure of famine in Canaan forced Isaac with his family and flocks to migrate into the land of the Philistines, where he was exposed to personal danger, as his father had been on account of his wife's beauty; but through the seasonable interposition of Providence, he was preserved (¹⁸⁷⁶Psalm 105:14,15).

12. *Then Isaac sowed in that land* — During his sojourn in that district he farmed a piece of land, which, by the blessing of God on his skill and industry, was very productive (²¹⁵¹Isaiah 65:13 ¹⁸⁷⁶Psalm 37:19); and by his plentiful returns he increased so rapidly in wealth and influence that the Philistines, afraid or envious of his prosperity, obliged him to leave the place (²¹⁷⁰Proverbs 27:4 ²¹⁰⁴Ecclesiastes 4:4). This may receive illustration from the fact that many Syrian shepherds at this day settle for a year or two in a place, rent some ground, in the produce of which they trade with the neighboring market, till the owners, through jealousy of their growing substance, refuse to renew their lease and compel them to remove elsewhere.

15. *all the wells which his father's servants had digged ... the Philistines had stopped*, etc. — The same base stratagem for annoying those against whom they have taken an umbrage is practiced still by choking the wells with sand or stones, or defiling them with putrid carcasses.

17. *valley of Gerar* — torrent-bed or wady, a vast undulating plain, unoccupied and affording good pasture.

18-22. *Isaac digged again the wells of water* — The naming of wells by Abraham, and the hereditary right of his family to the property, the change of the names by the Philistines — to obliterate the traces of their

origin, the restoration of the names by Isaac, and the contests between the respective shepherds to the exclusive possession of the water, are circumstances that occur among the natives in those regions as frequently in the present day as in the time of Isaac.

26-33. *Then Abimelech went to him* — As there was a lapse of ninety years between the visit of Abraham and of Isaac, the Abimelech and Phichol spoken of must have been different persons' official titles. Here is another proof of the promise (^[113]Genesis 12:2) being fulfilled, in an overture of peace being made to him by the king of Gerar. By whatever motive the proposal was dictated — whether fear of his growing power, or regret for the bad usage they had given him, the king and two of his courtiers paid a visit to the tent of Isaac (^[114]Proverbs 16:7). His timid and passive temper had submitted to the annoyances of his rude neighbors; but now that they wish to renew the covenant, he evinces deep feeling at their conduct, and astonishment at their assurance, or artifice, in coming near him. Being, however, of a pacific disposition, Isaac forgave their offense, accepted their proposals, and treated them to the banquet by which the ratification of a covenant was usually crowned.

34. *Esau ... took to wife* — If the pious feelings of Abraham recoiled from the idea of Isaac forming a matrimonial connection with a Canaanitish woman [^[124]Genesis 24:3], that devout patriarch himself would be equally opposed to such a union on the part of his children; and we may easily imagine how much his pious heart was wounded, and the family peace destroyed, when his favorite but wayward son brought no less than two idolatrous wives among them — an additional proof that Esau neither desired the blessing nor dreaded the curse of God. These wives never gained the affections of his parents, and this estrangement was overruled by God for keeping the chosen family aloof from the dangers of heathen influence.

CHAPTER 27

^{<020>}GENESIS 27:1-27.

INFIRMITY OF ISAAC.

1. *when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim* — He was in his hundred thirty-seventh year; and apprehending death to be near, Isaac prepared to make his last will — an act of the gravest importance, especially as it included the conveyance through a prophetic spirit of the patriarchal blessing.

4. *make ... savory meat* — perhaps to revive and strengthen him for the duty; or rather, “as eating and drinking” were used on all religious occasions, he could not convey the right, till he had eaten of the meat provided for the purpose by him who was to receive the blessing [ADAM CLARKE] (compare ^{<0180>}Genesis 18:7).

that my soul may bless thee — It is difficult to imagine him ignorant of the divine purpose (compare ^{<023>}Genesis 25:23). But natural affection, prevailing through age and infirmity, prompted him to entail the honors and powers of the birthright on his elder son; and perhaps he was not aware of what Esau had done (^{<0234>}Genesis 25:34).

6-10. *Rebekah spake unto Jacob* — She prized the blessing as invaluable; she knew that God intended it for the younger son [^{<023>}Genesis 25:23]; and in her anxiety to secure its being conferred on the right object — on one who cared for religion — she acted in the sincerity of faith; but in crooked policy — with unenlightened zeal; on the false principle that the end would sanctify the means.

11. *Jacob said, Esau my brother is a hairy man* — It is remarkable that his scruples were founded, not on the evil of the act, but on the risk and consequences of deception.

13-17. *and his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse* — His conscience being soothed by his mother, preparations were hastily made for carrying out the device; consisting, first, of a kid's flesh, which, made into a ragout, spiced with salt, onions, garlic, and lemon juice, might easily be passed off on a blind old man, with blunted senses, as game; second, of pieces of goat's skin bound on his hands and neck, its soft silken hair resembling that on the cheek of a young man; third, of the long white robe — the vestment of the first-born, which, transmitted from father to son and kept in a chest among fragrant herbs and perfumed flowers used much in the East to keep away moths — his mother provided for him.

18-27. *he came unto his father* — The scheme planned by the mother was to be executed by the son in the father's bedchamber; and it is painful to think of the deliberate falsehoods, as well as daring profanity, he resorted to. The disguise, though wanting in one thing, which had nearly upset the whole plot, succeeded in misleading Isaac; and while giving his paternal embrace, the old man was roused into a state of high satisfaction and delight.

27. *the smell of my son is as of a field* — The aromatic odors of the Syrian fields and meadows, often impart a strong fragrance to the person and clothes, as has been noticed by many travelers.

GENESIS 27:28-46.

THE BLESSING.

28. *God give thee of the dew of heaven* — To an Oriental mind, this phraseology implied the highest flow of prosperity. The copious fall of dew is indispensable to the fruitfulness of lands, which would be otherwise arid and sterile through the violent heat; and it abounds most in hilly regions, such as Canaan, hence called the "fat land" (^{<1025>}Nehemiah 9:25,35).

plenty of corn and wine — Palestine was famous for vineyards, and it produced varieties of corn, namely, wheat, barley, oats, and rye.

29. *Let people serve thee* — fulfilled in the discomfiture of the hostile tribes that opposed the Israelites in the wilderness; and in the pre-eminence and power they attained after their national establishment in the promised land. This blessing was not realized to Jacob, but to his descendants; and the temporal blessings promised were but a shadow of those spiritual ones, which formed the grand distinction of Jacob's posterity.

30-35. *Esau came in from his hunting* — Scarcely had the former scene been concluded, when the fraud was discovered. The emotions of Isaac, as well as Esau, may easily be imagined — the astonishment, alarm, and sorrow of the one; the disappointment and indignation of the other. But a moment's reflection convinced the aged patriarch that the transfer of the blessing was "of the Lord," and now irrevocable. The importunities of Esau, however, overpowered him; and as the prophetic afflatus was upon the patriarch, he added what was probably as pleasing to a man of Esau's character as the other would have been.

39, 40. *Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth* — The first part is a promise of temporal prosperity, made in the same terms as Jacob's [⁴¹²⁸Genesis 27:28] — the second part refers to the roving life of hunting freebooters, which he and his descendants should lead. Though Esau was not personally subject to his brother, his posterity were tributary to the Israelites, till the reign of Joram when they revolted and established a kingdom of their own (⁴¹³⁰2 Kings 8:20 ⁴¹³²2 Chronicles 21:8-10).

41. *Esau hated Jacob* — It is scarcely to be wondered at that Esau resented the conduct of Jacob and vowed revenge.

The days of mourning for my father are at hand — a common Oriental phrase for the death of a parent.

42-45. *these words of Esau were told Rebekah* — Poor woman! she now early begins to reap the bitter fruits of her fraudulent device; she is obliged to part with her son, for whom she planned it, never, probably, seeing him again; and he felt the retributive justice of heaven fall upon him heavily in his own future family.

45. *Why should I be deprived of you both?* — This refers to the law of Goelism, by which the nearest of kin would be obliged to avenge the death of Jacob upon his brother.

46. *Rebekah said to Isaac* — Another pretext Rebekah's cunning had to devise to obtain her husband's consent to Jacob's journey to Mesopotamia; and she succeeded by touching the aged patriarch in a tender point, afflicting to his pious heart — the proper marriage of their younger son.

CHAPTER 28

GENESIS 28:1-19.

JACOB'S DEPARTURE.

1. *Isaac called Jacob and blessed him* — He entered fully into Rebekah's feelings, and the burden of his parting counsel to his son was to avoid a marriage alliance with any but the Mesopotamian branch of the family. At the same time he gave him a solemn blessing — pronounced before unwittingly, now designedly, and with a cordial spirit. It is more explicitly and fully given, and Jacob was thus acknowledged “the heir of the promise.”

6-9. *when Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob*, etc. — Desirous to humor his parents and, if possible, get the last will revoked, he became wise when too late (see ^{<150>}Matthew 25:10), and hoped by gratifying his parents in one thing to atone for all his former delinquencies. But he only made bad worse, and though he did not marry a “wife of the daughters of Canaan,” he married into a family which God had rejected. It showed a partial reformation, but no repentance, for he gave no proofs of abating his vindictive purposes against his brother, nor cherishing that pious spirit that would have gratified his father — he was like Micah (see ^{<1713>}Judges 17:13).

10. *Jacob went out*, etc. — His departure from his father's house was an ignominious flight; and for fear of being pursued or waylaid by his vindictive brother, he did not take the common road, but went by lonely and unfrequented paths, which increased the length and dangers of the journey.

11. *he lighted upon a certain place* — By a forced march he had reached Beth-el, about forty-eight miles from Beer-sheba, and had to spend the night in the open field.

he took of the stones — “The nature of the soil is an existing comment on the record of the stony territory where Jacob lay” [CLARKE’S *Travels*].

12. *he dreamed ... and behold a ladder* — Some writers are of opinion that it was not a literal ladder that is meant, as it is impossible to conceive any imagery stranger and more unnatural than that of a ladder, whose base was on earth, while its top reached heaven, without having any thing on which to rest its upper extremity. They suppose that the little heap of stones, on which his head reclined for a pillow, being the miniature model of the object that appeared to his imagination, the latter was a gigantic mountain pile, whose sides, indented in the rock, gave it the appearance of a scaling ladder. There can be no doubt that this use of the original term was common among the early Hebrews; as JOSEPHUS, describing the town of Ptolemais (Acre), says it was bounded by a mountain, which, from its projecting sides, was called “the ladder,” and the stairs that led down to the city are, in the original, termed a ladder ([Ⓜ]Nehemiah 3:15) thought they were only a flight of steps cut in the side of the rock. But whether the image presented to the mental eye of Jacob were a common ladder, or such a mountain pile as has been described, the design of this vision was to afford comfort, encouragement, and confidence to the lonely fugitive, both in his present circumstances and as to his future prospects. His thoughts during the day must have been painful — he would be his own self-accuser that he had brought exile and privation upon himself — and above all, that though he had obtained the forgiveness of his father, he had much reason to fear lest God might have forsaken him. Solitude affords time for reflection; and it was now that God began to bring Jacob under a course of religious instruction and training. To dispel his fears and allay the inward tumult of his mind, nothing was better fitted than the vision of the gigantic ladder, which reached from himself to heaven, and on which the angels were continually ascending and descending from God Himself on their benevolent errands ([Ⓜ]John 1:51).

13. *The Lord stood above it, and said* — That Jacob might be at no loss to know the purport of the vision, he heard the divine voice; and the announcement of His name, together with a renewal of the covenant, and an assurance of personal protection, produced at once the most solemnizing and inspiriting effect on his mind.

16. *Jacob awaked out of his sleep* — His language and his conduct were alike that of a man whose mind was pervaded by sentiments of solemn awe, of fervent piety, and lively gratitude (^{<3613>}Jeremiah 31:36).

18, 19. *Jacob set up a stone* — The mere setting up of the stone might have been as a future memorial to mark the spot; and this practice is still common in the East, in memory of a religious vow or engagement. But the pouring oil upon it was a consecration. Accordingly he gave it a new name, Beth-el, “the house of God” (^{<3613>}Hosea 12:4); and it will not appear a thing forced or unnatural to call a stone a house, when one considers the common practice in warm countries of sitting in the open air by or on a stone, as are those of this place, “broad sheets of bare rock, some of them standing like the cromlechs of Druidical monuments” [STANLEY].

^{<3613>}GENESIS 28:20-22.

JACOB’S VOW.

20. *Jacob vowed a vow* — His words are not to be considered as implying a doubt, far less as stating the condition or terms on which he would dedicate himself to God. Let “if” be changed into “since,” and the language will appear a proper expression of Jacob’s faith — an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise. How edifying often to meditate on Jacob at Beth-el.

CHAPTER 29

GENESIS 29:1-35.

THE WELL OF HARAN.

1. *Then Jacob went*, etc. — *Hebrew*, “lifted up his feet.” He resumed his way next morning with a light heart and elastic step after the vision of the ladder; for tokens of the divine favor tend to quicken the discharge of duty (^{<4080>}Nehemiah 8:10).

and came into the land, etc. — Mesopotamia and the whole region beyond the Euphrates are by the sacred writers designated “the East” (^{<0068>}Judges 6:3 ^{<1080>}1 Kings 4:30 ^{<8008>}Job 1:3). Between the first and the second clause of this verse is included a journey of four hundred miles.

2. *And he looked*, etc. — As he approached the place of his destination, he, according to custom, repaired to the well adjoining the town where he would obtain an easy introduction to his relatives.

3. *thither were all the flocks gathered; and a stone*, etc. — In Arabia, owing to the shifting sands and in other places, owing to the strong evaporation, the mouth of a well is generally covered, especially when it is private property. Over many is laid a broad, thick, flat stone, with a round hole cut in the middle, forming the mouth of the cistern. This hole is covered with a heavy stone which it would require two or three men to roll away. Such was the description of the well at Haran.

4. *Jacob said, My brethren* — Finding from the shepherds who were reposing there with flocks and who all belonged to Haran, that his relatives in Haran were well and that one of the family was shortly expected, he enquired why they were idling the best part of the day there instead of watering their flocks and sending them back to pasture.

8. *They said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered* — In order to prevent the consequences of too frequent exposure in places where water

is scarce, the well is not only covered, but it is customary to have all the flocks collected round it before the covering is removed in presence of the owner or one of his representatives; and it was for this reason that those who were reposing at the well of Haran with the three flocks were waiting the arrival of Rachel.

9-11. *While he yet spake with them, Rachel came* — Among the pastoral tribes the young unmarried daughters of the greatest sheiks tend the flocks, going out at sunrise and continuing to watch their fleecy charges till sunset. Watering them, which is done twice a day, is a work of time and labor, and Jacob rendered no small service in volunteering his aid to the young shepherdess. The interview was affecting, the reception welcome, and Jacob forgot all his toils in the society of his Mesopotamian relatives. Can we doubt that he returned thanks to God for His goodness by the way?

12. *Jacob told Rachel*, etc. — According to the practice of the East, the term “brother” is extended to remote degrees of relationship, as uncle, cousin, or nephew.

14-20. *he abode a month* — Among pastoral people a stranger is freely entertained for three days; on the fourth day he is expected to tell his name and errand; and if he prolongs his stay after that time, he must set his hand to work in some way, as may be agreed upon. A similar rule obtained in Laban’s establishment, and the wages for which his nephew engaged to continue in his employment was the hand of Rachel.

17. *Leah tender-eyed* — that is, soft blue eyes — thought a blemish.

Rachel beautiful and well-favored — that is, comely and handsome in form. The latter was Jacob’s choice.

18. *I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy daughter* — A proposal of marriage is made to the father without the daughter being consulted, and the match is effected by the suitor either bestowing costly presents on the family, or by giving cattle to the value the father sets upon his daughter, or else by giving personal services for a specified period. The last was the course necessity imposed on Jacob; and there for seven years he submitted to the drudgery of a hired shepherd, with the view of obtaining Rachel.

The time went rapidly away; for even severe and difficult duties become light when love is the spring of action.

21. *Jacob said, Give me my wife* — At the expiry of the stipulated term the marriage festivities were held. But an infamous fraud was practiced on Jacob, and on his showing a righteous indignation, the usage of the country was pleaded in excuse. No plea of kindred should ever be allowed to come in opposition to the claim of justice. But this is often overlooked by the selfish mind of man, and fashion or custom rules instead of the will of God. This was what Laban did, as he said, “It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born.” But, then, if that were the prevailing custom of society at Haran, he should have apprized his nephew of it at an early period in an honorable manner. This, however, is too much the way with the people of the East still. The duty of marrying an elder daughter before a younger, the tricks which parents take to get off an elder daughter that is plain or deformed and in which they are favored by the long bridal veil that entirely conceals her features all the wedding day, and the prolongation for a week of the marriage festivities among the greater sheiks, are accordant with the habits of the people in Arabia and Armenia in the present day.

28. *gave him Rachel also* — It is evident that the marriage of both sisters took place nearly about the same time, and that such a connection was then allowed, though afterwards prohibited (^{GENESIS} Leviticus 18:18).

29. *gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah to be her maid* — A father in good circumstances still gives his daughter from his household a female slave, over whom the young wife, independently of her husband, has the absolute control.

31. *Leah ... hated* — that is, not loved so much as she ought to have been. Her becoming a mother ensured her rising in the estimation both of her husband and of society.

32-35. *son ... his name Reuben* — Names were also significant; and those which Leah gave to her sons were expressive of her varying feelings of thankfulness or joy, or allusive to circumstances in the history of the family. There was piety and wisdom in attaching a signification to names,

as it tended to keep the bearer in remembrance of his duty and the claims of God.

CHAPTER 30

GENESIS 30:1-24.

DOMESTIC JEALOUSIES.

1. *Rachel envied her sister* — The maternal relation confers a high degree of honor in the East, and the want of that status is felt as a stigma and deplored as a grievous calamity.

Give me children, or else I die — either be reckoned as good as dead, or pine away from vexation. The intense anxiety of Hebrew women for children arose from the hope of giving birth to the promised seed. Rachel's conduct was sinful and contrasts unfavorably with that of Rebekah (compare ^{<1252>}Genesis 25:22) and of Hannah (^{<9011>}1 Samuel 1:11).

3-9. *Bilhah ... Zilpah* — Following the example of Sarah with regard to Hagar, an example which is not seldom imitated still, she adopted the children of her maid. Leah took the same course. A bitter and intense rivalry existed between them, all the more from their close relationship as sisters; and although they occupied separate apartments, with their families, as is the uniform custom where a plurality of wives obtains, and the husband and father spends a day with each in regular succession, that did not allay their mutual jealousies. The evil lies in the system, which being a violation of God's original ordinance, cannot yield happiness.

20. *And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry* — The birth of a son is hailed with demonstrations of joy, and the possession of several sons confers upon the mother an honor and respectability proportioned to their number. The husband attaches a similar importance to the possession, and it forms a bond of union which renders it impossible for him ever to forsake or to be cold to a wife who has borne him sons. This explains the happy anticipations Leah founded on the possession of her six sons.

21. *afterwards, she bare a daughter* — The inferior value set on a daughter is displayed in the bare announcement of the birth.

GENESIS 30:25-43.

JACOB'S COVENANT WITH LABAN.

25. *when Rachel had born Joseph* — Shortly after the birth of this son, Jacob's term of servitude expired, and feeling anxious to establish an independence for his family, he probably, from knowing that Esau was out of the way, announced his intention of returning to Canaan (^{GEN 30:25} Hebrews 13:14). In this resolution the faith of Jacob was remarkable, for as yet he had nothing to rely on but the promise of God (compare ^{GEN 28:15} Genesis 28:15).

27. *Laban said ... I have learned* — His selfish uncle was averse to a separation, not from warmth of affection either for Jacob or his daughters, but from the damage his own interests would sustain. He had found, from long observation, that the blessing of heaven rested on Jacob, and that his stock had wonderfully increased under Jacob's management. This was a remarkable testimony that good men are blessings to the places where they reside. Men of the world are often blessed with temporal benefits on account of their pious relatives, though they have not always, like Laban, the wisdom to discern, or the grace to acknowledge it.

28. *appoint me thy wages, and I will give it* — The Eastern shepherds receive for their hire not money, but a certain amount of the increase or produce of the flock; but Laban would at the time have done anything to secure the continued services of his nephew, and make a show of liberality, which Jacob well knew was constrained.

31. *Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing* — A new agreement was made, the substance of which was, that he was to receive remuneration in the usual way, but on certain conditions which Jacob specified.

32. *I will pass through all thy flock to-day* — Eastern sheep being generally white, the goats black, and spotted or speckled ones

comparatively few and rare, Jacob proposed to remove all existing ones of that description from the flock, and to be content with what might appear at the next lambing time. The proposal *seemed* so much in favor of Laban, that he at once agreed to it. But Jacob has been accused of taking advantage of his uncle, and though it is difficult to exculpate him from practising some degree of dissimulation, he was only availing himself of the results of his great skill and experience in the breeding of cattle. But it is evident from the next chapter (^{GEN}Genesis 31:5-13) that there was something miraculous and that the means he had employed had been suggested by a divine intimation.

37. *Jacob took rods*, etc. — There are many varieties of the hazel, some of which are more erect than the common hazel, and it was probably one of these varieties Jacob employed. The styles are of a bright red color, when peeled; and along with them he took wands of other shrubs, which, when stripped of the bark, had white streaks. These, kept constantly before the eyes of the female at the time of gestation, his observation had taught him would have an influence, through the imagination, on the future offspring.

38. *watering troughs* — usually a long stone block hollowed out, from which several sheep could drink at once, but sometimes so small as to admit of only one drinking at a time.

CHAPTER 31

GENESIS 31:1-21.

ENVY OF LABAN AND SONS.

1. *he heard the words of Laban's sons* — It must have been from rumor that Jacob got knowledge of the invidious reflections cast upon him by his cousins; for they were separated at the distance of three days' journey.

2. *And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban* — literally, “was not the same as yesterday, and the day before,” a common Oriental form of speech. The insinuations against Jacob's fidelity by Laban's sons, and the sullen reserve, the churlish conduct, of Laban himself, had made Jacob's situation, in his uncle's establishment, most trying and painful. It is always one of the vexations attendant on worldly prosperity, that it excites the envy of others (²⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 4:4); and that, however careful a man is to maintain a good conscience, he cannot always reckon on maintaining a good name, in a censorious world. This, Jacob experienced; and it is probable that, like a good man, he had asked direction and relief in prayer.

3. *the Lord said ... Return unto the land of thy fathers* — Notwithstanding the ill usage he had received, Jacob might not have deemed himself at liberty to quit his present sphere, under the impulse of passionate fretfulness and discontent. Having been conducted to Haran by God (⁰¹⁸⁵Genesis 28:15) and having got a promise that the same heavenly Guardian would bring him again into the land of Canaan, he might have thought he ought not to leave it, without being clearly persuaded as to the path of duty. So ought we to set the Lord before us, and to acknowledge Him in all our ways, our journeys, our settlements, and plans in life.

4. *Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah* — His wives and family were in their usual residence. Whether he wished them to be present at the festivities of sheep shearing, as some think; or, because he could not leave his flock, he called them both to come to him, in order that, having

resolved on immediate departure, he might communicate his intentions. Rachel and Leah only were called, for the other two wives, being secondary and still in a state of servitude, were not entitled to be taken into account. Jacob acted the part of a dutiful husband in telling them his plans; for husbands that love their wives should consult with them and trust in them (^(31:11)Proverbs 31:11).

6. *ye know that ... I have served your father* — Having stated his strong grounds of dissatisfaction with their father’s conduct and the ill requital he had got for all his faithful services, he informed them of the blessing of God that had made him rich notwithstanding Laban’s design to ruin him; and finally, of the command from God he had received to return to his own country, that they might not accuse him of caprice, or disaffection to their family; but be convinced, that in resolving to depart, he acted from a principle of religious obedience.

14. *Rachel and Leah answered* — Having heard his views, they expressed their entire approval; and from grievances of their own, they were fully as desirous of a separation as himself. They display not only conjugal affection, but piety in following the course described — “whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do” (^(31:16)Genesis 31:16). “Those that are really their husbands’ helpmeets will never be their hindrances in doing that to which God calls them” [HENRY].

17. *Then Jacob rose up* — Little time is spent by pastoral people in removing. The striking down the tents and poles and stowing them among their other baggage; the putting their wives and children in *houdas* like cradles, on the backs of camels, or in panniers on asses; and the ranging of the various parts of the flock under the respective shepherds; all this is a short process. A plain that is covered in the morning with a long array of tents and with browsing flocks, may, in a few hours, appear so desolate that not a vestige of the encampment remains, except the holes in which the tent poles had been fixed.

18. *he carried the cattle of his getting* — that is, his own and nothing more. He did not indemnify himself for his many losses by carrying off any thing of Laban’s, but was content with what Providence had given him. Some may think that due notice should have been given; but when a

man feels himself in danger — the law of self-preservation prescribes the duty of immediate flight, if it can be done consistently with conscience.

20. *Jacob stole away* — The result showed the prudence and necessity of departing secretly; otherwise, Laban might have detained him by violence or artifice.

GENESIS 31:22-55.

LABAN PURSUES JACOB — THEIR COVENANT AT GILEAD.

22-24. *it was told Laban on the third day* — No sooner did the news reach Laban than he set out in pursuit, and he being not encumbered, advanced rapidly; whereas Jacob, with a young family and numerous flocks, had to march slowly, so that he overtook the fugitives after seven days' journey as they lay encamped on the brow of mount Gilead, an extensive range of hills forming the eastern boundary of Canaan. Being accompanied by a number of his people, he might have used violence had he not been divinely warned in a dream to give no interruption to his nephew's journey. How striking and sudden a change! For several days he had been full of rage, and was now in eager anticipation that his vengeance would be fully wreaked, when lo! his hands are tied by invisible power (¹³⁷³Psalm 76:10). He did not dare to touch Jacob, but there was a war of words.

26-30. *Laban said ... What hast thou done?* — Not a word is said of the charge (¹³³⁰Genesis 31:1). His reproaches were of a different kind. His first charge was for depriving him of the satisfaction of giving Jacob and his family the usual salutations at parting. In the East it is customary, when any are setting out to a great distance, for their relatives and friends to accompany them a considerable way with music and valedictory songs. Considering the past conduct of Laban, his complaint on this ground was hypocritical cant. But his second charge was a grave one — the carrying off his gods — *Hebrew*, “teraphim,” small images of human figures, used not as idols or objects of worship, but as talismans, for superstitious purposes.

31, 32. *Jacob said, ... With whomsoever thou findest thy gods let him not live* — Conscious of his own innocence and little suspecting the misdeed of his favorite wife, Jacob boldly challenged a search and denounced the heaviest penalty on the culprit. A personal scrutiny was made by Laban, who examined every tent [^{Q33}Genesis 31:33]; and having entered Rachel's last, he would have infallibly discovered the stolen images had not Rachel made an appeal to him which prevented further search [^{Q34}Genesis 31:34,35].

34. *Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them* — The common pack saddle is often used as a seat or a cushion, against which a person squatted on the floor may lean.

36, 37. *Jacob was wroth* — Recrimination on his part was natural in the circumstances, and, as usual, when passion is high, the charges took a wide range. He rapidly enumerated his grievances for twenty years and in a tone of unrestrained severity described the niggard character and vexatious exactions of his uncle, together with the hardships of various kinds he had patiently endured.

38. *The rams of thy flock have I not eaten* — Eastern people seldom kill the females for food except they are barren.

39. *That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee* — The shepherds are strictly responsible for losses in the flock, unless they can prove these were occasioned by wild beasts.

40. *in the day the drought ... and the frost by night* — The temperature changes often in twenty-four hours from the greatest extremes of heat and cold, most trying to the shepherd who has to keep watch by his flocks. Much allowance must be made for Jacob. Great and long-continued provocations ruffle the mildest and most disciplined tempers. It is difficult to "be angry and sin not" [^{Q35}Ephesians 4:26]. But these two relatives, after having given utterance to their pent-up feelings, came at length to a mutual understanding, or rather, God influenced Laban to make reconciliation with his injured nephew (^{Q36}Proverbs 16:7).

44. *Come thou, let us make a covenant* — The way in which this covenant was ratified was by a heap of stones being laid in a circular pile,

to serve as seats, and in the center of this circle a large one was set up perpendicularly for an altar. It is probable that a sacrifice was first offered, and then that the feast of reconciliation was partaken of by both parties seated on the stones around it. To this day heaps of stones, which have been used as memorials, are found abundantly in the region where this transaction took place.

52. *This heap be witness* — Objects of nature were frequently thus spoken of. But over and above, there was a solemn appeal to God; and it is observable that there was a marked difference in the religious sentiments of the two. Laban spake of the God of Abraham and Nahor, their common ancestors; but Jacob, knowing that idolatry had crept in among that branch of the family, swore by the “fear of his father Isaac.” They who have one God should have one heart: they who are agreed in religion should endeavor to agree in everything else.

CHAPTER 32

GENESIS 32:1,2.

VISION OF ANGELS.

1. *angels of God met him* — It is not said whether this angelic manifestation was made in a vision by day, or a dream by night. There is an evident allusion, however, to the appearance upon the ladder (compare ⁽¹³²⁾Genesis 28:12), and this occurring to Jacob on his return to Canaan, was an encouraging pledge of the continued presence and protection of God (⁽¹⁸⁴⁾Psalm 34:7 ⁽³⁰⁴⁾Hebrews 1:14).

2. *Mahanaim* — “two hosts,” or “camps.” The place was situated between mount Gilead and the Jabbok, near the banks of that brook.

GENESIS 32:3-32.

MISSION TO ESAU.

3. *Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau* — that is, “had sent.” It was a prudent precaution to ascertain the present temper of Esau, as the road, on approaching the eastern confines of Canaan, lay near the wild district where his brother was now established.

land of Seir — a highland country on the east and south of the Dead Sea, inhabited by the Horites, who were dispossessed by Esau or his posterity (⁽⁴⁸¹²⁾Deuteronomy 11:12). When and in what circumstances he had emigrated thither, whether the separation arose out of the undutiful conduct and idolatrous habits of his wives, which had made them unwelcome in the tent of his parents, or whether his roving disposition had sought a country from his love of adventure and the chase, he was living in a state of power and affluence, and this settlement on the outer

borders of Canaan, though made of his own free will, was overruled by Providence to pave the way for Jacob's return to the promised land.

4. *Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau* — The purport of the message was that, after a residence of twenty years in Mesopotamia, he was now returning to his native land, that he did not need any thing, for he had abundance of pastoral wealth, but that he could not pass without notifying his arrival to his brother and paying the homage of his respectful obeisance. Acts of civility tend to disarm opposition and soften hatred (⁽¹⁷⁷⁾Ecclesiastes 10:4).

Thy servant Jacob — He had been made *lord* over his brethren (compare ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾Genesis 27:29). But it is probable he thought this referred to a spiritual superiority; or if to temporal, that it was to be realized only to his posterity. At all events, leaving it to God to fulfill that purpose, he deemed it prudent to assume the most kind and respectful bearing.

6. *The messengers returned to Jacob* — Their report left Jacob in painful uncertainty as to what was his brother's views and feelings. Esau's studied reserve gave him reason to dread the worst. Jacob was naturally timid; but his conscience told him that there was much ground for apprehension, and his distress was all the more aggravated that he had to provide for the safety of a large and helpless family.

9-12. *Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham* — In this great emergency, he had recourse to prayer. This is the first recorded example of prayer in the Bible. It is short, earnest, and bearing directly on the occasion. The appeal is made to God, as standing in a covenant relation to his family, just as we ought to put our hopes of acceptance with God in Christ. It pleads the special promise made to him of a safe return; and after a most humble and affecting confession of unworthiness, it breathes an earnest desire for deliverance from the impending danger. It was the prayer of a kind husband, an affectionate father, a firm believer in the promises.

13-23. *took ... a present for Esau* — Jacob combined active exertions with earnest prayer; and this teaches us that we must not depend upon the aid and interposition of God in such a way as to supersede the exercise of prudence and foresight. Superiors are always approached with presents, and the respect expressed is estimated by the quality and amount of the

gift. The present of Jacob consisted of five hundred fifty head of cattle, of different kinds, such as would be most prized by Esau. It was a most magnificent present, skilfully arranged and proportioned. The milch camels alone were of immense value; for the she camels form the principal part of Arab wealth; their milk is a chief article of diet; and in many other respects they are of the greatest use.

16. *every drove by themselves* — There was great prudence in this arrangement; for the present would thus have a more imposing appearance; Esau's passion would have time to cool as he passed each successive company; and if the first was refused, the others would hasten back to convey a timely warning.

17. *he commanded the foremost* — The messengers were strictly commanded to say the same words [¹⁰³²⁸Genesis 32:18,20], that Esau might be more impressed and that the uniformity of the address might appear more clearly to have come from Jacob himself.

21. *himself lodged* — not the whole night, but only a part of it.

22. *ford Jabbok* — now the *Zerka* — a stream that rises among the mountains of Gilead, and running from east to west, enters the Jordan, about forty miles south of the Sea of Tiberias. At the ford it is ten yards wide. It is sometimes forded with difficulty; but in summer it is very shallow.

he rose up and took — Unable to sleep, Jacob waded the ford in the night time by himself; and having ascertained its safety, he returned to the north bank and sent over his family and attendants, remaining behind, to seek anew, in silent prayer, the divine blessing on the means he had set in motion.

24, 25. *There wrestled a man with him* — This mysterious person is called an angel (²⁰¹¹Hosea 12:4) and God (¹⁰³²⁸Genesis 32:28,30 ²⁰¹¹Hosea 12:5); and the opinion that is most supported is that he was “the angel of the covenant,” who, in a visible form, appeared to animate the mind and sympathize with the distress of his pious servant. It has been a subject of much discussion whether the incident described was an actual conflict or a visionary scene. Many think that as the narrative makes no mention in

express terms either of sleep, or dream, or vision, it was a real transaction; while others, considering the bodily exhaustion of Jacob, his great mental anxiety, the kind of aid he supplicated, as well as the analogy of former manifestations with which he was favored — such as the ladder — have concluded that it was a vision [CALVIN, HESSENBERG, HENGSTENBERG]. The moral design of it was to revive the sinking spirit of the patriarch and to arm him with confidence in God, while anticipating the dreaded scenes of the morrow. To us it is highly instructive; showing that, to encourage us valiantly to meet the trials to which we are subjected, God allows us to ascribe to the efficacy of our faith and prayers, the victories which His grace alone enables us to make.

26. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me* — It is evident that Jacob was aware of the character of Him with whom he wrestled; and, believing that His power, though by far superior to human, was yet limited by His promise to do him good, he determined not to lose the golden opportunity of securing a blessing. And nothing gives God greater pleasure than to see the hearts of His people firmly adhering to Him.

28. *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel* — The old name was not to be abandoned; but, referring as it did to a dishonorable part of the patriarch's history, it was to be associated with another descriptive of his now sanctified and eminently devout character.

29. *Jacob asked, Tell me ... thy name* — The request was denied that he might not be too elated with his conquest nor suppose that he had obtained such advantage over the angel as to make him do what he pleased.

31. *halted upon his thigh* — As Paul had a thorn in the flesh given to humble him, lest he should be too elevated by the abundant revelations granted him [⁴⁷¹⁰2 Corinthians 12:7], so Jacob's lameness was to keep him mindful of this mysterious scene, and that it was in gracious condescension the victory was yielded to him. In the greatest of these spiritual victories which, through faith, any of God's people obtain, there is always something to humble them.

32. *the sinew which shrank* — the nerve that fastens the thigh bone in its socket. The practice of the Jews in abstaining from eating this in the flesh of animals, is not founded on the law of Moses, but is merely a traditional

usage. The sinew is carefully extracted; and where there are no persons skilled enough for that operation, they do not make use of the hind legs at all.

CHAPTER 33

GENESIS 33:1-11.

KINDNESS OF JACOB AND ESAU.

1. *behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men* — Jacob having crossed the ford and ranged his wives and children in order — the dearest last, that they might be the least exposed to danger — awaited the expected interview. His faith was strengthened and his fears gone (¹²⁷Psalm 27:3). Having had power to prevail with God, he was confident of the same power with man, according to the promise (compare ¹²⁸Genesis 32:28).

3. *he bowed himself ... seven times* — The manner of doing this is by looking towards a superior and bowing with the upper part of the body brought parallel to the ground, then advancing a few steps and bowing again, and repeating his obeisance till, at the seventh time, the suppliant stands in the immediate presence of his superior. The members of his family did the same. This was a token of profound respect, and, though very marked, it would appear natural; for Esau being the elder brother, was, according to the custom of the East, entitled to respectful treatment from his younger brother. His attendants would be struck by it, and according to Eastern habits, would magnify it in the hearing of their master.

4. *Esau ran to meet him* — What a sudden and surprising change! Whether the sight of the princely present and the profound homage of Jacob had produced this effect, or it proceeded from the impulsive character of Esau, the cherished enmity of twenty years in a moment disappeared; the weapons of war were laid aside, and the warmest tokens of mutual affection reciprocated between the brothers. But doubtless, the efficient cause was the secret, subduing influence of grace (¹²⁹Proverbs 21:1), which converted Esau from an enemy into a friend.

5. *Who are those with thee?* — It might have been enough to say, They are my children; but Jacob was a pious man, and he could not give even a common answer but in the language of piety (^{<BCTB>}Psalm 127:3 113:9 107:41).

11. *He urged him and he took it* — In the East the acceptance by a superior is a proof of friendship, and by an enemy, of reconciliation. It was on both accounts Jacob was so anxious that his brother should receive the cattle; and in Esau's acceptance he had the strongest proofs of a good feeling being established that Eastern notions admit of.

^{<C3D>}GENESIS 33:12-20.

THE PARTING.

12. *And he said, Let us take our journey* — Esau proposed to accompany Jacob and his family through the country, both as a mark of friendship and as an escort to guard them. But the proposal was prudently declined. Jacob did not need any worldly state or equipage. Notwithstanding the present cordiality, the brothers were so different in spirit, character, and habits — the one so much a man of the world, and the other a man of God, that there was great risk of something occurring to disturb the harmony. Jacob having alleged a very reasonable excuse for the tardiness of his movements, the brothers parted in peace.

14. *until I come unto my lord* — It seems to have been Jacob's intention, passing round the Dead Sea, to visit his brother in Seir, and thus, without crossing the Jordan, go to Beer-sheba to Isaac; but he changed his plan, and whether the intention was carried out then or at a future period has not been recorded.

17. *Jacob journeyed to Succoth* — that is, "booths," that being the first station at which Jacob halted on his arrival in Canaan. His posterity, when dwelling in houses of stone, built a city there and called it Succoth, to commemorate the fact that their ancestor, "a Syrian ready to perish" [^{<B3F>}Deuteronomy 26:5], was glad to dwell in booths.

18. *Shalem* — that is, “peace”; and the meaning may be that Jacob came into Canaan, arriving safe and sound at the city Shechem — a tribute to Him who had promised such a return (compare ^{GEN5}Genesis 28:15). But most writers take Shalem as a proper name — a city of Shechem, and the site is marked by one of the little villages about two miles to the northeast. A little farther in the valley below Shechem “he bought a parcel of a field,” thus being the first of the patriarchs who became a proprietor of land in Canaan.

19. *an hundred pieces of money* — literally, “lambs”; probably a coin with the figure of a lamb on it.

20. *and he erected ... an altar* — A beautiful proof of his personal piety, a most suitable conclusion to his journey, and a lasting memorial of a distinguished favor in the name “God, the God of Israel.” Wherever we pitch a tent, God shall have an altar.

CHAPTER 34

GENESIS 34:1-31.

THE DISHONOR OF DINAH.

1-4. Though freed from foreign troubles, Jacob met with a great domestic calamity in the fall of his only daughter. According to JOSEPHUS, she had been attending a festival; but it is highly probable that she had been often and freely mixing in the society of the place and that she, being a simple, inexperienced, and vain young woman, had been flattered by the attentions of the ruler's son. There must have been time and opportunities of acquaintance to produce the strong attachment that Shechem had for her.

5. *Jacob held his peace* — Jacob, as a father and a good man, must have been deeply distressed. But he could do little. In the case of a family by different wives, it is not the father, but the full brothers, on whom the protection of the daughters devolves — they are the guardians of a sister's welfare and the avengers of her wrongs. It was for this reason that Simeon and Levi, the two brothers of Dinah by Leah [^{GEN}Genesis 34:25], appear the chief actors in this episode; and though the two fathers would have probably brought about an amicable arrangement of the affair, the hasty arrival of these enraged brothers introduced a new element into the negotiations.

6. *Hamor* — that is, “ass”; and it is a striking proof of the very different ideas which, in the East, are associated with that animal, which there appears sprightly, well proportioned, and of great activity. This chief is called Emmor (^{ACTS}Acts 7:16).

7. *the men were grieved, and ... very wroth* — Good men in such a case could not but grieve; but it would have been well if their anger had been less, or that they had known the precept “let not the sun go down upon your wrath” [^{EPH}Ephesians 4:26]. No injury can justify revenge (^{DEUT}Deuteronomy 32:35 ^{ROM}Romans 12:9); but Jacob's sons planned a scheme of revenge in the most deceitful manner.

8-10. *Hamor communed with them* — The prince and his son seem at first sight to have acted honestly, and our feelings are enlisted on their side. They betray no jealousy of the powerful shepherds; on the contrary, they show every desire to establish friendly intercourse. But their conduct was unjustifiable in neither expressing regret nor restoring Dinah to her family; and this great error was the true cause of the negotiations ending in so unhappy a manner.

11. *Shechem said unto her father ... and brethren* — The consideration of the proposal for marriage belonged to Jacob, and he certainly showed great weakness in yielding so much to the fiery impetuosity of his sons. The sequel shows the unhappy consequences of that concession.

12. *Ask me never so much dowry and gift* — The gift refers to the presents made at betrothal, both to the bride elect and her relations (compare ⁽¹²⁸⁾Genesis 24:53), the dowry to a suitable settlement upon her.

13. *The sons of Jacob answered* — The honor of their family consisted in having the sign of the covenant. Circumcision was the external rite by which persons were admitted members of the ancient Church. But that outward rite could not make the Shechemites true Israelites; and yet it does not appear that Jacob's sons required anything more. Nothing is said of their teaching the people to worship the true God, but only of their insisting on their being circumcised; and it is evident that they did not seek to convert Shechem, but only made a show of religion — a cloak to cover their diabolical design. Hypocrisy and deceit, in all cases vicious, are infinitely more so when accompanied with a show of religion; and here the sons of Jacob, under the pretense of conscientious scruples, conceal a scheme of treachery as cruel and diabolical as was, perhaps, ever perpetrated.

20. *Hamor and Shechem ... came unto the gate of their city* — That was the place where every public communication was made; and in the ready obsequious submission of the people to this measure we see an evidence either of the extraordinary affection for the governing family, or of the abject despotism of the East, where the will of a chief is an absolute command.

30. *Jacob said ... Ye have troubled me* — This atrocious outrage perpetrated on the defenseless citizens and their families made the cup of Jacob's affliction overflow. We may wonder that, in speaking of it to his sons, he did not represent it as a heinous sin, an atrocious violation of the laws of God and man, but dwelt solely on the present consequences. It was probably because that was the only view likely to rouse the cold-blooded apathy, the hardened consciences of those ruffian sons. Nothing but the restraining power of God saved him and his family from the united vengeance of the people (compare ⁴⁰³⁵Genesis 35:5). All his sons had not been engaged in the massacre. Joseph was a boy, Benjamin not yet born, and the other eight not concerned in it. Simeon and Levi alone, with their retainers, had been the guilty actors in the bloody tragedy. But the Canaanites would not be discriminating in their vengeance; and if *all* the Shechemites were put to death for the offense of their chief's son, what wonder if the natives should extend their hatred to all the family of Jacob; and who probably equalled, in number, the inhabitants of that village.

CHAPTER 35

GENESIS 35:1-15.

REMOVAL TO BETHEL.

1. *God said unto Jacob, Arise*, etc. — This command was given seasonably in point of time and tenderly in respect of language. The disgraceful and perilous events that had recently taken place in the patriarch's family must have produced in him a strong desire to remove without delay from the vicinity of Shechem. Borne down by an overwhelming sense of the criminality of his two sons — of the offense they had given to God and the dishonor they had brought on the true faith; distracted, too, with anxiety about the probable consequences which their outrage might bring upon himself and family, should the Canaanite people combine to extirpate such a band of robbers and murderers; he must have felt this call as affording a great relief to his afflicted feelings. At the same time it conveyed a tender rebuke.

go up to Beth-el — Beth-el was about thirty miles south of Shechem and was an ascent from a low to a highland country. There, he would not only be released from the painful associations of the latter place but be established on a spot that would revive the most delightful and sublime recollections. The pleasure of revisiting it, however, was not altogether unalloyed.

make there an altar unto God, that appeared — It too frequently happens that early impressions are effaced through lapse of time, that promises made in seasons of distress, are forgotten; or, if remembered on the return of health and prosperity, there is not the same alacrity and sense of obligation felt to fulfill them. Jacob was lying under that charge. He had fallen into spiritual indolence. It was now eight or ten years since his return to Canaan. He had effected a comfortable settlement and had acknowledged the divine mercies, by which that return and settlement had been signally distinguished (compare ^{GEN}Genesis 33:19). But for some

unrecorded reason, his early vow at Beth-el [^{<HEB>}Genesis 28:20-22], in a great crisis of his life, remained unperformed. The Lord appeared now to remind him of his neglected duty, in terms, however, so mild, as awakened less the memory of his fault, than of the kindness of his heavenly Guardian; and how much Jacob felt the touching nature of the appeal to that memorable scene at Beth-el, appears in the immediate preparations he made to *arise* and *go up* thither (^{<HEB>}Psalms 66:13).

2. *Then Jacob said unto his household ... Put away the strange gods that are among you* — Hebrew, “gods of the stranger,” of foreign nations.

Jacob had brought, in his service, a number of Mesopotamian retainers, who were addicted to superstitious practices; and there is some reason to fear that the same high testimony as to the religious superintendence of his household could not have been borne of him as was done of Abraham (^{<HEB>}Genesis 18:19). He might have been too negligent hitherto in winking at these evils in his servants; or, perhaps, it was not till his arrival in Canaan, that he had learnt, for the first time, that one nearer and dearer to him was secretly infected with the same corruption (^{<HEB>}Genesis 31:34). Be that as it may, he resolved on an immediate and thorough reformation of his household; and in commanding them to put away the strange gods, he added,

be clean, and change your garments — as if some defilement, from contact with idolatry, should still remain about them. In the law of Moses, many ceremonial purifications were ordained and observed by persons who had contracted certain defilements, and without the observance of which, they were reckoned unclean and unfit to join in the social worship of God. These bodily purifications were purely figurative; and as sacrifices were offered before the law, so also were external purifications, as appears from the words of Jacob; hence it would seem that types and symbols were used from the fall of man, representing and teaching the two great doctrines of revealed truth — namely, the atonement of Christ and the sanctification of our nature.

4. *they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods ... and earrings* — Strange gods, the “seraphim” (compare ^{<HEB>}Genesis 31:30), as well, perhaps, as other idols acquired among the Shechemite spoil — earrings of various forms, sizes, and materials, which are universally worn in the East, and,

then as now, connected with incantation and idolatry (compare ^{<0123>}Hosea 2:13). The decided tone which Jacob now assumed was the probable cause of the alacrity with which those favorite objects of superstition were surrendered.

Jacob hid them under the oak — or terebinth — a towering tree, which, like all others of the kind, was a striking object in the scenery of Palestine; and beneath which, at Shechem, the patriarch had pitched his tent. He hid the images and amulets, delivered to him by his Mesopotamian dependents, at the root of this tree. The oak being deemed a consecrated tree, to bury them at its root was to deposit them in a place where no bold hand would venture to disturb the ground; and hence it was called from this circumstance — “the plain of Meonenim” — that is, “the oak of enchantments” (^{<0123>}Judges 9:37); and from the great stone which Joshua set up — “the oak of the pillar” (^{<0123>}Judges 9:6).

5. the terror of God was upon the cities — There was every reason to apprehend that a storm of indignation would burst from all quarters upon Jacob’s family, and that the Canaanite tribes would have formed one united plan of revenge. But a supernatural panic seized them; and thus, for the sake of the “heir of the promise,” the protecting shield of Providence was specially held over his family.

6. So Jacob came to Luz ... that is, Beth-el — It is probable that this place was unoccupied ground when Jacob first went to it; and that after that period [CALVIN], the Canaanites built a town, to which they gave the name of Luz [^{<0123>}Genesis 28:19], from the profusion of almond trees that grew around. The name of Beth-el, which would, of course, be confined to Jacob and his family, did not supersede the original one, till long after. It is now identified with the modern Beitin and lies on the western slope of the mountain on which Abraham built his altar (^{<0123>}Genesis 12:8).

7. El-Beth-el — that is, “the God of Beth-el.”

8. Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died — This event seems to have taken place before the solemnities were commenced. Deborah (*Hebrew*, a “bee”), supposing her to have been fifty years on coming to Canaan, had attained the great age of a hundred eighty. When she was removed from Isaac’s household to Jacob’s, is unknown. But it probably was on his return from

Mesopotamia; and she would have been of invaluable service to his young family. Old nurses, like her, were not only honored, but loved as mothers; and, accordingly, her death was the occasion of great lamentation. She was buried under *the* oak — hence called “the terebinth of tears” (compare ^{<1134>}1 Kings 13:14). God was pleased to make a new appearance to him after the solemn rites of devotion were over. By this manifestation of His presence, God testified His acceptance of Jacob’s sacrifice and renewed the promise of the blessings guaranteed to Abraham and Isaac [^{<1311>}Genesis 35:11,12]; and the patriarch observed the ceremony with which he had formerly consecrated the place, comprising a sacramental cup, along with the oil that he poured on the pillar, and reimposing the memorable name [^{<1314>}Genesis 35:14]. The whole scene was in accordance with the character of the patriarchal dispensation, in which the great truths of religion were exhibited to the senses, and “the world’s grey fathers” taught in a manner suited to the weakness of an infantile condition.

13. *God went up from him* — The presence of God was indicated in some visible form and His acceptance of the sacrifice shown by the miraculous descent of fire from heaven, consuming it on the altar.

^{<1316>}GENESIS 35:16-27.

BIRTH OF BENJAMIN — DEATH OF RACHEL, ETC.

16. *And they journeyed from Beth-el* — There can be no doubt that much enjoyment was experienced at Beth-el, and that in the religious observances solemnized, as well as in the vivid recollections of the glorious vision seen there, the affections of the patriarch were powerfully animated and that he left the place a better and more devoted servant of God. When the solemnities were over, Jacob, with his family, pursued a route directly southward, and they reached Ephrath, when they were plunged into mourning by the death of Rachel, who sank in childbirth, leaving a posthumous son [^{<1318>}Genesis 35:18]. A very affecting death, considering how ardently the mind of Rachel had been set on offspring (compare ^{<1311>}Genesis 30:1).

18. *She called his name Ben-oni* — The dying mother gave this name to her child, significant of her circumstances; but Jacob changed his name into Benjamin. This is thought by some to have been originally Benjamin, “a son of days,” that is, of old age. But with its present ending it means “son of the right hand,” that is, particularly dear and precious.

19. *Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem* — The one, the old name; the other, the later name, signifying “house of bread.”

20. *and Jacob set a pillar on her grave ... unto this day* — The spot still marked out as the grave of Rachel exactly agrees with the Scriptural record, being about a mile from Beth-lehem. Anciently it was surmounted by a pyramid of stones, but the present tomb is a Mohammedan erection.

26. *Sons of Jacob ... born to him in Padan-aram* — It is a common practice of the sacred historian to say of a company or body of men that which, though true of the majority, may not be applicable to every individual. (See ^{<1828>}Matthew 19:28 ^{<1828>}John 20:24 ^{<1811>}Hebrews 11:13). Here is an example, for Benjamin was born in Canaan [^{<1836>}Genesis 35:16-18].

^{<1833>}GENESIS 35:28,29.

DEATH OF ISAAC.

29. *Isaac gave up the ghost* — The death of this venerable patriarch is here recorded by anticipation for it did not take place till fifteen years after Joseph’s disappearance. Feeble and blind though he was, he lived to a very advanced age; and it is a pleasing evidence of the permanent reconciliation between Esau and Jacob that they met at Mamre to perform the funeral rites of their common father.

CHAPTER 36

GENESIS 36:1-43.

POSTERITY OF ESAU.

1. *these are the generations* — history of the leading men and events (compare ^{<000>}Genesis 2:4).

Esau who is Edom — A name applied to him in reference to the peculiar color of his skin at birth [^{<025>}Genesis 25:25], rendered more significant by his inordinate craving for the *red* pottage [^{<029>}Genesis 25:30], and also by the fierce sanguinary character of his descendants (compare ^{<029>}Ezekiel 25:12 ^{<000>}Obadiah 1:10).

2, 3. *Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan* — There were three, mentioned under different names; for it is evident that Bashemath is the same as Mahalath (^{<029>}Genesis 28:9), since they both stand in the relation of daughter to Ishmael and sister to Nebajoth; and hence it may be inferred that Adah is the same as Judith, Aholibamah as Bathsemath (^{<029>}Genesis 26:34). It was not unusual for women, in that early age, to have two names, as Sarai was also Ischah [^{<012>}Genesis 11:29]; and this is the more probable in the case of Esau's wives, who of course would have to take new names when they went from Canaan to settle in mount Seir.

6, 7. *Esau ... went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob* — literally, “a country,” without any certain prospect of a settlement. The design of this historical sketch of Esau and his family is to show how the promise (^{<029>}Genesis 27:39,40) was fulfilled. In temporal prosperity he far exceeds his brother; and it is remarkable that, in the overruling providence of God, the vast increase of his worldly substance was the occasion of his leaving Canaan and thus making way for the return of Jacob.

8. *Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir* — This was divinely assigned as his possession (^{<024>}Joshua 24:4 ^{<000>}Deuteronomy 2:5).

15-19. *dukes* — The Edomites, like the Israelites, were divided into tribes, which took their names from his sons. The head of each tribe was called by a term which in our version is rendered “duke” — not of the high rank and wealth of a British peer, but like the sheiks or emirs of the modern East, or the chieftains of highland clans. Fourteen are mentioned who flourished contemporaneously.

20-30. *Sons of Seir the Horite land* — native dukes, who were incorporated with those of the Edomite race.

24. *This was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness* — The word “mules” is, in several ancient versions, rendered “water springs”; and this discovery of some remarkable fountain was sufficient, among a wandering or pastoral people, to entitle him to such a distinguishing notice.

31-39. *kings of Edom* — The royal power was not built on the ruins of the dukedoms, but existed at the same time.

40-43. Recapitulation of the dukes according to their residences.

CHAPTER 37

GENESIS 37:1-4.

PARENTAL PARTIALITY.

1. *Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger* — that is, “a sojourner”; “father” used collectively. The patriarch was at this time at Mamre, in the valley of Hebron (compare ^{<0327>}Genesis 35:27); and his dwelling there was continued in the same manner and prompted by the same motives as that of Abraham and Isaac (^{<5113>}Hebrews 11:13).

2. *generations* — leading occurrences, in the domestic history of Jacob, as shown in the narrative about to be commenced.

Joseph ... was feeding the flock — literally, “Joseph being seventeen years old was a shepherd over the flock” — he a lad, with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. Oversight or superintendence is evidently implied. This post of chief shepherd in the party might be assigned him either from his being the son of a principal wife or from his own superior qualities of character; and if invested with this office, he acted not as a gossiping telltale, but as a “faithful steward” in reporting the scandalous conduct of his brethren.

3. *son of his old age* — Benjamin being younger, was more the son of his old age and consequently on that ground might have been expected to be the favorite. Literally rendered, it is “son of old age to him” — *Hebrew phrase*, for “a wise son” — one who possessed observation and wisdom above his years — an old head on young shoulders.

made him a coat of many colors — formed in those early days by sewing together patches of colored cloth, and considered a dress of distinction (^{<0353>}Judges 5:30 ^{<0368>}2 Samuel 13:18). The passion for various colors still reigns among the Arabs and other people of the East, who are fond of dressing their children in this gaudy attire. But since the art of interweaving various patterns was introduced, “the coats of colors” are

different now from what they seem to have been in patriarchal times, and bear a close resemblance to the varieties of tartan.

4. *could not speak peaceably unto him* — did not say “peace be to thee” [^{<0163>}Genesis 43:23, etc.], the usual expression of good wishes among friends and acquaintances. It is deemed a sacred duty to give all this form of salutation; and the withholding of it is an unmistakable sign of dislike or secret hostility. The habitual refusal of Joseph’s brethren, therefore, to meet him with “the *salaam*,” showed how ill-disposed they were towards him. It is very natural in parents to love the youngest, and feel partial to those who excel in talents or amiableness. But in a family constituted as Jacob’s — many children by different mothers — he showed great and criminal indiscretion.

^{<0163>}GENESIS 37:5-36.

THE DREAMS OF JOSEPH.

5. *Joseph dreamed a dream* — Dreams in ancient times were much attended to, and hence the dream of Joseph, though but a mere boy, engaged the serious consideration of his family. But this dream was evidently symbolical. The meaning was easily discerned, and, from its being repeated under different emblems, the fulfillment was considered certain (compare ^{<0163>}Genesis 41:32), whence it was that “his brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying” [^{<0171>}Genesis 37:11].

12. *his brethren went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem* — The vale of Shechem was, from the earliest mention of Canaan, blest with extraordinary abundance of water. Therefore did the sons of Jacob go from Hebron to this place, though it must have cost them near twenty hours’ travelling — that is, at the shepherd rate, a little more than fifty miles. But the herbage there was so rich and nutritious that they thought it well worth the pains of so long a journey, to the neglect of the grazing district of Hebron [VAN DE VELDE].

13-17. *Israel said, ... Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem?* — Anxious to learn how his sons were doing in their distant encampment,

Jacob despatched Joseph; and the youth, accepting the mission with alacrity, left the vale of Hebron, sought them at Shechem, heard of them from a man in “the field” (the wide and richly cultivated plain of Esdraelon), and found that they had left that neighborhood for Dothan, probably being compelled by the detestation in which, from the horrid massacre, their name was held.

17. *Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan* — Hebrew, *Dothaim*, or “two wells,” recently discovered in the modern “Dothan,” situated a few hours’ distance from Shechem.

18. *when they saw him afar off* — on the level grass field, where they were watching their cattle. They could perceive him approaching in the distance from the side of Shechem, or rather, Samaria.

19. *Behold, this dreamer cometh* — literally, “master of dreams” — a bitterly ironical sneer. Dreams being considered suggestions from above, to make false pretensions to having received one was detested as a species of blasphemy, and in this light Joseph was regarded by his brethren as an artful pretender. They already began to form a plot for Joseph’s assassination, from which he was rescued only by the address of Reuben, who suggested that he should rather be cast into one of the wells, which are, and probably were, completely dried up in summer.

23. *they stripped Joseph out of his coat ... of many colors* — Imagine him advancing in all the unsuspecting openness of brotherly affection. How astonished and terrified must he have been at the cold reception, the ferocious aspect, the rough usage of his unnatural assailants! A vivid picture of his state of agony and despair was afterwards drawn by themselves (compare ^{<0427>}Genesis 42:21).

25. *they sat down to eat bread* — What a view does this exhibit of those hardened profligates! Their common share in this conspiracy is not the only dismal feature in the story. The rapidity, the almost instantaneous manner in which the proposal was followed by their joint resolution, and the cool indifference, or rather the fiendish satisfaction, with which they sat down to regale themselves, is astonishing. It is impossible that mere envy at his dreams, his gaudy dress, or the doting partiality of their common father, could have goaded them on to such a pitch of frenzied

resentment or confirmed them in such consummate wickedness. Their hatred to Joseph must have had a far deeper seat. It must have been produced by dislike to his piety and other excellencies, which made his character and conduct a constant censure upon theirs, and on account of which they found that they could never be at ease till they had rid themselves of his hated presence. This was the true solution of the mystery, just as it was in the case of Cain (^(GEN2)1 John 3:12).

they lifted up their eyes, ... and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites — They are called Midianites (^(GEN2)Genesis 37:28), and Medanites, in *Hebrew* (^(GEN2)Genesis 37:36), being a travelling caravan composed of a mixed association of Arabians. Those tribes of Northern Arabia had already addicted themselves to commerce, and long did they enjoy a monopoly, the carrying trade being entirely in their hands. Their approach could easily be seen; for, as their road, after crossing the ford from the trans-jordanic district, led along the south side of the mountains of Gilboa, a party seated on the plain of Dothan could trace them and their string of camels in the distance as they proceeded through the broad and gently sloping valley that intervenes. Trading in the produce of Arabia and India, they were in the regular course of traffic on their way to Egypt: and the chief articles of commerce in which this clan dealt were

spicery from India, that is, a species of resinous gum, called *storax*, ***balm*** — “balm of Gilead,” the juice of the balsam tree, a native of Arabia-Felix, and ***myrrh*** — an Arabic gum of a strong, fragrant smell. For these articles there must have been an enormous demand in Egypt as they were constantly used in the process of embalming.

26-28. Judah said, ... What profit is it if we slay our brother? — The sight of these travelling merchants gave a sudden turn to the views of the conspirators; for having no wish to commit a greater degree of crime than was necessary for the accomplishment of their end, they readily approved of Judah’s suggestion to dispose of their obnoxious brother as a slave. The proposal, of course, was founded on their knowledge that the Arabian merchants trafficked in slaves; and there is the clearest evidence furnished by the monuments of Egypt that the traders who were in the habit of bringing slaves from the countries through which they passed, found a ready market in the cities of the Nile.

they ... lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold him — Acting impulsively on Judah's advice, they had their poor victim ready by the time the merchants reached them; and money being no part of their object, they sold him for

twenty pieces of silver — The money was probably in rings or pieces (shekels), and silver is always mentioned in the records of that early age before gold, on account of its rarity. The whole sum, if in shekel weight, did not exceed \$20.

they brought Joseph into Egypt — There were two routes to Egypt: the one was overland by Hebron, where Jacob dwelt, and by taking which, the fate of his hapless son would likely have reached the paternal ears; the other was directly westward across the country from Dothan to the maritime coast, and in this, the safest and most expeditious way, the merchants carried Joseph to Egypt. Thus did an overruling Providence lead this murderous conclave of brothers, as well as the slave merchants both following their own free courses — to be parties in an act by which He was to work out, in a marvellous manner, the great purposes of His wisdom and goodness towards His ancient Church and people.

29, 30. *Reuben returned unto the pit* — He seems to have designedly taken a circuitous route, with a view of secretly rescuing the poor lad from a lingering death by starvation. His intentions were excellent, and his feelings no doubt painfully lacerated when he discovered what had been done in his absence. But the thing was of God, who had designed that Joseph's deliverance should be accomplished by other means than his.

31-33. *they took Joseph's coat* — The commission of one sin necessarily leads to another to conceal it; and the scheme of deception which the sons of Jacob planned and practiced on their aged father was a necessary consequence of the atrocious crime they had perpetrated. What a wonder that their cruel sneer, "thy son's coat," and their forced efforts to comfort him, did not awaken suspicion! But extreme grief, like every other passion, is blind, and Jacob, great as his affliction was, did allow himself to indulge his sorrow more than became one who believed in the government of a supreme and all-wise Disposer.

34. *Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins* — the common signs of Oriental mourning. A rent is made in the skirt more or less long according to the afflicted feelings of the mourner, and a coarse rough piece of black sackcloth or camel's hair cloth is wound round the waist.

35. *and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son* — not the earth, for Joseph was supposed to be torn in pieces, but the unknown place — the place of departed souls, where Jacob expected at death to meet his beloved son.

CHAPTER 38

GENESIS 38:1-30.

JUDAH AND FAMILY.

1. *at that time* — a formula frequently used by the sacred writers, not to describe any precise period, but an interval near about it.

2. *And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite* — Like Esau [⁴²⁵⁴Genesis 26:34], this son of Jacob, casting off the restraints of religion, married into a Canaanite family; and it is not surprising that the family which sprang from such an unsuitable connection should be infamous for bold and unblushing wickedness.

8. *Judah said unto Onan ... marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother* — The first instance of a custom, which was afterwards incorporated among the laws of Moses, that when a husband died leaving a widow, his brother next of age was to marry her, and the issue, if any, was to be served heir to the deceased (compare ⁴²⁵⁵Deuteronomy 25:5).

12. *Judah ... went up unto his sheep-shearers* — This season, which occurs in Palestine towards the end of March, was spent in more than usual hilarity, and the wealthiest masters invited their friends, as well as treated their servants, to sumptuous entertainments. Accordingly, it is said, Judah was accompanied by his friend Hirah.

Timnath — in the mountains of Judah.

18. *signet*, etc. — Bracelets, including armllets, were worn by men as well as women among the Hebrews. But the *Hebrew* word here rendered “bracelets,” is everywhere else translated “lace” or “ribbon”; so that as the signet alone was probably more than an equivalent for the kid, it is not easy to conjecture why the other things were given in addition, except by supposing the perforated seal was attached by a ribbon to the staff.

24. *Bring her forth, and let her be burnt* — In patriarchal times fathers seem to have possessed the power of life and death over the members of their families. The crime of adultery was anciently punished in many places by burning (^{<B20>}Leviticus 21:9 ^{<B756>}Judges 15:6 ^{<B22>}Jeremiah 29:22). This chapter contains details, which probably would never have obtained a place in the inspired record, had it not been to exhibit the full links of the chain that connects the genealogy of the Savior with Abraham; and in the disreputable character of the ancestry who figure in this passage, we have a remarkable proof that “He made himself of no reputation” [^{<B107>}Philippians 2:7].

CHAPTER 39

GENESIS 39:1-23.

JOSEPH IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE.

1. *Potiphar* — This name, Potiphar, signifies one “devoted to the sun,” the local deity of On or Heliopolis, a circumstance which fixes the place of his residence in the Delta, the district of Egypt bordering on Canaan.

officer — literally, “prince of the Pharaoh” — that is, in the service of government.

captain of the guard — The import of the original term has been variously interpreted, some considering it means “chief cook,” others, “chief inspector of plantations”; but that which seems best founded is “chief of the executioners,” the same as the captain of the watch, the *zabut* of modern Egypt [WILKINSON].

bought him ... of the Ishmaelites — The age, appearance, and intelligence of the Hebrew slave would soon cause him to be picked up in the market. But the unseen, unfelt influence of the great Disposer drew the attention of Potiphar towards him, in order that in the house of one so closely connected with the court, he might receive that previous training which was necessary for the high office he was destined to fill, and in the school of adversity learn the lessons of practical wisdom that were to be of greatest utility and importance in his future career. Thus it is that when God has any important work to be done, He always prepares fitting agents to accomplish it.

2. *he was in the house of his master* — Those slaves who had been war captives were generally sent to labor in the field and subjected to hard treatment under the “stick” of taskmasters. But those who were bought with money were employed in domestic purposes, were kindly treated, and enjoyed as much liberty as the same class does in modern Egypt.

3. *his master saw that the Lord was with him* — Though changed in condition, Joseph was not changed in spirit; though stripped of the gaudy coat that had adorned his person, he had not lost the moral graces that distinguished his character; though separated from his father on earth, he still lived in communion with his Father in heaven; though in the house of an idolater, he continued a worshipper of the true God.

5. *the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake*, etc. — It might be — it probably was — that a special, a miraculous blessing was poured out on a youth who so faithfully and zealously served God amid all the disadvantages of his place. But it may be useful to remark that such a blessing usually follows in the ordinary course of things; and the most worldly, unprincipled masters always admire and respect religion in a servant when they see that profession supported by conscientious principle and a consistent life.

made him overseer in his house — We do not know in what capacity Joseph entered into the service of Potiphar; but the observant eye of his master soon discovered his superior qualities and made him his chief, his confidential servant (compare ^{<HINT>}Ephesians 6:7 ^{<NOTE>}Colossians 3:23). The advancement of domestic slaves is not uncommon, and it is considered a great disgrace not to raise one who has been a year or two in the family. But this extraordinary advancement of Joseph was the doing of the Lord, though on the part of Potiphar it was the consequence of observing the astonishing prosperity that attended him in all that he did.

7. *his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph* — Egyptian women were not kept in the same secluded manner as females are in most Oriental countries now. They were treated in a manner more worthy of a civilized people — in fact, enjoyed much freedom both at home and abroad. Hence Potiphar's wife had constant opportunity of meeting Joseph. But the ancient women of Egypt were very loose in their morals. Intrigues and intemperance were vices very prevalent among the them, as the monuments too plainly attest [WILKINSON]. Potiphar's wife was probably not worse than many of the same rank, and her infamous advances made to Joseph arose from her superiority of station.

9. *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* — This remonstrance, when all inferior arguments had failed, embodied the

true principle of moral purity — a principle always sufficient where it exists, and alone sufficient.

14. *Then she called unto the men of her house* — Disappointed and affronted, she vowed revenge and accused Joseph, first to the servants of the house, and on his return to her lord.

See, he hath brought in an Hebrew ... to mock us — an affected and blind aspersion of her husband for keeping in his house an *Hebrew*, the very abomination of Egyptians.

20. *Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison* — the roundhouse, from the form of its construction, usually attached to the dwelling of such an officer as Potiphar. It was partly a subterranean dungeon (^{Q41H}Genesis 41:14), though the brick-built walls rose considerably above the surface of the ground, and were surmounted by a vaulted roof somewhat in the form of an inverted bowl. Into such a dungeon Potiphar, in the first ebullition of rage, threw Joseph and ordered him to be subjected further to as great harshness of treatment (^{Q45B}Psalms 105:18) as he dared; for the power of masters over their slaves was very properly restrained by law, and the murder of a slave was a capital crime.

a place where the king's prisoners were bound — Though prisons seem to have been an inseparable appendage of the palaces, this was not a common jail — it was the receptacle of state criminals; and, therefore, it may be presumed that more than ordinary strictness and vigilance were exercised over the prisoners. In general, however, the Egyptian, like other Oriental prisons, were used solely for the purposes of detention. Accused persons were cast into them until the charges against them could be investigated; and though the jailer was responsible for the appearance of those placed under his custody, yet, provided they were produced when called, he was never interrogated as to the way in which he had kept them.

21-23. *The Lord ... gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison,* etc. — It is highly probable, from the situation of this prison (^{Q41B}Genesis 40:3), that the keeper might have been previously acquainted with Joseph and have had access to know his innocence of the crime laid to his charge, as well as with all the high integrity of his character. That may partly account for his showing so much kindness and confidence to his prisoner.

But there was a higher influence at work; for “the Lord was with Joseph, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.”

CHAPTER 40

GENESIS 40:1-8.

TWO STATE PRISONERS.

1. *the butler* — not only the cup-bearer, but overseer of the royal vineyards, as well as the cellars; having, probably, some hundreds of people under him.

baker — or cook, had the superintendence of every thing relating to the providing and preparing of meats for the royal table. Both officers, especially the former, were, in ancient Egypt, always persons of great rank and importance; and from the confidential nature of their employment, as well as their access to the royal presence, they were generally the highest nobles or princes of the blood.

3. *Pharaoh put them in ward*, etc. — Whatever was their crime, they were committed, until their case could be investigated, to the custody of the captain of the guard, that is, Potiphar, in an outer part of whose house the royal prison was situated.

4. *The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them* — not the keeper, though he was most favorably disposed; but Potiphar himself, who, it would seem, was by this time satisfied of the perfect innocence of the young Hebrew; though, probably, to prevent the exposure of his family, he deemed it prudent to detain him in confinement (see ^{<200>}Psalm 37:5).

They continued a season in ward — literally, “days,” how long, is uncertain; but as they were called to account on the king’s birthday, it has been supposed that their offense had been committed on the preceding anniversary [CALVIN].

5-8. *they dreamed a dream* — Joseph, influenced by the spirit of true religion, could feel for others (^{<200>}Ecclesiastes 4:1 ^{<525>}Romans 12:15 ^{<110>}Philippians 2:4). Observing them one day extremely depressed, he

inquired the cause of their melancholy; and being informed it was owing to a dream they had respectively dreamed during the previous night, after piously directing them to God (²¹²¹Daniel 2:30 ²²³¹Isaiah 26:10), he volunteered to aid them, through the divine help, in discovering the import of their vision. The influence of Providence must be seen in the remarkable fact of both officers dreaming such dreams in one night. He moves the spirits of men.

~~0400~~ GENESIS 40:9-15.

THE BUTLER'S DREAM.

9-11. *In my dream, behold, a vine was before me* — The visionary scene described seems to represent the king as taking exercise and attended by his butler, who gave him a cooling draught. On all occasions, the kings of ancient Egypt were required to practice temperance in the use of wine [WILKINSON]; but in this scene, it is a prepared beverage he is drinking, probably the sherbet of the present day. Everything was done in the king's presence — the cup was washed, the juice of the grapes pressed into it; and it was then handed to him — not grasped; but lightly resting on the tips of the fingers.

12-15. *Joseph said, ... This is the interpretation* — Speaking as an inspired interpreter, he told the butler that within three days he would be restored to all the honors and privileges of his office; and while making that joyful announcement, he earnestly bespoke the officer's influence for his own liberation. Nothing has hitherto met us in the record indicative of Joseph's feelings; but this earnest appeal reveals a sadness and impatient longing for release, which not all his piety and faith in God could dispel.

GENESIS 40:16-23.

THE BAKER'S DREAM.

16. *I had three white baskets* — The circumstances mentioned exactly describe his duties, which, notwithstanding numerous assistants, he performed with his own hands.

white — literally, “full of holes”; that is, wicker baskets. The meats were carried to table upon the head in three baskets, one piled upon the other; and in the uppermost, the bakemeats. And in crossing the open courts, from the kitchen to the dining rooms, the removal of the viands by a vulture, eagle, ibis, or other rapacious bird, was a frequent occurrence in the palaces of Egypt, as it is an everyday incident in the hot countries of the East still. The risk from these carnivorous birds was the greater in the cities of Egypt, where being held sacred, it was unlawful to destroy them; and they swarmed in such numbers as to be a great annoyance to the people.

18, 19. *Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation* — The purport was that in three days his execution should be ordered. The language of Joseph describes minutely one form of capital punishment that prevailed in Egypt; namely, that the criminal was decapitated and then his headless body gibbeted on a tree by the highway till it was gradually devoured by the ravenous birds.

20-22. *it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday* — This was a holiday season, celebrated at court with great magnificence and honored by a free pardon to prisoners. Accordingly, the issue happened to the butler and baker, as Joseph had foretold. Doubtless, he felt it painful to communicate such dismal tidings to the baker; but he could not help announcing what God had revealed to him; and it was for the honor of the true God that he should speak plainly.

23. *yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph* — This was human nature. How prone are men to forget and neglect in prosperity, those who have been their companions in adversity (^{300b}Amos 6:6)! But although reflecting no credit on the butler, it was wisely ordered in the providence

of God that he should forget him. The divine purposes required that Joseph should obtain his deliverance in another way, and by other means.

CHAPTER 41

GENESIS 41:1-24.

PHARAOH'S DREAM.

1. *at the end of two full years* — It is not certain whether these years are reckoned from the beginning of Joseph's imprisonment, or from the events described in the preceding chapter — most likely the latter. What a long time for Joseph to experience the sickness of hope deferred! But the time of his enlargement came when he had sufficiently learned the lessons of God designed for him; and the plans of Providence were matured.

Pharaoh dreamed — “Pharaoh,” from an Egyptian word *Phre*, signifying the “sun,” was the official title of the kings of that country. The prince, who occupied the throne of Egypt, was Aphophis, one of the Memphite kings, whose capital was On or Heliopolis, and who is universally acknowledged to have been a patriot king. Between the arrival of Abraham and the appearance of Joseph in that country, somewhat more than two centuries had elapsed. Kings sleep and dream, as well as their subjects. And this Pharaoh had two dreams in one night so singular and so similar, so distinct and so apparently significant, so coherent and vividly impressed on his memory, that his spirit was troubled.

8. *he called for all the magicians of Egypt* — It is not possible to define the exact distinction between “magicians” and “wise men”; but they formed different branches of a numerous body, who laid claim to supernatural skill in occult arts and sciences, in revealing mysteries, explaining portents, and, above all, interpreting dreams. Long practice had rendered them expert in devising a plausible way of getting out of every difficulty and framing an answer suitable to the occasion. But the dreams of Pharaoh baffled their united skill. Unlike their Assyrian brethren (²⁰⁰⁹Daniel 2:4), they did not pretend to know the meaning of the symbols contained in them, and the providence of God had determined that they

should all be nonplussed in the exercise of their boasted powers, in order that the inspired wisdom of Joseph might appear the more remarkable.

9-13. *then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults* — This public acknowledgment of the merits of the young Hebrew would, tardy though it was, have reflected credit on the butler had it not been obviously made to ingratiate himself with his royal master. It is right to confess our faults against God, and against our fellow men when that confession is made in the spirit of godly sorrow and penitence. But this man was not much impressed with a sense of the fault he had committed against Joseph; he never thought of God, to whose goodness he was indebted for the prophetic announcement of his release, and in acknowledging his former fault against the king, he was practising the courtly art of pleasing his master.

14. *Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph* — Now that God's set time had come (^{GEN 45} Psalm 105:19), no human power nor policy could detain Joseph in prison. During his protracted confinement, he might have often been distressed with perplexing doubts; but the mystery of Providence was about to be cleared up, and all his sorrows forgotten in the course of honor and public usefulness in which his services were to be employed.

shaved himself — The Egyptians were the only Oriental nation that liked a smooth chin. All slaves and foreigners who were reduced to that condition, were obliged, on their arrival in that country, to conform to the cleanly habits of the natives, by shaving their beards and heads, the latter of which were covered with a close cap. Thus prepared, Joseph was conducted to the palace, where the king seemed to have been anxiously waiting his arrival.

15, 16. *Pharaoh said, ... I have dreamed a dream* — The king's brief statement of the service required brought out the genuine piety of Joseph; disclaiming all merit, he ascribed whatever gifts or sagacity he possessed to the divine source of all wisdom, and he declared his own inability to penetrate futurity; but, at the same time, he expressed his confident persuasion that God would reveal what was necessary to be known.

17. *Pharaoh said, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river* — The dreams were purely Egyptian, founded on the productions of

that country and the experience of a native. The fertility of Egypt being wholly dependent on the Nile, the scene is laid on the banks of that river; and oxen being in the ancient hieroglyphics symbolical of the earth and of food, animals of that species were introduced in the first dream.

18. *there came up out of the river seven kine* — Cows now, of the buffalo kind, are seen daily plunging into the Nile; when their huge form is gradually emerging, they seem as if rising “out of the river.”

and they fed in a meadow — Nile grass, the aquatic plants that grow on the marshy banks of that river, particularly the lotus kind, on which cattle were usually fattened.

19. *behold, seven other kine ... poor and ill-favored* — The cow being the emblem of fruitfulness, the different years of plenty and of famine were aptly represented by the different condition of those kine — the plenty, by the cattle feeding on the richest fodder; and the dearth, by the lean and famishing kine, which the pangs of hunger drove to act contrary to their nature.

22. *I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears* — that is, of Egyptian wheat, which, when “full and good,” is remarkable in size (a single seed sprouting into seven, ten, or fourteen stalks) and each stalk bearing an ear.

23. *blasted with the east wind* — destructive everywhere to grain, but particularly so in Egypt; where, sweeping over the sandy deserts of Arabia, it comes in the character of a hot, blighting wind, that quickly withers all vegetation (compare ^{<3910>}Ezekiel 19:12 ^{<3915>}Hosea 13:15).

24. *the thin ears devoured the seven good ears* — *devoured* is a different word from that used in ^{<0404>}Genesis 41:4 and conveys the idea of destroying, by absorbing to themselves all the nutritious virtue of the soil around them.

GENESIS 41:25-36.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

25. *Joseph said, ... The dream ... is one* — They both pointed to the same event — a remarkable dispensation of seven years of unexampled abundance, to be followed by a similar period of unparalleled dearth. The repetition of the dream in two different forms was designed to show the absolute certainty and speedy arrival of this public crisis; the interpretation was accompanied by several suggestions of practical wisdom for meeting so great an emergency as was impending.

33. *Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man* — The explanation given, when the key to the dreams was supplied, appears to have been satisfactory to the king and his courtiers; and we may suppose that much and anxious conversation arose, in the course of which Joseph might have been asked whether he had anything further to say. No doubt the providence of God provided the opportunity of his suggesting what was necessary.

34. *and let him appoint officers over the land* — overseers, equivalent to the beys of modern Egypt.

take up the fifth part of the land — that is, of the land's produce, to be purchased and stored by the government, instead of being sold to foreign corn merchants.

GENESIS 41:37-57.

JOSEPH MADE RULER OF EGYPT.

38. *Pharaoh said unto his servants* — The kings of ancient Egypt were assisted in the management of state affairs by the advice of the most distinguished members of the priestly order; and, accordingly, before admitting Joseph to the new and extraordinary office that was to be created, those ministers were consulted as to the expediency and propriety of the appointment.

a man in whom the Spirit of God is — An acknowledgment of the being and power of the true God, though faint and feeble, continued to linger amongst the higher classes long after idolatry had come to prevail.

40. *Thou shalt be over my house* — This sudden change in the condition of a man who had just been taken out of prison could take place nowhere, except in Egypt. In ancient as well as modern times, slaves have often risen to be its rulers. But the special providence of God had determined to make Joseph governor of Egypt; and the way was paved for it by the deep and universal conviction produced in the minds both of the king and his councillors, that a divine spirit animated his mind and had given him such extraordinary knowledge.

according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled — literally, “kiss.” This refers to the edict granting official power to Joseph, to be issued in the form of a firman, as in all Oriental countries; and all who should receive that order would kiss it, according to the usual Eastern mode of acknowledging obedience and respect for the sovereign [WILKINSON].

41. *Pharaoh said, ... See, I have set thee over all the land* — These words were preliminary to investiture with the insignia of office, which were these: the signet-ring, used for signing public documents, and its impression was more valid than the sign-manual of the king; the *khelaat* or dress of honor, a coat of finely wrought linen, or rather cotton, worn only by the highest personages; the gold necklace, a badge of rank, the plain or ornamental *form* of it indicating the degree of rank and dignity; the privilege of riding in a state carriage, the second chariot; and lastly —

43. *they cried before him, Bow the knee* — *abrech*, an Egyptian term, not referring to prostration, but signifying, according to some, “father” (compare ^{145B}Genesis 45:8); according to others, “native prince” — that is, proclaimed him naturalized, in order to remove all popular dislike to him as a foreigner.

44. These ceremonies of investiture were closed in usual form by the king in council solemnly ratifying the appointment.

I am Pharaoh, and without thee, etc. — a proverbial mode of expression for great power.

45. *Zaphnath-paaneah* — variously interpreted, “revealer of secrets”; “saviour of the land”; and from the hieroglyphics, “a wise man fleeing from pollution” — that is, adultery.

gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of — His naturalization was completed by this alliance with a family of high distinction. On being founded by an Arab colony, Poti-pherah, like Jethro, priest of Midian, might be a worshipper of the true God; and thus Joseph, a pious man, will be freed from the charge of marrying an idolatress for worldly ends.

On — called Aven (^{אֲבֵן} Ezekiel 30:17) and also Beth-shemesh (^{בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ} Jeremiah 43:13). In looking at this profusion of honors heaped suddenly upon Joseph, it cannot be doubted that he would humbly yet thankfully acknowledge the hand of a special Providence in conducting him through all his checkered course to almost royal power; and we, who know more than Joseph did, cannot only see that his advancement was subservient to the most important purposes relative to the Church of God, but learn the great lesson that a Providence directs the minutest events of human life.

46. *Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh* — seventeen when brought into Egypt, probably three in prison, and thirteen in the service of Potiphar.

went out ... all the land — made an immediate survey to determine the site and size of the storehouses required for the different quarters of the country.

47. *the earth brought forth by handfuls* — a singular expression, alluding not only to the luxuriance of the crop, but the practice of the reapers grasping the ears, which alone were cut.

48. *he gathered up all the food of the seven years* — It gives a striking idea of the exuberant fertility of this land, that, from the superabundance of the seven plenteous years, corn enough was laid up for the subsistence, not only of its home population, but of the neighboring countries, during the seven years of dearth.

50-52. *unto Joseph were born two sons* — These domestic events, which increased his temporal happiness, develop the piety of his character in the names conferred upon his children.

53-56. *The seven years of plenteousness ... ended* — Over and above the proportion purchased for the government during the years of plenty, the people could still have husbanded much for future use. But improvident as men commonly are in the time of prosperity, they found themselves in want, and would have starved by thousands had not Joseph anticipated and provided for the protracted calamity.

57. *The famine was sore in all lands* — that is, the lands contiguous to Egypt — Canaan, Syria, and Arabia.

CHAPTER 42

GENESIS 42:1-38.

JOURNEY INTO EGYPT.

1. *Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt* — learned from common rumor. It is evident from Jacob's language that his own and his sons' families had suffered greatly from the scarcity; and through the increasing severity of the scourge, those men, who had formerly shown both activity and spirit, were sinking into despondency. God would not interpose miraculously when natural means of preservation were within reach.

5. *the famine was in the land of Canaan* — The tropical rains, which annually falling swell the Nile, are those of Palestine also; and their failure would produce the same disastrous effects in Canaan as in Egypt. Numerous caravans of its people, therefore, poured over the sandy desert of Suez, with their beasts of burden, for the purchase of corn; and among others, "the sons of Israel" were compelled to undertake a journey from which painful associations made them strongly averse.

6. *Joseph was the governor* — in the zenith of his power and influence.

he it was that sold — that is, directed the sales; for it is impossible that he could give attendance in every place. It is probable, however, that he may have personally superintended the storehouses near the border of Canaan, both because that was the most exposed part of the country and because he must have anticipated the arrival of some messengers from his father's house.

Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him — His prophetic dreams [^{GEN 37}Genesis 37:5-11] were in the course of being fulfilled, and the atrocious barbarity of his brethren had been the means of bringing about the very issue they had planned to prevent (^{ISA 60}Isaiah 60:14 ^{REV 3}Revelation 3:9, last clause).

7, 8. *Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, ... but they knew not him* — This is not strange. They were full-grown men — he was but a lad at parting. They were in their usual garb — he was in his official robes. They never dreamt of him as governor of Egypt, while he had been expecting them. They had but one face; he had ten persons to judge by.

made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly — It would be an injustice to Joseph's character to suppose that this stern manner was prompted by any vindictive feelings — he never indulged any resentment against others who had injured him. But he spoke in the authoritative tone of the governor in order to elicit some much-longed-for information respecting the state of his father's family, as well as to bring his brethren, by their own humiliation and distress, to a sense of the evils they had done to him.

9-14. *Ye are spies* — This is a suspicion entertained regarding strangers in all Eastern countries down to the present day. Joseph, however, who was well aware that his brethren were not spies, has been charged with cruel dissimulation, with a deliberate violation of what he knew to be the truth, in imputing to them such a character. But it must be remembered that he was sustaining the part of a ruler; and, in fact, acting on the very principle sanctioned by many of the sacred writers, and our Lord Himself, who spoke parables (fictitious stories) to promote a good end.

15. *By the life of Pharaoh* — It is a very common practice in Western Asia to swear by the life of the king. Joseph spoke in the style of an Egyptian and perhaps did not think there was any evil in it. But we are taught to regard all such expressions in the light of an oath (⁽⁴¹⁵⁾Matthew 5:34 ⁽⁴¹⁶⁾James 5:12).

17-24. *put them ... into ward three days* — Their confinement had been designed to bring them to salutary reflection. And this object was attained, for they looked upon the retributive justice of God as now pursuing them in that foreign land. The drift of their conversation is one of the most striking instances on record of the power of conscience (⁽⁴¹⁷⁾Genesis 42:21,22).

24. *took ... Simeon, and bound him* — He had probably been the chief instigator — the most violent actor in the outrage upon Joseph; and if so,

his selection to be the imprisoned and fettered hostage for their return would, in the present course of their reflections, have a painful significance.

25-28. *Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money* — This private generosity was not an infringement of his duty — a defrauding of the revenue. He would have a discretionary power — he was daily enriching the king's exchequer — and he might have paid the sum from his own purse.

27. *inn* — a mere station for baiting beasts of burden.

he espied his money — The discovery threw them into greater perplexity than ever. If they had been congratulating themselves on escaping from the ruthless governor, they perceived that now he would have a handle against them; and it is observable that they looked upon this as a judgment of heaven. Thus one leading design of Joseph was gained in their consciences being roused to a sense of guilt.

35. *as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's ... money was in his sack* — It appears that they had been silent about the money discovery at the resting-place, as their father might have blamed them for not instantly returning. However innocent they knew themselves to be, it was universally felt to be an unhappy circumstance, which might bring them into new and greater perils.

36. *Me have ye bereaved* — This exclamation indicates a painfully excited state of feeling, and it shows how difficult it is for even a good man to yield implicit submission to the course of Providence. The language does not imply that his missing sons had got foul play from the hands of the rest, but he looks upon Simeon as lost, as well as Joseph, and he insinuates it was by some imprudent statements of theirs that he was exposed to the risk of losing Benjamin also.

37. *Reuben spake, ... Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee* — This was a thoughtless and unwarrantable condition — one that he never seriously expected his father would accept. It was designed only to give assurance of the greatest care being taken of Benjamin. But unforeseen circumstances might arise to render it impossible for all of them to

preserve that young lad (^{<50413>}James 4:13), and Jacob was much pained by the prospect. Little did he know that God was dealing with him severely, but in kindness (^{<50217>}Hebrews 12:7,8), and that all those things he thought against Him were working together for his good.

CHAPTER 43

GENESIS 43:1-14.

PREPARATIONS FOR SECOND JOURNEY TO EGYPT.

2. *their father said, ... Go again, buy us a little food* — It was no easy matter to bring Jacob to agree to the only conditions on which his sons could return to Egypt (^{42:15}Genesis 42:15). The necessity of immediately procuring fresh supplies for the maintenance of themselves and their families overcame every other consideration and extorted his consent to Benjamin joining in a journey, which his sons entered on with mingled feelings of hope and anxiety — of hope, because having now complied with the governor's demand to bring down their youngest brother, they flattered themselves that the alleged ground of suspecting them would be removed; and of apprehension that some ill designs were meditated against them.

11. *take of the best fruits ... a present* — It is an Oriental practice never to approach a man of power without a present, and Jacob might remember how he pacified his brother (^{21:14}Proverbs 21:14) — balm, spices, and myrrh (see on ^{37:25}Genesis 37:25),

honey — which some think was *dibs*, a syrup made from ripe dates [BOCHART]; but others, the honey of Hebron, which is still valued as far superior to that of Egypt;

nuts — pistachio nuts, of which Syria grows the best in the world;

almonds — which were most abundant in Palestine.

12. *take double money* — the first sum to be returned, and another sum for a new supply. The restored money in the sacks' mouth was a perplexing circumstance. But it might have been done inadvertently by one of the servants — so Jacob persuaded himself — and happy it was for his own peace and the encouragement of the travelers that he took this view.

Besides the duty of restoring it, honesty in their case was clearly the best, the safest policy.

14. *God Almighty give you mercy before the man* — Jacob is here committing them all to the care of God and, resigned to what appears a heavy trial, prays that it may be overruled for good.

GENESIS 43:15-30.

ARRIVAL IN EGYPT.

15. *stood before Joseph* — We may easily imagine the delight with which, amid the crowd of other applicants, the eye of Joseph would fix on his brethren and Benjamin. But occupied with his public duties, he consigned them to the care of a confidential servant till he should have finished the business of the day.

16. *ruler of his house* — In the houses of wealthy Egyptians one upper man servant was intrusted with the management of the house (compare ^{<0395>}Genesis 39:5).

slay, and make ready — *Hebrew*, “kill a killing” — implying preparations for a grand entertainment (compare ^{<0354>}Genesis 31:54 ^{<0251>}1 Samuel 25:11 ^{<0192>}Proverbs 9:2 ^{<0204>}Matthew 22:4). The animals have to be killed as well as prepared at home. The heat of the climate requires that the cook should take the joints directly from the hands of the flesher, and the Oriental taste is, from habit, fond of newly killed meat. A great profusion of viands, with an inexhaustible supply of vegetables, was provided for the repasts, to which strangers were invited, the pride of Egyptian people consisting rather in the quantity and variety than in the choice or delicacy of the dishes at their table.

dine ... at noon — The hour of dinner was at midday.

18. *the men were afraid* — Their feelings of awe on entering the stately mansion, unaccustomed as they were to houses at all, their anxiety at the reasons of their being taken there, their solicitude about the restored money, their honest simplicity in communicating their distress to the

steward and his assurances of having received their money in “full weight,” the offering of their fruit present, which would, as usual, be done with some parade, and the Oriental salutations that passed between their host and them — are all described in a graphic and animated manner.

GENESIS 43:31-34.

THE DINNER.

31. *Joseph said, Set on bread* — equivalent to having dinner served, “bread” being a term inclusive of all victuals. The table was a small stool, most probably the usual round form, “since persons might even then be seated according to their rank or seniority, and the modern Egyptian table is not without its post of honor and a fixed gradation of place” [WILKINSON]. Two or at most three persons were seated at one table. But the host being the highest in rank of the company had a table to himself; while it was so arranged that an Egyptian was not placed nor obliged to eat from the same dish as a Hebrew.

32. *Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination* — The prejudice probably arose from the detestation in which, from the oppressions of the shepherd-kings, the nation held all of that occupation.

34. *took and sent messes ... Benjamin’s mess was five times* — In Egypt, as in other Oriental countries, there were, and are, two modes of paying attention to a guest whom the host wishes to honor — either by giving a choice piece from his own hand, or ordering it to be taken to the stranger. The degree of respect shown consists in the quantity, and while the ordinary rule of distinction is a double mess, it must have appeared a very distinguished mark of favor bestowed on Benjamin to have no less than five times any of his brethren.

they drank, and were merry with him — *Hebrew*, “drank freely” (same as Song of Solomon 5: ^{אֲבִי}1 John 2:10). In all these cases the idea of intemperance is excluded. The painful anxieties and cares of Joseph’s brethren were dispelled, and they were at ease.

CHAPTER 44

GENESIS 44:1-34.

POLICY TO STAY HIS BRETHERN.

1. *And Joseph commanded the steward* — The design of putting the cup into the sack of Benjamin was obviously to bring that young man into a situation of difficulty or danger, in order thereby to discover how far the brotherly feelings of the rest would be roused to sympathize with his distress and stimulate their exertions in procuring his deliverance. But for what purpose was the money restored? It was done, in the first instance, from kindly feelings to his father; but another and further design seems to have been the prevention of any injurious impressions as to the character of Benjamin. The discovery of the cup in *his* possession, if there had been nothing else to judge by, might have fastened a painful suspicion of guilt on the youngest brother; but the sight of the money in each man's sack would lead all to the same conclusion, that Benjamin was just as innocent as themselves, although the additional circumstance of the cup being found in his sack would bring him into greater trouble and danger.

2. *put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth* — It was a large goblet, as the original denotes, highly valued by its owner, on account of its costly material or its elegant finish and which had probably graced his table at the sumptuous entertainment of the previous day.

3. *As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away* — They commenced their homeward journey at early dawn (see on ^{ORIG}Genesis 18:2); and it may be readily supposed in high spirits, after so happy an issue from all their troubles and anxieties.

4. *When they were gone out of the city ... Joseph said unto his steward* — They were brought to a sudden halt by the stunning intelligence that an article of rare value was missing from the governor's house. It was a silver cup; so strong suspicions were entertained against them that a special messenger was despatched to search them.

5. *Is not this it in which my lord drinketh* — not only kept for the governor's personal use, but whereby he divines. Divination by cups, to ascertain the course of futurity, was one of the prevalent superstitions of ancient Egypt, as it is of Eastern countries still. It is not likely that Joseph, a pious believer in the true God, would have addicted himself to this superstitious practice. But he might have availed himself of that popular notion to carry out the successful execution of his stratagem for the last decisive trial of his brethren.

6, 7. *he overtook them, and he spake ... these words* — The steward's words must have come upon them like a thunderbolt, and one of their most predominant feelings must have been the humiliating and galling sense of being made so often objects of suspicion. Protesting their innocence, they invited a search. The challenge was accepted [^{<0440}Genesis 44:10,11]. Beginning with the eldest, every sack was examined, and the cup being found in Benjamin's [^{<0442}Genesis 44:12], they all returned in an indescribable agony of mind to the house of the governor [^{<0443}Genesis 44:13], throwing themselves at his feet [^{<0444}Genesis 44:14], with the remarkable confession, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" [^{<0446}Genesis 44:16].

16-34. *Judah said, What shall we say?* — This address needs no comment — consisting at first of short, broken sentences, as if, under the overwhelming force of the speaker's emotions, his utterance were choked, it becomes more free and copious by the effort of speaking, as he proceeds. Every word finds its way to the heart; and it may well be imagined that Benjamin, who stood there speechless like a victim about to be laid on the altar, when he heard the magnanimous offer of Judah to submit to slavery for his ransom, would be bound by a lifelong gratitude to his generous brother, a tie that seems to have become hereditary in his tribe. Joseph's behavior must not be viewed from any single point, or in separate parts, but as a whole — a well-thought, deep-laid, closely connected plan; and though some features of it do certainly exhibit an appearance of harshness, yet the pervading principle of his conduct was real, genuine, brotherly kindness. Read in this light, the narrative of the proceedings describes the continuous, though secret, pursuit of one end; and Joseph exhibits, in his management of the scheme, a very high order of intellect, a warm and susceptible heart, united to a judgment that exerted a

complete control over his feelings — a happy invention in devising means towards the attainment of his ends and an inflexible adherence to the course, however painful, which prudence required.

CHAPTER 45

GENESIS 45:1-28.

JOSEPH MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN.

1. *Then Joseph could not refrain himself* — The severity of the inflexible magistrate here gives way to the natural feelings of the man and the brother. However well he had disciplined his mind, he felt it impossible to resist the artless eloquence of Judah. He saw a satisfactory proof, in the return of *all* his brethren on such an occasion, that they were affectionately united to one another; he had heard enough to convince him that time, reflection, or grace had made a happy improvement on their characters; and he would probably have proceeded in a calm and leisurely manner to reveal himself as prudence might have dictated. But when he heard the heroic self-sacrifice of Judah [⁰⁴⁴³Genesis 44:33] and realized all the affection of that proposal — a proposal for which he was totally unprepared — he was completely unmanned; he felt himself forced to bring this painful trial to an end.

he cried, Cause every man to go out from me — In ordering the departure of witnesses of this last scene, he acted as a warm-hearted and real friend to his brothers — his conduct was dictated by motives of the highest prudence — that of preventing their early iniquities from becoming known either to the members of his household, or among the people of Egypt.

2. *he wept aloud* — No doubt, from the fullness of highly excited feelings; but to indulge in vehement and long-continued transports of sobbing is the usual way in which the Orientals express their grief.

3. *I am Joseph* — or, “terrified at his presence.” The emotions that now rose in his breast as well as that of his brethren — and chased each other in rapid succession — were many and violent. He was agitated by sympathy and joy; they were astonished, confounded, terrified; and betrayed their terror, by shrinking as far as they could from his presence. So “troubled” were they, that he had to repeat his announcement of himself; and what

kind, affectionate terms he did use. He spoke of their having sold him — not to wound their feelings, but to convince them of his identity; and then, to reassure their minds, he traced the agency of an overruling Providence, in his exile and present honor [^{-0135F}Genesis 35:5-7]. Not that he wished them to roll the responsibility of their crime on God; no, his only object was to encourage their confidence and induce them to trust in the plans he had formed for the future comfort of their father and themselves.

6. and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest — “Ear” is an *old* English word, meaning “to plough” (compare ⁻⁰¹⁸²1 Samuel 8:12 ^{-2310B}Isaiah 30:24). This seems to confirm the view given (⁻⁰⁴⁵⁷Genesis 41:57) that the famine was caused by an extraordinary drought, which prevented the annual overflowing of the Nile; and of course made the land unfit to receive the seed of Egypt.

14, 15. And he fell upon ... Benjamin's neck — The sudden transition from a condemned criminal to a fondled brother, might have occasioned fainting or even death, had not his tumultuous feelings been relieved by a torrent of tears. But Joseph's attentions were not confined to Benjamin. He affectionately embraced every one of his brothers in succession; and by those actions, his forgiveness was demonstrated more fully than it could be by words.

17-20. Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren — As Joseph might have been prevented by delicacy, the king himself invited the patriarch and all his family to migrate into Egypt; and he made most liberal arrangements for their removal and their subsequent settlement. It displays the character of this Pharaoh to advantage, that he was so kind to the relatives of Joseph; but indeed the greatest liberality he could show could never recompense the services of so great a benefactor of his kingdom.

21. Joseph gave them wagons — which must have been novelties in Palestine; for wheeled carriages were almost unknown there.

22. changes of raiment — It was and is customary, with great men, to bestow on their friends dresses of distinction, and in places where they are of the same description and quality, the value of these presents consists in their number. The great number given to Benjamin bespoke the warmth of his brother's attachment to him; and Joseph felt, from the amiable temper

they now all displayed, he might, with perfect safety, indulge this fond partiality for his mother's son.

23. *to his father he sent* — a supply of everything that could contribute to his support and comfort — the large and liberal scale on which that supply was given being intended, like the five messes of Benjamin, as a token of his filial love [see on ⁴¹⁸³Genesis 43:34].

24. *so he sent his brethren away* — In dismissing them on their homeward journey, he gave them this particular admonition:

See that ye fall not out by the way — a caution that would be greatly needed; for not only during the journey would they be occupied in recalling the parts they had respectively acted in the events that led to Joseph's being sold into Egypt, but their wickedness would soon have to come to the knowledge of their venerable father.

CHAPTER 46

GENESIS 46:1-4.

SACRIFICE AT BEER-SHEBA.

1. *Israel took his journey with all that he had* — that is, his household; for in compliance with Pharaoh's recommendation, he left his heavy furniture behind. In contemplating a step so important as that of leaving Canaan, which at his time of life he might never revisit, so pious a patriarch would ask the guidance and counsel of God. With all his anxiety to see Joseph, he would rather have died in Canaan without that highest of earthly gratifications than leave it without the consciousness of carrying the divine blessing along with him.

came to Beer-sheba — That place, which was in his direct route to Egypt, had been a favorite encampment of Abraham (⁽¹²¹³⁾Genesis 21:33) and Isaac (⁽¹²⁵⁵⁾Genesis 26:25), and was memorable for their experience of the divine goodness; and Jacob seems to have deferred his public devotions till he had reached a spot so consecrated by covenant to his own God and the God of his fathers.

2. *God spake unto Israel* — Here is a virtual renewal of the covenant and an assurance of its blessings. Moreover, here is an answer on the chief subject of Jacob's prayer and a removal of any doubt as to the course he was meditating. At first the prospect of paying a personal visit to Joseph had been viewed with unmingled joy. But, on calmer consideration, many difficulties appeared to lie in the way. He may have remembered the prophecy to Abraham that his posterity was to be afflicted in Egypt and also that his father had been expressly told *not* to go [⁽¹⁵¹³⁾Genesis 15:13 26:2]; he may have feared the contamination of idolatry to his family and their forgetfulness of the land of promise. These doubts were removed by the answer of the oracle, and an assurance given him of great and increasing prosperity.

3. *I will there make of thee a great nation* — How truly this promise was fulfilled, appears in the fact that the seventy souls who went down into Egypt increased (~~ONE~~ Exodus 1:5-7), in the space of two hundred fifteen years, to one hundred eighty thousand.

4. *I will also surely bring thee up [again]* — As Jacob could not expect to live till the former promise was realized, he must have seen that the latter was to be accomplished only to his posterity. To himself it was literally verified in the removal of his remains to Canaan; but, in the large and liberal sense of the words, it was made good only on the establishment of Israel in the land of promise.

Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes — shall perform the last office of filial piety; and this implied that he should henceforth enjoy, without interruption, the society of that favorite son.

~~ONE~~ GENESIS 46:5-27.

IMMIGRATION TO EGYPT.

5. *And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba* — to cross the border and settle in Egypt. However refreshed and invigorated in spirit by the religious services at Beer-sheba, he was now borne down by the infirmities of advanced age; and, therefore, his sons undertook all the trouble and toil of the arrangements, while the enfeebled old patriarch, with the wives and children, was conveyed by slow and leisurely stages in the Egyptian vehicles sent for their accommodation.

6. *goods, which they had gotten in the land* — not furniture, but substance — precious things.

7. *daughters* — As Dinah was his only daughter, this must mean daughters-in-law.

all his seed brought he with him — Though disabled by age from active superintendence, yet, as the venerable sheik of the tribe, he was looked upon as their common head and consulted in every step.

8-27. *all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten* — Strictly speaking, there were only sixty-six went to Egypt; but to these add Joseph and his two sons, and Jacob the head of the clan, and the whole number amounts to seventy. In the speech of Stephen (^{<4174>}Acts 7:14) the number is stated to be seventy-five; but as that estimate includes five sons of Ephraim and Manasseh (^{<1074>}1 Chronicles 7:14-20), born in Egypt, the two accounts coincide.

^{<0443>}GENESIS 46:28-34.

ARRIVAL TO EGYPT.

28. *he sent Judah before him unto Joseph* — This precautionary measure was obviously proper for apprising the king of the entrance of so large a company within his territories; moreover, it was necessary in order to receive instruction from Joseph as to the *locale* of their future settlement.

29, 30. *Joseph made ready his chariot* — The difference between chariot and wagon was not only in the lighter and more elegant construction of the former, but in the one being drawn by horses and the other by oxen. Being a public man in Egypt, Joseph was required to appear everywhere in an equipage suitable to his dignity; and, therefore, it was not owing either to pride or ostentatious parade that he drove his carriage, while his father's family were accommodated only in rude and humble wagons.

presented himself unto him — in an attitude of filial reverence (compare ^{<0227>}Exodus 22:17). The interview was a most affecting one — the happiness of the delighted father was now at its height; and life having no higher charms, he could, in the very spirit of the aged Simeon, have departed in peace [^{<0125>}Luke 2:25,29].

31-34. *Joseph said, ... I will go up, and show Pharaoh* — It was a tribute of respect due to the king to inform him of their arrival. And the instructions which he gave them were worthy of his character alike as an affectionate brother and a religious man.

CHAPTER 47

GENESIS 47:1-31.

JOSEPH'S PRESENTATION AT COURT.

1. *Joseph ... told Pharaoh, My father and my brethren* — Joseph furnishes a beautiful example of a man who could bear equally well the extremes of prosperity and adversity. High as he was, he did not forget that he had a superior. Dearly as he loved his father and anxiously as he desired to provide for the whole family, he would not go into the arrangements he had planned for their stay in Goshen until he had obtained the sanction of his royal master.

2. *he took some of his brethren* — probably the five eldest brothers: seniority being the least invidious principle of selection.

4. *For to sojourn ... are we come* — The royal conversation took the course which Joseph had anticipated (^{46:33}Genesis 46:33), and they answered according to previous instructions — manifesting, however, in their determination to return to Canaan, a faith and piety which affords a hopeful symptom of their having become all, or most of them, religious men.

7. *Joseph brought in Jacob his father* — There is a pathetic and most affecting interest attending this interview with royalty; and when, with all the simplicity and dignified solemnity of a man of God, Jacob signaled his entrance by imploring the divine blessing on the royal head, it may easily be imagined what a striking impression the scene would produce (compare ^{7:7}Hebrews 7:7).

8. *Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?* — The question was put from the deep and impressive interest which the appearance of the old patriarch had created in the minds of Pharaoh and his court. In the low-lying land of Egypt and from the artificial habits of its society, the age of man was far shorter among the inhabitants of that country than it had yet

become in the pure bracing climate and among the simple mountaineers of Canaan. The Hebrews, at least, still attained a protracted longevity.

9. *The days of the years of my pilgrimage*, etc. — Though a hundred thirty years, he reckons by days (compare ^{<90D>}Psalm 90:12), which he calls *few*, as they appeared in retrospect, and *evil*, because his life had been one almost unbroken series of trouble. The answer is remarkable, considering the comparative darkness of the patriarchal age (compare ^{<511D>}2 Timothy 1:10).

11. *Joseph placed his father and his brethren ... in the best of the land* — best *pasture* land in lower Egypt. Goshen, “the land of verdure,” lay along the Pelusiac or eastern branch of the Nile. It included a part of the district of Heliopolis, or “On,” the capital, and on the east stretched out a considerable length into the desert. The ground included within these boundaries was a rich and fertile extent of natural meadow, and admirably adapted for the purposes of the Hebrew shepherds (compare ^{<144D>}Genesis 49:24 ^{<138D>}Psalm 34:10; ^{<158D>}78:72).

13-15. *there was no bread in all the land* — This probably refers to the second year of the famine (^{<145D>}Genesis 45:6) when any little stores of individuals or families were exhausted and when the people had become universally dependent on the government. At first they obtained supplies for payment. Before long “money failed.

16. *And Joseph said, Give your cattle* — “This was the wisest course that could be adopted for the preservation both of the people and the cattle, which, being bought by Joseph, was supported at the royal expense, and very likely returned to the people at the end of the famine, to enable them to resume their agricultural labors.”

21. *as for the people, he removed them to cities* — obviously for the convenience of the country people, who were doing nothing, to the cities where the corn stores were situated.

22. *Only the land of the priests bought he not* — These lands were inalienable, being endowments by which the temples were supported. The priests for themselves received an annual allowance of provision from the state, and it would evidently have been the height of cruelty to withhold that allowance when their lands were incapable of being tilled.

23-28. *Joseph said, Behold*, etc. — The lands being sold to the government (^{<047B>}Genesis 47:19,20), seed would be distributed for the first crop after the famine; and the people would occupy them as tenants-at-will on the payment of a produce rent, almost the same rule as obtains in Egypt in the present day.

29-31. *the time drew nigh that Israel must die* — One only of his dying arrangements is recorded; but that one reveals his whole character. It was the disposal of his remains, which were to be carried to Canaan, not from a mere romantic attachment to his native soil, nor, like his modern descendants, from a superstitious feeling for the soil of the Holy Land, but from faith in the promises. His address to Joseph — “if now I have found grace in thy sight,” that is, as the vizier of Egypt — his exacting a solemn oath that his wishes would be fulfilled and the peculiar form of that oath, all pointed significantly to the promise and showed the intensity of his desire to enjoy its blessings (compare ^{<040B>}Numbers 10:29).

31. *Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head* — Oriental beds are mere mats, having no head, and the translation should be “the top of his staff,” as the apostle renders it (^{<3812B>}Hebrews 11:21).

CHAPTER 48

GENESIS 48:1-22.

JOSEPH'S VISIT TO HIS SICK FATHER.

1. *one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick* — Joseph was hastily sent for, and on this occasion he took with him his two sons.
2. *Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed* — In the chamber where a good man lies, edifying and spiritual discourse may be expected.
- 3, 4. *God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz* — The object of Jacob, in thus reverting to the memorable vision at Beth-el (^{<OR30>}Genesis 28:10-15) — one of the great landmarks in his history — was to point out the splendid promises in reserve for his posterity — to engage Joseph's interest and preserve his continued connection with the people of God, rather than with the Egyptians.
4. *Behold, I will make thee fruitful* — This is a repetition of the covenant (^{<OR3>}Genesis 28:13-15 ^{<ES12>}35:12). Whether these words are to be viewed in a limited sense, as pointing to the many centuries during which the Jews were occupiers of the Holy Land, or whether the words bear a wider meaning and intimate that the scattered tribes of Israel are to be reinstated in the land of promise, as their “everlasting possession,” are points that have not yet been satisfactorily determined.
5. *thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh* — It was the intention of the aged patriarch to adopt Joseph's sons as his own, thus giving him a double portion. The reasons for this procedure are stated (^{<OR1>}1 Chronicles 5:1,2).
- are mine* — Though their connections might have attached them to Egypt and opened to them brilliant prospects in the land of their nativity, they willingly accepted the adoption (^{<S125>}Hebrews 11:25).
9. *Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them* — The apostle (^{<S121>}Hebrews 11:21) selected the blessing of Joseph's son as the chief,

because the most comprehensive, instance of the patriarch's faith which his whole history furnishes.

13. *Joseph took them both* — The very act of pronouncing the blessing was remarkable, showing that Jacob's bosom was animated by the spirit of prophecy.

21. *Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die* — The patriarch could speak of death with composure, but he wished to prepare Joseph and the rest of the family for the shock.

but God shall be with you — Jacob, in all probability, was not authorized to speak of their bondage — he dwelt only on the certainty of their restoration to Canaan.

22. *moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren* — This was near Shechem (^{GEN 33:18} Genesis 33:18 ^{JOHN 4:5} John 4:5; also ^{JOSH 16:1} Joshua 16:1 ^{JOSH 20:7} 20:7). And it is probable that the Amorites, having seized upon it during one of his frequent absences, the patriarch, with the united forces of his tribe, recovered it from them by his sword and his bow.

CHAPTER 49

<049> **GENESIS 49:1-33.**

PATRIARCHAL BLESSING.

1. *Jacob called unto his sons* — It is not to the sayings of the dying saint, so much as of the inspired prophet, that attention is called in this chapter. Under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit he pronounced his prophetic benediction and described the condition of their respective descendants in the last days, or future times.

<049> **GENESIS 49:3,4.**

REUBEN

forfeited by his crime the rights and honors of primogeniture. His posterity never made any figure; no judge, prophet, nor ruler, sprang from this tribe.

<049> **GENESIS 49:5-7.**

SIMEON AND LEVI

were associate in wickedness, and the same prediction would be equally applicable to both their tribes. Levi had cities allotted to them (<0201> Joshua 21:1-45) in every tribe. On account of their zeal against idolatry, they were honorably “divided in Jacob”; whereas the tribe of Simeon, which was guilty of the grossest idolatry and the vices inseparable from it, were ignominiously “scattered.”

GENESIS 49:8-12.

JUDAH

— A high pre-eminence is destined to this tribe (^{<0114>}Numbers 10:14 ^{<0100>}Judges 1:2). Besides the honor of giving name to the Promised Land, David, and a greater than David — the Messiah — sprang from it. Chief among the tribes, “it grew up from a lion’s whelp” — that is, a little power — till it became “an old lion” — that is, calm and quiet, yet still formidable.

10. *until Shiloh come* — Shiloh — this obscure word is variously interpreted to mean “the sent” (^{<8103>}John 17:3), “the seed” (^{<2101>}Isaiah 11:1), the “peaceable or prosperous one” (^{<8104>}Ephesians 2:14) — that is, the Messiah (^{<2110>}Isaiah 11:10 ^{<8102>}Romans 15:12); and when He should come, “the tribe of Judah should no longer boast either an independent king or a judge of their own” [CALVIN]. The Jews have been for eighteen centuries without a ruler and without a judge since Shiloh came, and “to Him the gathering of the people has been.”

GENESIS 49:13.

ZEBULUN

was to have its lot on the seacoast, close to Zidon, and to engage, like that state, in maritime pursuits and commerce.

GENESIS 49:14,15.

ISSACHAR

14. *a strong ass couching down between two burdens* — that is, it was to be active, patient, given to agricultural labors. It was established in lower Galilee — a “good land,” settling down in the midst of the Canaanites,

where, for the sake of quiet, they “bowed their shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.”

GENESIS 49:16-18.

DAN

— though the son of a secondary wife, was to be “as one of the tribes of Israel.”

17. *Daniel* — “a judge.”

a serpent ... an adder — A serpent, an adder, implies subtlety and stratagem; such was pre-eminently the character of Samson, the most illustrious of its judges.

GENESIS 49:19.

GAD

— This tribe should be often attacked and wasted by hostile powers on their borders (Judges 10:8 Jeremiah 49:1). But they were generally victorious in the close of their wars.

GENESIS 49:20.

ASHER

— “Blessed.” Its allotment was the seacoast between Tyre and Carmel, a district fertile in the production of the finest corn and oil in all Palestine.

<042> GENESIS 49:21.

NAPHTALI

— The best rendering we know is this, “Naphtali is a deer roaming at liberty; he shooteth forth goodly branches,” or majestic antlers [TAYLOR, *Scripture Illustrations*], and the meaning of the prophecy seems to be that the tribe of Naphtali would be located in a territory so fertile and peaceable, that, feeding on the richest pasture, he would spread out, like a deer, branching antlers.

<042> GENESIS 49:22-26.

JOSEPH

22. *a fruitful bough*, etc. — denotes the extraordinary increase of that tribe (compare <013> Numbers 1:33-35 <077> Joshua 17:17 <037> Deuteronomy 33:17). The patriarch describes him as attacked by envy, revenge, temptation, ingratitude; yet still, by the grace of God, he triumphed over all opposition, so that he became the sustainer of Israel; and then he proceeds to shower blessings of every kind upon the head of this favorite son. The history of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh shows how fully these blessings were realized.

<042> GENESIS 49:27-33.

BENJAMIN

27. *shall ravin like a wolf* — This tribe in its early history spent its energies in petty or inglorious warfare and especially in the violent and unjust contest (<078> Judges 19:1-20:48), in which it engaged with the other tribes, when, notwithstanding two victories, it was almost exterminated.

28. *all these are the twelve tribes of Israel* — or ancestors. Jacob's prophetic words obviously refer not so much to the sons as to the tribes of Israel.

29. *he charged them* — The charge had already been given and solemnly undertaken (^{47:31}Genesis 47:31). But in mentioning his wishes now and rehearsing all the circumstances connected with the purchase of Machpelah, he wished to declare, with his latest breath, before all his family, that he died in the same faith as Abraham.

33. *when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons* — It is probable that he was supernaturally strengthened for this last momentous office of the patriarch, and that when the divine afflatus ceased, his exhausted powers giving way, he yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

CHAPTER 50

GENESIS 50:1-26.

MOURNING FOR JACOB.

1. *Joseph fell upon his father's face*, etc. — On him, as the principal member of the family, devolved the duty of closing the eyes of his venerable parent (compare ⁴⁰⁰Genesis 46:4) and imprinting the farewell kiss.
2. *Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father*, etc. — In ancient Egypt the embalmers were a class by themselves. The process of embalmment consisted in infusing a great quantity of resinous substances into the cavities of the body, after the intestines had been removed, and then a regulated degree of heat was applied to dry up the humors, as well as decompose the tarry materials which had been previously introduced. Thirty days were allotted for the completion of this process; forty more were spent in anointing it with spices; the body, tanned from this operation, being then washed, was wrapped in numerous folds of linen cloth — the joinings of which were fastened with gum, and then it was deposited in a wooden chest made in the form of a human figure.
3. *the Egyptians mourned*, etc. It was made a period of public mourning, as on the death of a royal personage.
- 4, 5. *Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh*, etc. — Care was taken to let it be known that the family sepulcher was provided before leaving Canaan and that an oath bound his family to convey the remains thither. Besides, Joseph deemed it right to apply for a special leave of absence; and being unfit, as a mourner, to appear in the royal presence, he made the request through the medium of others.

7-9. *Joseph went up to bury his father* — a journey of three hundred miles. The funeral cavalcade, composed of the nobility and military, with their equipages, would exhibit an imposing appearance.

10. *they came to the threshing-floor of Atad*, etc. — “Atad” may be taken as a common noun, signifying “the plain of the thorn bushes.” It was on the border between Egypt and Canaan; and as the last opportunity of indulging grief was always the most violent, the Egyptians made a prolonged halt at this spot, while the family of Jacob probably proceeded by themselves to the place of sepulture.

15-21. *When Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us*, etc. — Joseph was deeply affected by this communication. He gave them the strongest assurances of his forgiveness and thereby gave both a beautiful trait of his own pious character, as well as appeared an eminent type of the Savior.

22, 23. *Joseph dwelt in Egypt* — He lived eighty years after his elevation to the chief power [see on ^{<1446}Genesis 41:46] witnessing a great increase in the prosperity of the kingdom, and also of his own family and kindred — the infant Church of God.

24. *Joseph said unto his brethren, I die* — The national feelings of the Egyptians would have been opposed to his burial in Canaan; but he gave the strongest proof of the strength of his faith and full assurance of the promises, by “the commandment concerning his bones” [^{<812}Hebrews 11:22].

26. *and they embalmed him* — [See on ^{<812}Genesis 50:2]. His funeral would be conducted in the highest style of Egyptian magnificence and his mummied corpse carefully preserved till the Exodus.