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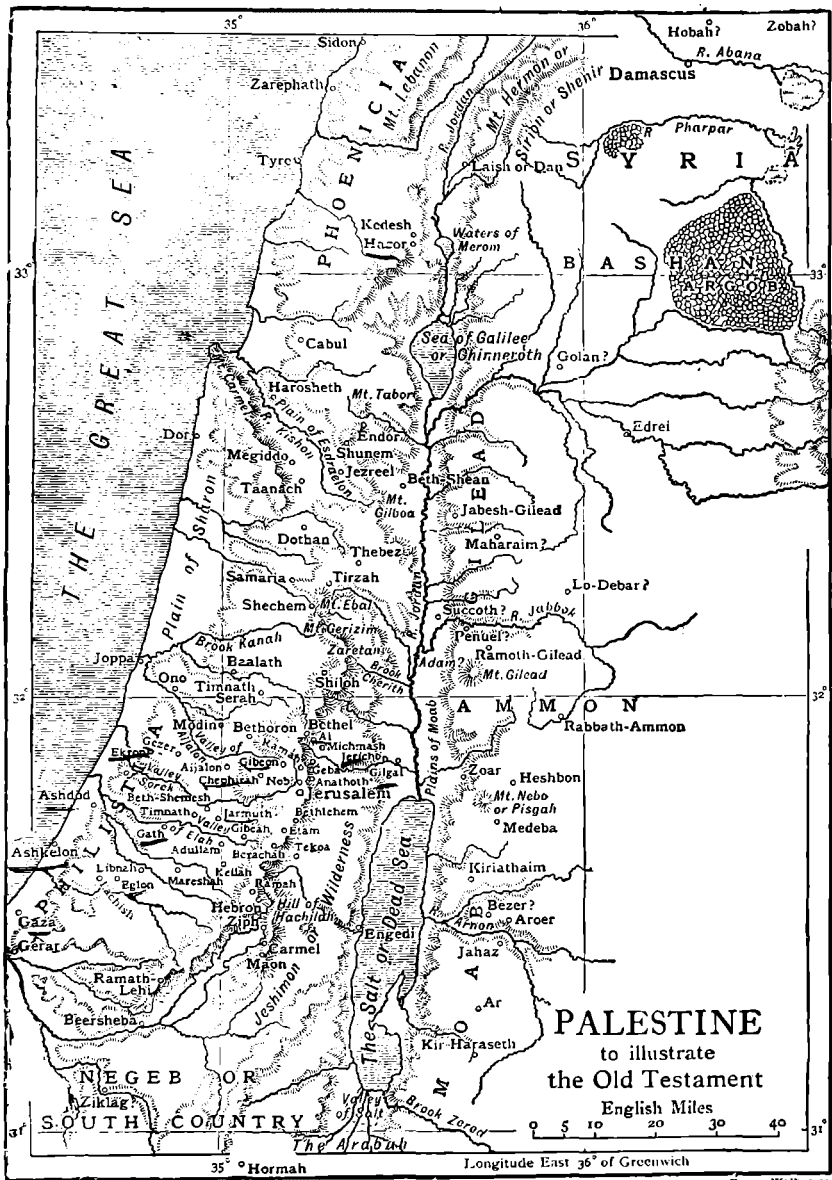
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LATE PRINCIPAL OF CULHAM COLLEGE

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PREFACE

THIS book is an abridgment of the author's Old Testament History. It has been shortened by omission of notes and of a large amount of direct quotations from the sacred text, and by a general simplification of the narrative. It is intended for the Junior Forms of schools, and for the general reader who desires a plain summary of the Old Testament story from a Christian point of view, without technicalities or discussion of difficulties, whether critical or historical. As in the larger book, the most assured results of Old Testament criticism have been assumed, but the general arrangement of the narrative has been left undisturbed, as the Church has received it.

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SHORT OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE CREATION

THE Bible begins with a plain statement about the origin of the universe:—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1). God alone, **The Begin-** by His own act and will, made all things. No **ning.** date is given; but the Hebrew word for "created" implies that God made everything, the original *matter* as well as the *form* which it was afterwards to bear.

At first the earth "was without form, and void": there was nothing but a dark abyss, like some dreary waste of water. But "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." God's life-giving power was preparing to carry out a great purpose, which only needed His word to bring it to pass.

The successive stages of this work are described in the first account of Creation (Gen. i. 3—ii. 3), **The Work of** where God is represented as performing it in **the Six Days.** six days. These "days" may, however, have been long ages of time.

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The *first* day saw the creation of light:—"God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light,"—and the separation of light from darkness.

The *second* day's work was the creation of the *firmament*, or heaven, and the separation of the waters above (*i.e.* clouds and rain) from the waters beneath; a poetical way of describing the creation of the atmosphere, without which life could not have existed.

On the *third* day came another great separation; the earth, the dry land, was divided from the seas. And on this day also inanimate life appeared:—"the earth brought forth grass, and the fruit trees yielding fruit." Both "grass" and "fruit" had the power of propagating their own life by seed. They are described as "having seed in themselves after their kind."

The *fourth* day saw the creation of the "lights in the firmament," *i.e.* the sun, moon, and stars, intended "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." Thus were created the changes of seasons and the natural divisions by which men were to reckon *time*.

On the *fifth* day appeared animate life. The waters at God's word brought forth abundantly, both the "great whales" (sea-monsters) and "every living creature that moveth," *i.e.* every sort of fish and sea-animal. On the same day were created the birds, "every winged fowl after his kind."

The *sixth* day brought the climax of creation. First the earth by the word of God brought forth all the animals that were to live upon it—"cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind." These, like all the previous works, were pronounced by God to be "very good." But now God designed a higher work still:—"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

27. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.

28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it : and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Gen. i. 27, 28.

Thus man was created to be God's representative and vice-gerent in the new-made world.

Finally, God is represented as bestowing on all His animate creation the gift of *food*. To man He gave "every herb bearing seed," and "every tree in God's Gift which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed." and Blessing. To the animals also "every green herb" was assigned for meat.

"God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." God had "blessed" both animals and man. There was no evil in nature. Evil was afterwards to enter by man's fault, but evil is no essential part of nature, only a disease which may be cured.

1. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made ; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it : because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. Gen. ii. 1-3.

The *seventh* day is different from all the others. It is a time of rest ; it is "sanctified," made holy. And no evening or morning are mentioned as in the The Sabbath. case of the previous six days. This is the institution of the sabbath, the one day's rest for man in

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the seven. But the words are probably meant to suggest also the existence of another world than this, the eternal and unchanging world, where there is no time or succession of evenings and mornings.

This first account of Creation is not meant to teach exact scientific facts such as man may gradually learn for himself from geology and physics, but to teach great religious principles, *e.g.* that God is the Author and Maker of the universe; that all He created was good; that in everything there was Divine purpose and progress.

A second description of Creation follows in Gen. ii., which was doubtless obtained by the writer of Genesis from some different source. It describes Creation from another point of view, and chiefly deals with *man*. The primitive condition of the world is described as being without rain, watered only by a mist, uncultivated, and having no vegetation. Man is described as having two parts of his nature—one derived from the earth, and the other directly from God:—

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The newly-formed man, who is called Adam (man), was placed by God in a spot prepared for him—a garden planted “eastward in Eden,” *i.e.* in Baby-
The Garden.
lonia, where the great rivers take their rise. Four rivers are mentioned, as dividing from the one which flowed through Eden:—

11. The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold;

12. And the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone.

13. And the name of the second river *is* Gihon: the same *is* it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

14. And the name of the third river *is* Hiddekel: that *is* it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* Euphrates.

Gen. ii. 11-14.

(Pison and Gihon are now unknown; Havilah is, perhaps, N.E. Arabia; bdellium is probably some precious gum.) In this garden God caused to grow "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." But two other trees are spoken of, "the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." These are apparently allegorical, and represent the possibilities of progress or failure which lay before man. As in the first account man had been charged to rule the world, so here he is charged to "dress and keep" the garden. But he is also warned *not* to eat of the tree of knowledge; "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Evil existed somewhere, but man was not to know it; and he need never know it, if he used his power of free-will to obey God.

The creation of the animals is next described, as companions for man. "It is not good that man should be alone." But although Adam gave names **Marriage** to every living creature, there was not found **instituted** among them "an help meet (*i.e.* suitable) for him." Consequently *woman* was created. Her creation is allegorically described by saying that God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and took from him a rib, out of which the woman was made. Adam described

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the new-formed helper as "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." They became husband and wife, and thus marriage was instituted, the nearest of all natural relationships. Hence the writer adds: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (*i.e.* be steadfastly faithful to her).

CHAPTER II

THE FALL: CAIN AND ABEL

ALL the works of creation were "very good." Adam and his wife were originally innocent and without sin. Evil, indeed, existed, as implied in the allusion to The entrance "the tree of knowledge of good and evil"; of evil. but as yet it was not in this world. How it came in is described in the story of the temptation and the fall; a story which may, indeed, be a parable, but which is, nevertheless, profoundly *true*.

The narrative of Gen. iii. relates how "the serpent," which was "more subtil (or crafty) than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made"—tempted the woman to doubt the truth of what God had spoken concerning the tree of knowledge, and then to break His command by eating of its fruit. By "the serpent" is evidently meant some evil being, which Rev. xii. 9 states to have been "the Devil" or "Satan."

1. . . . And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:
3. But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
4. And the serpent said unto the woman. Ye shall not surely die:

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5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Gen. iii. 1-5.

The serpent here suggests that the prohibition was due to jealousy on the part of God, and was intended to keep man in a lower position than he ought rightly to occupy.

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Two immediate results followed. The offenders lost their feeling of innocence; they sewed fig-leaves together **The results of the Fall.** to cover their bodies. And, secondly, they lost their freedom of intercourse with God. When they heard His voice, they were afraid and hid themselves. In consequence God pronounced a curse on the serpent.

But mingling with the curse was a strange promise of some future champion of mankind, who would suffer, indeed, from the attack of the serpent, but would crush his power—

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

In this promise we recognize the first prophecy of Christ, the seed of the woman, who was to suffer but conquer. All the rest of the Bible is really the working out of this Divine promise.

The man and the woman were also to be punished, though they were not left without hope. The woman was to bring forth children "in sorrow." The man was to have a hard struggle with nature to win his bread. "Cursed

is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." And the final penalty for both was death. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Thus as a consequence of their disobedience—the wrong use of the free-will they possessed—mankind were reduced to a lower life of labour and suffering and **The lower** death. They were not to be allowed to eat of **life**. the "tree of life," which would have made them immortal. God exiled them from the Garden of Eden, and protected the tree of life by "Cherubims (p. 79), and a flaming sword which turned every way." Clothing was given by God to the exiles, coats of the skins of animals; which has led many to think that here was instituted the *sacrifice* of animals as a means of approaching God, now that the old free intercourse had an end. The woman received from her husband the name of Eve, *i.e.* life, "because she was the mother of all living." The human race would continue, but their life, derived from their parents, would be only natural life, not the immortality which the fruit of the tree of life would have given.

In the history of the descendants of Adam and Eve it is clearly seen that the sin which had entered into human nature was reproduced. Their first son, Cain, murdered his brother Abel, and Cain's own posterity carried on the tradition of evil.

Cain and Abel both offered sacrifice; Cain, being a "tiller of the ground," brought "of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord." Abel, who **Cain and** was "a keeper of sheep," brought "of the **Abel** firstlings of his flock." Cain's offering was rejected, while that of Abel was accepted. The reason seems to

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have lain in the character of the two brothers; for Cain showed himself angry and sullen, "his countenance fell," and seizing the opportunity when he and Abel were "in the field" together, he slew his brother. In answer to the Divine inquiry, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" he contemptuously replied: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" But a heavy curse was pronounced upon the murderer:—

10. What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11. And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. Gen. iv. 10-12.

Cain complained, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He was to be a homeless wanderer, and any one who met him might kill him. In answer to this complaint, the Divine mercy set a "mark" upon him, as a warning that no one should kill him; and threatened "sevenfold vengeance" on any one who should do so.

This allusion to other men, and the fact that Cain is described as marrying a wife in his place of exile ("the land of Nod, on the east of Eden"), shows that the writer of Genesis has selected a few characters as typical, and we are not to suppose that those mentioned by name were the only people on the earth.

The descendants of Cain are now briefly described as far as the seventh generation from Adam, and then dis-

The children of Cain. missed by the writer. Their works and occupations seem to be examples of the early civilization of the human race. Cain built a city, calling

it after the name of his son Enoch (not to be confused with a later Enoch in Gen. v.). Lamech, in the fifth generation from Cain, stands out in bad prominence: he was a polygamist, he married two wives, Adah and Zillah; and a murderer. In poetic language Lamech describes his crime to his two wives, and glories in it:—

23. And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.¹

24. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

The children of Lamech were Jabal, "the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle," *i.e.* the originator of the nomadic and pastoral life: Jubal, "the father of such as handle the harp and organ"; and Tubal-Cain, "the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron" (R.V.), *i.e.* the inventor of weapons.

¹ Or "for wounding me," R.V., *i.e.* in revenge for an injury he has inflicted on me.

CHAPTER III

THE PATRIARCHS ; THE DELUGE

FROM the beginning of human history after the Fall, there was a separation among mankind. In contrast apparently with the inventions and the sins of the descendants of Cain, Scripture describes the line of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve. In this we see the beginning of a Church, a society living in the midst of a corrupt world, and yet distinct from it,—in which religion is preserved, and redemption prepared for. The son of Seth was Enos ; “then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.” Thus began the worship of God, under the name by which afterwards the God of Revelation and of the Covenant was known,—Jehovah,¹ “the LORD.” The line of Seth retained the knowledge of the one true God, while mankind generally drifted into heathenism and polytheism.

The seventh descendant from Adam in the line of Seth was Enoch, who may be called a Saint of the Church

¹ LORD in the Bible, spelt with capital letters, always represents the proper name of God, as He revealed Himself to His chosen people in the Old Testament (see p. 55). It is the name which we ordinarily but wrongly call “Jehovah” ; the exact spelling or pronunciation is no longer known. The only letters in Hebrew are JHVH : the vowels were put in by the reader : but as the Jews through excessive reverence would not pronounce the name, the tradition became lost. The present vowels are those of another word, Adonai, “Lord,” which the Jews substituted for the sacred name in reading.

of the Patriarchs. He "walked with God," *i.e.* he lived in close communion with God: "he was not, **Enoch.** for God took him," *i.e.* he passed away in some mysterious manner which convinced his fellow-men of his immortality.

Gen. vi.-viii. contains the account of the destruction of the wicked human race by a great Deluge, and the preservation of Noah and his family **Noah.** in the ark. The birth of Noah, the tenth from Seth, was marked by a prophecy from his father:—

"This same shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed."

Noah is described as "just and perfect," and one who "walked with God." In contrast, the earth is described as "filled with violence,"—"for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;" "every imagination of the thought of man's heart was only evil continually" God is represented by the holy writer as "grieved at His heart," and "repenting" that He had made man on the earth. A respite of 120 years was promised, and then all flesh was to be destroyed by a flood of waters.

Noah was instructed by God to build an ark in which to preserve himself, his family, and specimens of all the animals, seven pairs, male and female, of every "clean" beast, and one pair of "un- **The Ark.** clean" (*i.e.* of those which were not used for food or sacrifice). The construction of the ark is thus prescribed:—

14. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of:

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The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

16. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; *with* lower, second, and third *stories* shalt thou make it. Gen. vi. 14-16.

“Gopher” is, perhaps, pine. The cubit may be reckoned as 18 inches.

The Deluge which followed on the entrance of Noah and his fellow-passengers into the ark, is mentioned in **The Deluge.** the early traditions of many nations; as in the Greek legend of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and the Babylonian story (from which many suppose that the story in Genesis is partly derived) of Xisuthros, preserved in a great ship from a deluge which a quarrel among the gods had produced in the valley of Euphrates.

The Deluge is described in Gen. vii. thus:—

“The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

Apparently the waters of the ocean rushed in upon the land, accompanied by floods of rain which lasted forty days. This may have been occasioned by some volcanic disturbance or earthquake.

The flood covered all the earth that was known to man, *i.e.* the plains of Babylonia and the hills which can be seen from them. After floating about for five months, the ark, as the waters began to subside, rested on “the mountains of Ararat.” Noah sent out birds from the ark to see whether the earth was dried, first a raven, and then a dove. The raven “went to and fro;” the dove, after her second flight, returned with an olive-leaf in her beak, thus showing that vegetation had again commenced.

Finally, after twelve months and ten days in the ark, those within it were commanded by God to go forth. This event was like a new beginning of the ^{The new} world, and was marked by a *sacrifice* which, as ^{beginning.} it were, dedicated the world again to God. Noah built an altar, and offered burnt-offerings of "every clean beast and every clean fowl." This sacrifice was accepted, and a Divine promise given:—

21. And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. Gen. viii. 21, 22.

This promise was supplemented (according to the account that follows in Gen. ix.) by a *blessing* on the human race, and a renewal of the original commission to Adam to rule the world. An addition is made to it. Man henceforth may eat flesh as well as "the green herb." But blood must not be tasted. There is a sacredness about all *life*, of which blood is the O.T. symbol. And especially human life must be revered:—

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

Gen. ix. 6.

These Divine blessings and laws given to Noah and his sons, are described as a "covenant," "an everlasting covenant between God and every living ^{The Covenant.} creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." A covenant between man and man means simply a solemn agreement with certain conditions. But a Divine

covenant is different. It is a gift or promise of God to man, to which God attaches conditions which man must keep. It is not a bargain between man and God as if they were equals. Here in the Noachic covenant the promise is the renewed friendship of God and the world, after the great judgment of the Flood. The conditions are not to eat blood, nor to shed the blood of one's fellow-man.

A sign was attached to this covenant: "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." The rainbow, **The sign of the Rainbow.** which usually marks the passing of a storm, has a new significance given to it. It is a reminder of God's renewed forbearance and mercy.

The three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—are represented as the ancestors of all the races of mankind, **The races of Mankind.** as known to the writer of Genesis. These are specified in Gen. x. All mankind are thus of one blood, and are all included in God's purpose. But the attention is for the present concentrated on the line of Shem, from which would spring the Hebrews, and Christ Himself. A prophecy made by Noah is preserved in Gen. ix. 26: "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem," which no doubt refers to the preservation of the knowledge and the revelation of Jehovah, the covenant God, in the descendants of Shem. This is the subject which the remainder of the Old Testament develops.

The catalogue of the descendants of the son of Noah is followed by a mysterious story, explaining why **The Tower of Babel.** men of a common origin have different languages. The human race is described as journeying eastward (*see R.V.*), settling in a plain in the land of Shinar, *i.e.* the district of Babylonia, where clay

and bitumen provided materials for brick-making and building. Here they proposed, in a vainglorious spirit, to build "a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven." "Let us make us a name," they said, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth." Jehovah broke short their presumptuous plans, by "confounding their language." Unable to understand one another's speech, or to co-operate in building, they were scattered over the earth—the very fate they had tried to avoid. The city which they had begun to build is called Babel¹—evidently an allusion to Babylon (the great city typical of heathenism and opposition to God).

¹ Babel properly means "gate of God," but there is a play upon the similarity of another Hebrew word, which means "confusion."

CHAPTER IV

THE CALL OF ABRAM

GENESIS I.-XI. forms the introduction to the history of God's redemption of mankind through Christ. These chapters cover a very long period, which it is impossible to date.¹

A new beginning appears in Gen. xii. History begins with definite individuals and in a definite place. Eight generations of the line of Shem bring us to the family of Terah, established at Ur of the Chaldees, probably Uru or Mugeir, a very ancient city, a centre of the worship of the moon, on the lower Euphrates. Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. The last-named died at Ur, leaving a son Lot. Later, at some unknown impulse, Terah began to migrate with his family northwards and arrived at Haran (the Roman Carrhae) in N. Mesopotamia. Here the father died, and his son Abram became conscious of a Divine call from the God of his fathers, El-Shaddai (God Almighty) or Jehovah (p. 55), to go further. We do not know how this call came to him, but he is described in Gen. xx. 7, as a "prophet," and prophets are those who receive convincing messages of truth from God. With the

¹ The date 4004 B.C., and the other dates given in the margin of reference Bibles for Gen. i.-xi., are quite incorrect, and should be disregarded.

command to go out from his "kindred and his father's home," were combined three promises: (1) that God would give him another land, instead of the one he was leaving; (2) that God would make of him a great nation (though he was old and childless); and (3) that he would not only be blessed himself, but that this blessing would have a world-wide influence: "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Thus the promise to Abram carries on the hope of redemption which had been first raised in Gen. iii. 13 and points to the birth of Christ, and the world-wide Christian Church. (See Acts iii. 25.)

Abram, who was a wealthy and powerful chieftain with large flocks and herds, and a great retinue of servants and dependants, started on his un-
The Land of
known journey, taking with him his wife **Promise.**
Sarai and his nephew Lot, the son of Haran. He crossed the Euphrates, turned south by Hamath and Damascus, and entered the land of Canaan. The various tribesmen who inhabited this country do not seem to have molested him, perhaps overawed by his armed followers and his own commanding personality. His first encampment was at Sichem or Shechem, the later Samaria. Here he was encouraged by a vision of Jehovah, who assured him that this was the land of the promise and would be given to his descendants. Here, too, "he built an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him." From Shechem he moved southwards upon the central mountain ridge of Palestine, and encamped between Bethel and Hai, a few miles north of Jerusalem. Then he proceeded into the lower country known as the Negeb or "South."

A famine impelled him to go further still into the adjoining country of Egypt, a land which the perennial overflowing of the Nile rendered less liable to drought.

Egypt is one of the world's oldest civilizations, and Abram would see the same pyramids and obelisks which still move the wonder of travellers. Here he committed a fault which led to his being rightly rebuked by the reigning Pharaoh. In fear of his own safety, he passed off his wife Sarai as his sister, thinking that her beauty might lead the Egyptians to kill her husband. Sarai was actually seized for the royal household; but "great plagues" which fell upon the court convinced the Pharaoh that she was really Abram's wife. He restored her to her husband with the indignant question: "What is this that thou hast done unto me?" Nevertheless on a later occasion (Gen. xx.) Abram is said to have told the same falsehood to Abimelech, king of Gerar, with much the same results, and to have received a severe rebuke.

Abram returned from Egypt and encamped again on the former ground between Bethel and Hai. Here a separation took place between him and his nephew Lot. The latter had his own possessions of flocks and herds and dependants. The herdmen of the two chieftains quarrelled, and anxious to prevent a strife between near relatives, Abram generously proposed that Lot should choose which part of the region he preferred to dwell in; he himself would take the second best, to go either to the right hand or to the left. Lot made a disastrous choice: he chose the best land without regard to the character of its inhabitants.

10. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed east : and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom.

13. But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly. Gen. xiii. 10-13.

“The plain (more properly the Circle) of Jordan” was the district surrounding the lower part of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and included, probably south of the latter, the five cities Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Bela. The climate was sub-tropical and enervating, the soil very fertile, and the people had fallen below even the low standard of heathen life. The near future would show what an unhappy choice Lot had made.

Abram meanwhile was comforted by another promise from God that the whole land, in every direction, should be his hereafter ; and his descendants who would possess it, should be as numerous as “the dust of the earth.”

He now settled for the present near Hebron, the highest city in Palestine, where he again built an altar to Jehovah.

We next find Abram engaged in war ; as the champion of his Canaanite hosts against the encroachments of foreign invaders. A confederacy War. of four kings from Babylonia, under Chedor-laomer king of Elam, had subjugated and reduced to tribute the five kings of the cities of the plain. After thirteen years the latter rebelled. Then came in the fourteenth year an invasion from the confederacy. The five kings were defeated and scattered in a battle in the vale of Siddim, a region full of “slime-pits,” *i.e.* wells of bitumen.

Sodom and Gomorrah were sacked, and Lot, Abram's nephew, was among the captives. Abram collected 318 armed men from among his own followers, and pursued the Babylonians northward, overtaking them near Laish. By a night attack he threw them into confusion, chased them as far as Damascus, and recovered both his nephew and the spoils of Sodom.

As Abram returned in triumph he was met at "the King's Vale" by a mysterious personage, Melchizedek, described as king of Salem, *i.e.* probably **Melchizedek** Jerusalem, and priest of El Elyon, "God most high." He gave Abram his blessing and offered for his refreshment bread and wine. Abram treated him with great reverence, giving him "tithes," a tenth part, of all the spoils; and apparently he recognized in El Elyon only another title of the one God, Jehovah, whom he himself worshipped. In refusing the king of Sodom's offer to enrich himself out of the spoils, he used the remarkable words, "I have lift up mine hand [*i.e.* as a sign of solemn oath] unto the LORD [Jehovah], the most high God [El Elyon], the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take anything that is thine."

Melchizedek must, like Abram, have been one of those who, in the midst of heathenism, cherished the truth of one supreme God. Later writers saw in Melchizedek a type of Christ Himself, both king and priest of humanity, and superior in rank to Abram, and to the Jewish priests (*cf.* Ps. cx. and Heb. vii.).

CHAPTER V

THE COVENANT OF ABRAM

ABRAM, notwithstanding the promises he had received, and his influence among the Canaanites, was still only a childless wanderer. Fresh encouragement came to him in a "vision" in which God **The Covenant.** said, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." He complained that he had no heir, and all his property would go to his servant Eliezer. God bade him go out of his tent and look at the starry sky: his descendants should be as innumerable as the stars. "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Faith was Abram's special characteristic, and it was acceptable to God.

Doubt again seems to have clouded his mind as to his future possession of the land of Canaan. He asked for some sign from God that he would inherit it. In answer God bade him prepare the materials for a sacrifice, an heifer, a she-goat and a ram, a turtle-dove and a young pigeon. He was further directed to arrange the divided carcasses of the animals in the way by which a human covenant was usually ratified in that age, viz. in two parallel rows, between which the two parties to the covenant would walk. This done, Abram watched by his sacrifice until sundown, when he fell into a deep sleep. "A horror of great

darkness fell upon him"; God was drawing near to him, with tidings of sorrow as well as of hope. The Divine voice spoke to the sleeper, and told him that his descendants would have to be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years in a strange land (Egypt): but afterwards they would be delivered, and return "in the fourth generation" (perhaps = century) to Canaan.

Then, apparently as the voice ceased, the sleeper began to awake. The sun had set, and the land was dark, but a mysterious sight convinced him that God was not only promising, but ratifying His promise by a "covenant": "behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces." (The "furnace" was a portable earthenware stove, such as would be used by the tent-dwellers for making bread.) Under these visible forms God sealed His promise, moving as a human covenanter might have done between the pieces of the sacrifice. He promised to give to Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan "from the river of Egypt (the frontier-brook) unto the great river, the river Euphrates," a land then possessed by ten heathen nations.

Still Abram was childless (though ten years had been spent in Canaan), and as the customs of his time allowed polygamy, he took at his wife's suggestion, as a second wife, Hagar, the Egyptian slave of Sarai. But before Hagar became a mother, Sarai's jealousy caused her to run away. On her way southwards, evidently on the road to Egypt, "the angel of the LORD" met her "by a fountain of water in the wilderness." He bade her return, promised that her child should be a son, called Ishmael, and from him should spring a great multitude of descendants. "He

will be a wild man: his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him," was the mysterious prediction that foretold that Ishmael should be the ancestor, not of the promised seed, but of the wild children of the desert; the Ishmaelites, or Bedouins. Hagar recognized that no place was without God's presence; she called this Divine revelation "Thou God seest me"; and later time preserved its memory in the name of the well, Beer-lahai-roi, *i.e.* "the well of the living One that seeth me." She returned to her master's household and gave birth to Ishmael.

Another thirteen years passed by, and Abram was now ninety-nine years old. Again a Divine revelation was given him. God revealed Himself by the The changing name of names. El-Shaddai, "God Almighty," and gave the command, "walk before Me, and be thou perfect." The covenant was again confirmed, and the promises repeated with great solemnity; and further signs were granted and conditions imposed. The patriarch's name was to be changed, expanded from Abram to Abraham: the exact force of the change is uncertain, but its general meaning is given in the words that follow, "A father of many nations have I made thee." Nations and kings, God said, were to spring from Abraham; the covenant was to be "everlasting," and the land of Canaan an "everlasting possession" to his seed, "and I will be their God."

A condition of this covenant was also imposed, a rite which became and is still one of the fundamental ordinances of the Hebrew race. Every male was to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth.

There was also a special promise for Sarai. Her name, too, was to be changed to Sarah ("princess"). "I

will bless her, and give thee a son also of her . . . she shall be a mother of nations." This seemed, even to the man of faith, to be an impossible thing. Surely it could not be expected. Ishmael, he thought, was the only hope for the promises.

17. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a *child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

18. And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!
Gen. xvii. 17, 18.

But the Divine answer was clear. Next year Sarah herself should bear a son, whose name, Isaac (laughter), would recall not only the joy at his birth, but the unbelief of his parents. The prayer for Ishmael was heard also in its measure. He was to be the founder of a great nation—"twelve princes shall he beget;" but he was not the child of the promises. "My covenant will I establish with Isaac."

This same promise of a child to be supernaturally born is described again in another story. "The angel of **Angels** the LORD," or Jehovah Himself, appeared to **entertained**. Abraham in the form of a wayfaring stranger, with two companions, also angelic beings, but in the same disguise.

Abraham espied the travellers as he sat in his tent-door in the heat of the day, and with courtesy and eager hospitality welcomed them. He offered them a rest and water to wash their feet; and when they consented to eat a meal there, he hastened to Sarah in the tent, bidding her make unleavened cakes on the hearth (just as the Arabs still do to-day), while he provided from his herd "a

calf tender and good," with butter and milk. The real character of the guests began to be disclosed when the chief of them began to speak about Sarah. "I will certainly return unto thee—and lo, Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son." Sarah herself was characteristically listening behind the door of the tent, and she laughed at such an absurd prophecy. Her laughter called forth a rebuke, and a clearer revelation that the speaker was Jehovah Himself. "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?—Is anything too hard for the LORD?"

This strange interview had a strange ending—to be described later: we pass on to the fulfilment of the promise.

The next year, the hundredth of Abraham's life, saw the birth of Isaac. "God," said his mother, "hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." This was the first clear sign of the fulfilment of the promises, but it brought with it the sorrow for Abraham of parting with Ishmael. Sarah could not tolerate the presence of the son of the bondswoman as fellow-heir with her own son. Abraham was grieved, but he was counselled by God to do what Sarah wished; Ishmael had, indeed, a future, but not in Abraham's house—"in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Hagar and her boy, now fourteen years old, were sent away with but little provision of food and water into the wilderness of Beersheba. Here, when death seemed close at hand for them both, the same tender Divine providence which had sent back Hagar from the well—now again, by the voice of "the angel of the LORD," directed her to another well, and guarded the boy as he grew to manhood. "God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer." He married a wife from Egypt,

his mother's native country. His descendants are traced by the writer of Genesis in the twelve tribes of desert people, who "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest towards Assyria" (Gen. **xv.** 12-18).

CHAPTER VI

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

AT the end of the interview with the three mysterious strangers described in the last chapter, one of them apparently disclosed himself to Abraham as Abraham's Jehovah Himself. While the other two (who ^{intercession.} were attendant angels) went on, He stopped and told Abraham of a terrible destruction which was hanging over the wicked cities of the Plain. The two angels were actually on their way to Sodom to give the place its final trial, before the judgment fell.

When Abraham heard what was threatened, his first thought was to pray that at least the righteous might not be destroyed along with the wicked. In one of the most remarkable scenes in the Bible, he interceded with God. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" he asked.

26. And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes :

28. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous : wilt thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five ? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

29. And he spake unto him yet again, and said,

Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.

30. And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak : Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there.

31. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord : Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.

32. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once : Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

Gen. xviii. 26-32.

But it was not to be. The two angels could not even find so small a number. They were entertained by Lot, who with difficulty kept back the mob of Sodom from insulting and outraging them. **The doom of Sodom and Gomorrah.** But before the judgment fell, Abraham's prayer was to be answered as far as possible. Lot and his family were allowed, and even urged to escape. Accompanied by his wife and his two unmarried daughters, Lot was hurried out of the city at daybreak by the two angels, his guests, and bidden to escape to the mountains. At his earnest prayer, however, he was permitted to take refuge in the smallest of the five cities, Bela or Zoar. Then descended the rain of "fire and brimstone" upon the remaining cities—some terrible volcanic disturbance which overwhelmed the whole district, and reduced it from fertility to a burnt-up wilderness. So narrow was the escape of the survivors that even Lot's wife perished, as the result of pausing to look back at the conflagration. She "became a pillar of salt," her body being encrusted with cinders of burning bitumen. Abraham, returning in

the morning to the place where he had prayed, and looking towards Sodom, saw that "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Lot had paid heavily for his willingness to live among evil surroundings for the sake of gain. He had lost everything, and spent the rest of his life a wanderer in caves on the mountains. Two nations, neighbours, and constant enemies of Israel, the Moabites and the Ammonites, are traced by the writer of Genesis to two sons of Lot, Moab and Ben-Ammi.

The next great scene in the life of Abraham took place some years after the birth of Isaac. His faith was to be put to its keenest trial. We read, The trial of Abraham's faith. "God did tempt," *i.e.* try or test, "Abraham." He received the command,

Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. Gen. xxii. 2.

It must be remembered that human sacrifices offered to deities were not uncommon in that age. It may have seemed to Abraham that such a command was not in itself unreasonable, as it meant his willingness to offer to God the most precious possession he had. Nevertheless it would be not only a crushing blow to his affection for Isaac; but also it would seem as if God were contradicting Himself; for if Isaac died, how could the promises be fulfilled? Nevertheless the father prepared to obey, believing apparently that God was able even to bring back Isaac from the dead, if He willed.

The "land of Moriah" is unknown, but Jewish tradition made it (not improbably) the hill at Jerusalem (called Mount Moriah, 2 Chron. iii. 1), on which the

Temple was afterwards built. When they arrived at the place after two days' journey, the servants were left behind and father and son ascended the mountain.

6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. Gen. xxii. 6-8.

The reply of Abraham to his boy's question seems to be prophetic, not merely of what was to happen on that occasion, but of that great sacrifice which God was preparing for the future, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (St. John i. 29).

The altar was built, the boy bound upon the wood, and the father stretched forth his knife to slay his son. But a voice from heaven arrested his hand. The angel of the LORD called aloud to him to desist: "Now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Looking round the father saw a substitute provided, "a ram caught in a thicket by his horns"; this was offered in sacrifice instead of Isaac. Abraham, it is said, called the place Jehovah-jireh, *i.e.* Jehovah will provide; where originated a proverb with reference to the Temple-hill at Jerusalem: "In the mount of the LORD it shall be provided," again a prophecy of Christ.

As the reward of faith and obedience, the promises

were now once again renewed to Abraham, and with the most solemn confirmation, God even swearing by Himself that Abraham should be blessed, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea, and that in them all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

Abraham would also learn from this event something more of the nature of the God whom he served. Human sacrifices were not what God really required, but the obedience of faith.

Abraham's faith in these repeated promises of God is shown in his anxiety to purchase a family place of burial in the land of Canaan. On the death of Sarah, he purchased for four hundred shekels ^{The Cave of} Machpelah. (weight, not coined money) the field and cave of Machpelah, near Hebron, from Ephron one of "the children of Heth," or Hittites, a local tribe. As all the surrounding country was in the possession of others, this burial-place could only be approached by their permission; but its purchase was a sign for the future, a testimony that the whole land would afterwards, in accordance with God's promise, become the property of Abraham's seed. In this cave of Machpelah Sarah was buried. It is still one of the most sacred places of Mohammedanism; and there still it is believed rest the bodies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives.

A further proof of Abraham's faith is seen in his resolution to seek a wife for Isaac from his own family, rather than from among the Canaanites. But ^{A wife sought} above all he was anxious to prevent his son ^{for Isaac.} from returning to Mesopotamia and leaving the land of promise. He commissioned the chief servant of his household to visit the members of his family who were still dwelling in northern Mesopotamia, and to bring back,

if possible, a wife for Isaac from among them. The story of the journey is simply and beautifully told in Gen. xxiv. The servant of Abraham shared the prayerfulness and piety of his master. As he approached "the city of Nahor" (*i. e.* Haran) with his train of ten camels, and drew near to the fountain where the women, according to the ancient custom of the East, went in the evening to draw water, he prayed for guidance and a sign.

The answer quickly followed the prayer. Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, and grand-daughter of Nahor,

Abraham's brother, came to the well with her
Rebekah. pitcher, and unconsciously fulfilled the sign which the man had prayed for, by her kindness in drawing water both for the man and his camels. He presented her with jewels, and on learning who she was, "bowed down his head and worshipped the LORD." Invited by Rebekah to the hospitality of her mother's house, the man at once disclosed his errand, and asked for the hand of Rebekah for his master's son, telling also of the Divine guidance which had been granted him. Rebekah's family agreed to the request, and she herself consented to go at once. Bearing the blessing of her kindred, "thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions," Rebekah went forth to her new far-off home to take her place as wife and mother in the household of faith.

Abraham, after Sarah's death, married as a second wife, Keturah, by whom he had six sons, ancestors of Midianite tribes. He died at the age of 175, and was buried at the side of Sarah, in the cave of Machpelah, by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

CHAPTER VII

ISAAC, ESAU, AND JACOB

THE character of Isaac seems to have been more passive than that of either his father or his sons, and his life generally was calm and uneventful. He lived chiefly in the south of Palestine, in the neighbourhood of Gerar, and made some change from the wandering pastoral life of his father, by sowing in the land, and winning an abundant harvest, "an hundredfold." Most of the incidents recorded of his life are very similar to those of the life of Abraham, and have led some to suppose that they are really the same events, though attributed both to father and son. He, too, tried to pass off his wife as his sister with another Abimelech, king of the Philistines; and, like his father, he built an altar, saw visions of Jehovah, and received confirmation of the promises.

For a long time Rebekah was childless, but in answer to her husband's earnest prayer, God granted her two sons, twins, but of very different characters and destinies. Even before their birth a Divine oracle proclaimed to the mother, "The elder shall serve the younger." The elder, Esau ("hairy"), is described as a "cunning hunter, a man of the field." The younger, Jacob ("supplanter"), as "a plain man dwelling in tents." The latter, his mother's favourite, had a strangely mixed

disposition : crafty and ambitious, he was, nevertheless, a man of wider outlook than his brother, more susceptible to Divine influences ; less pleasing at first than the natural, active, and passionate Esau, but of greater promise.

Jacob seems to have realized in early life the advantage of being head of a family, which had such remarkable Divine promises attached to it : probably also he knew of the oracle uttered before his birth. Not content to wait, he determined to oust his brother, if possible, from the position of first-born. Taking advantage of the hunger and weariness of Esau, as he returned from hunting, Jacob persuaded him to sell his "birthright," for a meal of bread and pottage of red lentiles. But, after all, the birthright required to be ratified by the father's blessing ; and this Isaac still intended to bestow on Esau.

Instructed by his mother, Jacob played a deceitful trick on his father and brother. When Isaac, very old, and nearly blind, was intending to give the blessing to Jacob's
deceit. Esau, and as a preliminary, had commissioned Esau to go to the field and hunt some venison to make "savoury meat," Jacob dressed up in his brother's clothes, and wearing a goatskin to represent his brother's rough and hairy body, and carrying a dish of goat's flesh instead of venison, succeeded by deliberate lying in passing himself off as Esau, and obtained the prophetic blessing :—

28. God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine :

29. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee : be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee : cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

Gen. xxvii. 28, 29.

The real Esau returning with the venison from his hunting, had, in spite of his "great and exceeding bitter cry," to be content with the second best:—

39. Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

40. And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Esau is not to be pitied; he had already "sold his birthright" to gratify his immediate desire; but Jacob's conduct is not the less to be blamed. And Jacob's subsequent history shows how he was punished by having himself to suffer all through his life deceit and disappointment and treachery. At the same time, by these sufferings God was teaching him and bringing out the good that lay at the bottom of his heart, and making him a humbler and better man.

The immediate and natural effect of his deceit was to win Esau's hatred, and be in danger of his life at his brother's hand. Consequently at the wish of his mother he left his home and began the long exile of his life. He set off, apparently alone, towards Padan-aram, the seat of his mother's family, to find there a wife, as his father had done.

But a strange experience befell him on the way. At a place then called Luz, about ten miles north of Jerusalem, he lay down to sleep in the open air, with a The Vision stone for his pillow. In a dream he saw a at Bethel. ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and "the angels of God ascending and descending" on it. From the top as it seemed of the ladder, he heard the voice of Jehovah

speaking to him, renewing the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, and adding a special promise to the dreamer himself. "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land." "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I knew it not," was the first thought of Jacob when he awoke. He called the place Bethel (house of God); set up the stone on which he had laid his head for a memorial pillar, and vowed a vow dedicating himself to Jehovah, and promising to give the tenth part of all that he might earn to God's service.

This remarkable dream seems to have had meanings both for the present and the future. It was a revelation to Jacob that God's presence was not (as primitive religion usually imagined) confined to any one place or region; and an assurance of God's mercy and providence. But it was also a type of the future union of God and man through the Incarnation. Christ Himself is the true ladder from earth to heaven, by which the angels "ascend" with the prayers and worship of the Church, and "descend" with answers and grace (St. John i. 51).

Arriving at Haran, he met and loved Rachel, the daughter of Laban, and agreed to serve the latter seven years if he might have her for his wife. But it was now Jacob's turn to be deceived. Laban cunningly substituted the elder daughter, Leah, for Rachel at the marriage ceremonies; and then made Jacob serve another seven years for his first love.

Altogether Jacob spent twenty years in the service of his uncle, as chief herdsman and shepherd, a time of hard work and exposure. His uncle also proved a hard master, and attempted to overreach him in his wages. And in his own household, as might be expected, there was

constant sorrow. Leah was disliked, and Rachel loved, though the former had many sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Rachel was for long childless, but after many years bore Joseph, and later still, just before her death, Benjamin. The other sons who made up the twelve who afterwards gave their names to the twelve tribes of Israel, were the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, household slaves (as Ishmael had been the son of Hagar). Their names were, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

At last Jacob determined to leave his uncongenial service and return to his own country. Taking advantage of Laban's absence at a sheep-shearing festival, Jacob's he fled in haste with his family and possessions return. across the Euphrates. Rachel also carried off the *teraphim* (images of household gods, or of Jehovah—the tribal God) of Laban. Laban gave hot pursuit, but warned by God not to molest his nephew, contented himself with a remonstrance; and finally made a covenant with Jacob at a place in the high land of Gilead, east of Jordan. The two agreed to separate and not to interfere with one another. A pillar and a heap of stones were erected to commemorate this—which afterwards bore the name Mizpah (watch-tower), in memory of their words: "The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another" (Gen. xxxi. 49).

Jacob had next to look forward to the peril of a meeting with Esau, now a powerful chieftain dwelling in the mountainous country of Seir, south of the Jacob wres- Dead Sea. Hearing that his brother with ties with God. four hundred men was on the way towards him, in answer to a message he had sent, and not knowing what reception he might meet with, Jacob divided his company, and

prepared a present of cattle to propitiate his brother's anger. Arriving at the Jabbok, a tributary of Jordan, he sent all his family across it in advance, and himself alone spent a night in prayer. Here another mysterious spiritual experience befell him. Some unknown person, described first as "a man," but evidently more than man, an angel or God Himself, wrestled with him in the darkness. Jacob proved himself a match for his antagonist, and the latter could only free himself by touching the hollow of Jacob's thigh so that the sinew shrank, and he was lamed. Still, however, the patriarch refused to loose his hold until he received a blessing. The blessing was given in the form of a change of name. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel [he that perseveres with God]: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The mysterious wrestler refused to disclose his own name, but Jacob showed his own belief by calling the spot Peniel (face of God), "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. xxxii.).

This wrestling seems to have been the spiritual crisis of Jacob's life. By persistence and suffering he had really won the Divine blessing, which he had once thought he could make his own by craft and deceit. But he had first to learn that God was stronger than himself, and to bear in his lameness the mark of humiliation and penitence.

The meeting with Esau (Gen. xxxiii.) proved a happy one. Jacob approached his brother with every mark of reverence, and Esau met him with courtesy, and was with difficulty prevailed on to accept his gift. The reconciliation made, Esau returned with his four hundred men to Seir, and Jacob, after an encampment at Succoth, pursued his way across the Jordan to

Shechem, the first resting-place of Abraham on his entry into Canaan. Here he encamped, and purchased for a hundred pieces of silver a piece of ground from "the children of Hamor," which became a burying-place, like the field and cave of Machpelah bought by Abraham (cp. Josh. xxiv. 32; Acts vii. 16). Here, too, it is recorded that Jacob built an altar, commemorating the new name given him and his posterity, an altar to El-elohe-Israel, "God, the God of Israel."

Jacob then, in obedience to a Divine call, revisited Bethel, the scene of his great vision at the beginning of his wanderings. The occasion was marked **Bethel** by a religious reformation of his household. **revisited.** Before starting for Bethel, all the "strange gods" (images of foreign idols, perhaps including Rachel's stolen teraphim) and the earrings, which seem to have had superstitious uses, were surrendered, and were buried by Jacob under "the oak which was by Shechem." In the journey south to Bethel there may have been some fighting between Jacob's followers and the Canaanites, in which the former were victorious (cp. Gen. xlviii. 22). It is stated that "the terror of God" (*i.e.* a great terror) was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. Arrived at Bethel, Jacob built there an altar to El-Bethel (God of Bethel), in renewal of his early vow. As they still moved southward, and were drawing near Ephrath (Bethlehem), Rachel died in childbirth, calling her son Ben-oni ("son of my sorrow"), a name afterwards changed by his father to Benjamin ("son of my right hand"). The sorrowing husband erected a pillar on Rachel's grave, which was well known in later times, and alluded to in Jer. xxxi. 15-17, and in St. Matthew's account of the Slaughter of the Innocents (St.

42 SHORT OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

Matt. ii. 17, 18). The last recorded stage in this journey was at Kirjath-arba (Hebron), where Isaac was found still living in extreme old age, and where he was subsequently buried, in the cave of Machpelah, by Jacob and Esau, as Abraham had been by Isaac and Ishmael.

CHAPTER VIII

JOSEPH

JOSEPH, the son of Rachel, was his father's favourite, and seems to have been chosen to take the place of the first-born, as Reuben had deeply offended his father. As a mark of preference Jacob gave Joseph's dreams.

Joseph "a coat of many colours," the garment worn by princes and heads of tribes. Naturally his other brothers were jealous of him, and their ill feeling was increased by Joseph's dreams of future greatness. He dreamed, first, that all his brethren's sheaves when they were reaping in the field bowed down to his sheaf; and then that the sun and moon and eleven stars (interpreted as father, mother and brethren) also came and bowed down to him.

An opportunity of wreaking vengeance on Joseph presented itself to the brethren, when he was sent by his father to bring news of them, while they were feeding their flocks in Shechem. Joseph found them at Dothan, a spot with two wells, from which it gains its name, about fifteen miles north of Shechem. "Behold, this dreamer cometh," they said to each other, and plotted to kill him and hide his body in a pit, "and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Reuben and Judah interfered to prevent the murder, and the brethren contented themselves at first by stripping off

Joseph's coat, the hated badge of favour, and putting him in a dry pit or cistern, such as are frequent in Palestine for the storage of water against times of drought.

The approach of a caravan of merchants, described variously as Ishmeelites and Midianites, who were carrying on camels "spicery and balm and myrrh" down the ancient road from Gilead which crosses central Palestine and leads to Egypt, suggested to his brothers an easy method of getting rid of Joseph altogether. They took their brother out of the pit, and sold him as a slave to these traders for twenty pieces of silver. The brethren then dipped his coat in the blood of a kid of the goats, and brought it to his father, who naturally imagined, as they intended, that Joseph had fallen a victim to some wild beast, and "mourned many days," and "refused to be comforted" (Gen. xxxvii.).

The traders, arrived in Egypt, sold their captive to Potiphar, a royal servant, "the captain of the guard."

Joseph in Egypt. Here Joseph prospered, winning high favour for his talents and honesty, until his master's wife brought a false charge against him, and he was thrown into prison. But here again he won his way to be the favourite of the keeper of the prison.

He also gained a reputation which was afterwards to be of great service, by interpreting correctly the dreams of two of the royal officials who were in prison with him, Pharaoh's "chief butler" and "chief baker." The former dreamed of a vine with three branches from which he pressed the juice of grapes into the Pharaoh's cup. This Joseph explained rightly as meaning his restoration to royal favour and his former office in three days. The baker dreamed of carrying three baskets of confectionery on his head, of which not the king but the birds were

eating. To him was foretold execution within three days, which also came to pass.

In spite of Joseph's entreaty not to be forgotten by the chief butler when he was restored, the man forgot him for two years. Not till the Pharaoh himself dreamed dreams which troubled him and the court, and which the magicians could not explain, did the butler think of Joseph, and recommend him to the king's notice. The Pharaoh had dreamed of seven fat kine rising out of the Nile, devoured by seven lean kine; and then again of seven good ears of corn on one stalk devoured by seven other ears, "thin and blasted by the east wind." Joseph was summoned hastily from the prison to the palace, and pronounced both the dreams to refer to the same coming events: seven years of plenty succeeded by seven years of famine. He also advised the king to appoint some trustworthy official to store up in each year of plenty, one-fifth of the corn, as a provision against the years of famine.

Joseph
interprets
Pharaoh's
dreams.

The effect produced on the king and his court is best described in the actual words of Gen. xli.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zaphnath-paaneah (" God spake and he lived ") seems to be an allusion to this sudden and extraordinary exaltation of Joseph, who was still only thirty years of age. He appears to have exercised his great office and position wisely. He laid up a store of corn : and used it when the years of scarcity came, both in helping the starving populace and also in serving the interests of his master. The king received payment for the corn, first in money, and then in land, until all the private possessions of land in Egypt, except that of the priests, had passed into his hands.

But the climax in Joseph's life arrived when his ten brethren who had sold him into captivity appeared before **Joseph tests his brethren.** him to buy corn, as the famine had extended to Canaan also ; and did not recognize him. The kindness and the conscientiousness of Joseph's character both came out in the interviews that followed. He was anxious to forgive his brethren, and to be reunited to his family ; but he was determined also to find out whether they were changed, and were sorry for their former cruelty. He therefore treated them with some little harshness, accusing them of being spies, insisting on their bringing Benjamin back with them

to prove their story, and keeping one of them, Simeon, as a hostage in custody until they should do so. Conscience smote them, and in their trouble, they remembered their old cruelty to Joseph, and not knowing that Joseph himself was there, and could understand their language, they said to each other, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us" (Gen. xlii. 21). So far this was satisfactory, but further tests were ready for the time when famine should compel them to visit Egypt again.

Their money was returned in their sacks of corn; apparently to test their honesty. This they discovered during their return journey and it increased their fear. For a long time their father Jacob refused to send them again or allow Benjamin, now his favourite, to leave him. But famine compelled them to go again, and bearing a present of spices, honey and nuts from their father, with double money in their hand and accompanied by Benjamin, they presented themselves before the dreaded official. Here they were kindly treated, entertained at a banquet in Joseph's house, Simeon was restored, and Benjamin had the honour of a fivefold portion of meat.

But the next morning before they departed Joseph's steward was instructed to hide in their sacks not only their money, but Joseph's own silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Then the steward pursued them, charged them with theft, and brought them back again to Joseph's house. The object was to see whether they would save themselves by sacrificing Benjamin, as Joseph professed his willingness to let them all go, if the apparent thief remained behind as a slave.

Joseph made known to his brethren.

But they refused to do this, and Judah especially interceded both for Benjamin and the aged father, finally offering himself instead of Benjamin as a slave. Joseph was now convinced of their change of heart, and made himself known to them in the most affectionate manner. He then sent them back loaded with presents and with an entreaty that Jacob and the whole family would migrate to Egypt, as there were still five years of famine. Jacob received the astonishing news at first with incredulity, but the sight of the waggons sent by Joseph convinced him. "It is enough," he said, "Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

CHAPTER IX

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

THIS decision of Jacob to remove his entire family to Egypt is a very important turning-point. In Egypt the family, which at first numbered only seventy, **Jacob goes** was to increase into a vast people, and it was **to Egypt**. to come under the influence of the oldest and most important civilization of the world at that time. Jacob was encouraged on his way to Egypt by a vision at Beersheba, in which God promised His protection, and said that though the patriarch himself would die there, his children would multiply and eventually return to Palestine.

Joseph obtained permission from the Pharaoh for his father and brethren to settle in the land of Goshen, the eastern part of the delta of the Nile, where their flocks and herds would find pasturage, and they could also act as keepers of the royal cattle.

Jacob lived seventeen years in Egypt. Just before his death he gave a solemn charge to Joseph to bury him in the family sepulchre at Machpelah. He also **Jacob's** gave his blessing to Joseph's two sons, **blessing**. Manasseh and Ephraim, thus adopting them into his own family, and giving, through them, to Joseph the "double portion" of the first-born. But it was noted that he put his right hand in blessing on the head of the younger, Ephraim, contrary to Joseph's wish, thus foretelling the future greatness of the tribe of Ephraim.

Finally, the patriarch gave a blessing to each of his twelve sons, in which was foreshadowed in poetical language something of the future history of the tribes (Gen. xlix.). The most remarkable of these blessings is that of Judah, who, though only the fourth in order of age, was marked out as the progenitor of the royal tribe. Both the line of David and Christ Himself were to descend from Judah, and this is apparently alluded to in the mysterious prophecy: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [ruler's staff—R.V.] from between his feet, until Shiloh come." The name Shiloh is sometimes interpreted as meaning "the Prince of Peace," one of the titles of Christ; but it more probably means, "He whose right it is," *i.e.* "Christ who is the rightful King not only of Israel, but of all mankind" (see p. 254).

In accordance with Egyptian custom, the body of Jacob was embalmed, and a period of state-mourning of **Jacob's** seventy days (almost as long as that for a **burial.** king) was kept for him. The Pharaoh consented to the funeral taking place in Palestine, and a great company, with chariots and horsemen, carried the body to its resting-place in the field of Machpelah. It seems that the funeral procession took a circuitous route to the south of the Dead Sea (as the Israelites did in after-time); for a period of seven days' mourning is said to have been observed at "the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan," afterwards called, in memory, Abel-mizraim ("the meadow of Egypt").

After Jacob's death, his sons were afraid that Joseph might now, after all, take vengeance on them for their **Joseph's** former conduct. They little knew his forgive- **forgiveness.** ing character and his broadness of mind. In answer to their entreaty for forgiveness, "he comforted

them and spake kindly unto them," and told them that God had turned their evil intention into good, for, by his being sold into Egypt, he had been able "to save much people alive."

When Joseph died, at the age of 110, his body was, in accordance with his solemn instructions, embalmed and preserved in Egypt, until such time as God should bring the family of Israel back again to Palestine, and his body could be buried there.

Little is known of the history of the Israelites in Egypt. Probably they lived much apart from the Egyptians, especially as the latter considered **The Kings** shepherds an "abomination"; but they must **of Egypt**. have learned something of the arts of the Egyptians, and been influenced to some extent by Egyptian religion, especially by their strong belief in immortality and the resurrection of the dead.

The Pharaoh (an official title, not a personal name) who received Jacob was probably Apepi, one of the usurping dynasty of the Hyksos, or shepherd-kings, who were, like the Israelites, of Semitic race, and ruled over Egypt for five centuries. At last these were driven out by Amasis, who was of the ancient line of Egyptian kings. This change of dynasty was unfortunate for the Israelites, who now seem to have fallen into suspicion and disfavour, and were reduced to the position of serfs. We are told that "there arose up a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph" (Exod. i.). This may have been the great Rameses II., whom the Greeks called Sesostris, a mighty conqueror and builder. He set himself to reduce the spirit and the numbers of the Israelites, first by employing them in the hard, forced labours of agriculture and brick-making. Among other works, they built for the Pharaoh the

store-cities of Pithom and Rameses. Then, as this servitude failed of its purpose, he went so far as to order that all the male children should be killed at birth or thrown into the Nile. But the purpose of God had yet to be accomplished for Israel, and His promises fulfilled. A champion and deliverer was at hand.

CHAPTER X

MOSES

MOSES was the man called by God not only to deliver Israel from the oppressions of Egypt, but to lay the foundation of their national life, and to restore the true faith in one supreme God. He was the son of Amram and Jochebed, of the tribe of Levi. As an infant, he was so beautiful that his parents took extraordinary pains to preserve his life from the cruel decrees of the Pharaoh. After hiding him for three months, his mother placed him in a little "ark" or cradle-shaped boat of papyrus, made water-tight with clay or bitumen, and exposed him in it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. As she hoped, the child was found and admired by the Pharaoh's daughter when she came to the river to bathe. The princess decided to adopt him, and at the suggestion of his sister Miriam, who had kept watch at a distance, he was returned to his mother, to be tended and brought up as the princess's son. She gave him the name of Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water"—the name having a similarity in sound to a Hebrew word "to draw out."

Moses received the highest education and training that Egypt could give; but he did not forget his oppressed fellow-Israelites. At the age of forty he had to flee from Egypt, because he had slain an Egyptian who was ill-treating an Israelite. He took refuge in the land of

Birth and
education
of Moses.

Midian, in the peninsula of Siuai, with the shepherd-priest Reuel or Jethro, whose daughter, Zipporah, he married.

The story of his exile is vividly sketched in Exod. ii.

15. Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

16. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew *water*, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

17. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

18. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How *is it that* ye are come so soon to day?

19. And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew *water* enough for us, and watered the flock.

20. And he said unto his daughters, And where *is he?* why *is it that* ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

21. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

22. And she bare *him* a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

For forty more years he tended the flocks of his father-in-law, waiting for a further call. This came to him at last on a spot which was already held sacred, "the mount of God," Horeb, one of the great granite mountains in the south of the peninsula.

God revealed Himself by the appearance of a bush burning with fire but not consumed, and by an audible voice. The voice called to Moses, bidding him first take off his shoes, as the place was holy, and then giving him the great charge to return to Egypt and bring out the Israelites, and lead them to a land "flowing with milk and honey."

**The Call
of God.**

Moses seemed to shrink from so great a task, and asked by what name he should announce the God who had sent him to the Israelites. The memorable reply was given: "I AM THAT I AM: The Name revealed. and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

This phrase is intended as an explanation of the name Jehovah, the ancient name of the God of the Shemites and of the family of Abraham (p. 18). Hitherto its full meaning had not been understood; but now it is revealed. The God of Israel is not a mere tribal or local deity, as the heathen imagined their "gods" to be, but the absolute and eternal and universal Lord of all places and all times.

As a proof to himself and to the Israelites of his mission, Moses was also commissioned to perform two miracles, with the promise of power to perform a third. His rod, thrown upon the Signs of the call. ground, became a serpent; when boldly seized it became a rod again. His hand, thrust into his bosom, became "leprous," but when placed there a second time was healed. Also, if these two signs were not sufficient to convince his hearers of a Divine call, he was to pour water from the Nile on the ground and it would become blood.

Moses still hesitated, and pleaded his natural lack of eloquence; but, as a concession, he was allowed to take Aaron, his brother, with him as a spokesman.

Moses was no longer able to resist God's call, and, fearing the Divine wrath if he disobeyed, prepared for his great return to Egypt. He met Aaron, his The Appeal to the Pharaoh. brother, at the "mount of God." Together they visited the oppressed Israelites, and were received with joy and thankfulness. They then obtained an

audience with the king, and asked permission for Israel to go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to Jehovah. The Pharaoh was probably Meneptah, a weak, but arrogant and obstinate ruler. He received them contemptuously, and asked, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" Instead of allowing Israel to go, he ill-treated the people worse, accusing them of idleness. More work was laid on them, and they were no longer allowed straw for making bricks, but had to find it for themselves among the stubble fields. The Egyptian taskmasters hurried them on and beat them, and they complained, as was natural, to Moses, that their case was worse than before, owing to his interference.

Moses appealed to God in prayer, and was told that a great struggle was inevitable, and the Pharaoh's heart would be "hardened," but that in the end he would be compelled to let Israel go.

The miracle of the rod turned into a serpent, and then again becoming a rod, was performed before the Pharaoh. But his magicians, a class for which Egypt was famous, were able to counterfeit this miracle by their jugglery; and even though Aaron's rod finally swallowed up the magicians' rods, the king was unconvinced.

Now commenced the great duel between the representatives of Jehovah, two aged men (Moses was 80 and Aaron 83), and the power and wizardry of Egypt; between Jehovah and the false gods of the Egyptians. Ten terrible "plagues" in succession visited Egypt. For

The Ten Plagues. the most part these were natural and familiar visitations in themselves, but far more severe than usual, and were foretold by Moses, and both produced and taken away by his word, at God's command.

1. The waters of the Nile were turned into "blood" for seven days—the water looked like blood and was offensive, perhaps discoloured and made putrid by some weed or insect.

2. A plague of *frogs* which swarmed in the houses.

The magicians pretended to be able to perform both these plagues, but the Pharaoh at the second one began to show signs of fear.

3. A plague of *lice*, or mosquitoes, which even the magicians confessed to be "the finger of God."

4. A plague of *flies*, or beetles, over all Egypt, except where the Israelites dwelt in Goshen.

Pharaoh now tried to compromise, offering to let Israel go, but "not very far away."

5. "A very grievous *murrain*," or mortality among all the horses and cattle of Egypt.

6. A plague of "*boils and blains*," *i.e.* a skin disease on man and beast. Such diseases are common in Egypt, but this was exceptionally severe, and the magicians were so afflicted with it that they could not even enter the royal presence.

7. A terrible storm of *hail and thunder*, which destroyed the flax and barley harvests.

The Pharaoh was so moved at this that he confessed himself and his people to be sinful; but as before, as soon as the plague was removed, he hardened his heart.

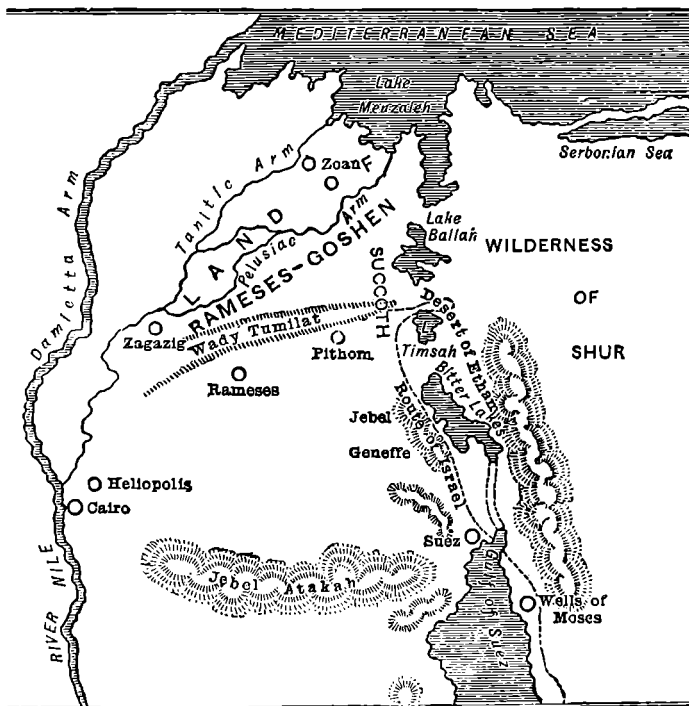
8. A plague of *locusts*, the worst on record, covering the whole land, and destroying every green thing which the hail had left. The effect on the king was much the same as before; though even his servants pleaded with him.

9. An extraordinary *darkness*, lasting three days—perhaps a shmoon or sandstorm—which darkened the sun.

The Pharaoh now offered to let Israel go, if they

would leave their flocks and herds behind. But this was refused, and Moses in wrath announced that one plague more would follow, so terrible that the Egyptians would be thankful to get rid of Israel.

10. The destruction of all the *first-born* of Egypt by a destroying angel of pestilence.



ROUTE OF ISRAEL TO THE RED SEA.

CHAPTER XI

THE DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT

THE great turning-point in the history of the Israelites was now at hand. Their deliverance from Egypt was to be a proof of the greatness of Jehovah, and of His care for His people. Henceforth they were to be not merely a collection of families, but a nation. And their national existence was to be founded on what God had done for them, and their special relationship to Him. They were to be a nation separated from the rest of the world.

Consequently the night of deliverance was marked by new institutions. A new era began ; the calendar starting afresh with the month of Nisan or Abib (March 21—April 20).

The first of these institutions was *the Passover*—a solemn family sacrifice and feast to commemorate their deliverance (Exod. xii.). Each household had to take a lamb and kill it on the 14th of Nisan, ^{The Passover.} sprinkling its blood on the door of the house. Then in the evening the lamb was roasted, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs : all were to partake of it, standing, loins girded, shoes on the feet, and staff in hand, as those ready for a journey. This lamb was recognized afterwards as a type of Christ and His Sacrifice on the Cross. The sprinkling of the blood on the door was to be a means of deliverance from the destroying angel who was about to

smite the first-born of Egypt—"When I see the blood I will pass over you,"—and so typified the Blood of the Lord Jesus shed for the redemption of mankind.

The Passover was also a type of the Holy Eucharist, which Christ instituted when He had kept the last Passover with His disciples before He suffered.

2. *The Feast of Unleavened Bread* was also instituted—a feast of seven days, when unleavened bread only was to be eaten, following the Passover.

3. *The Consecration of the First-born* also was intended as a memorial of deliverance. Every first-born in Israel henceforth, of man or beast, was to be dedicated to Jehovah—children being "redeemed," bought back again, by paying five shekels of silver to the sacred treasury (Exod. xiii.).

The people obeyed the Divine instructions given by Moses, and celebrated the Passover in their houses. At midnight the blow descended on the Egyptians. **The first-born slain.** The destroying angel spared the houses where the blood was sprinkled; but slew every first-born in every Egyptian family, "from the first-born of Pharaoh, that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle." "There was a great cry in Egypt"; the king and his subjects were seized with such terror that their one thought was to get rid of the Israelites at once.

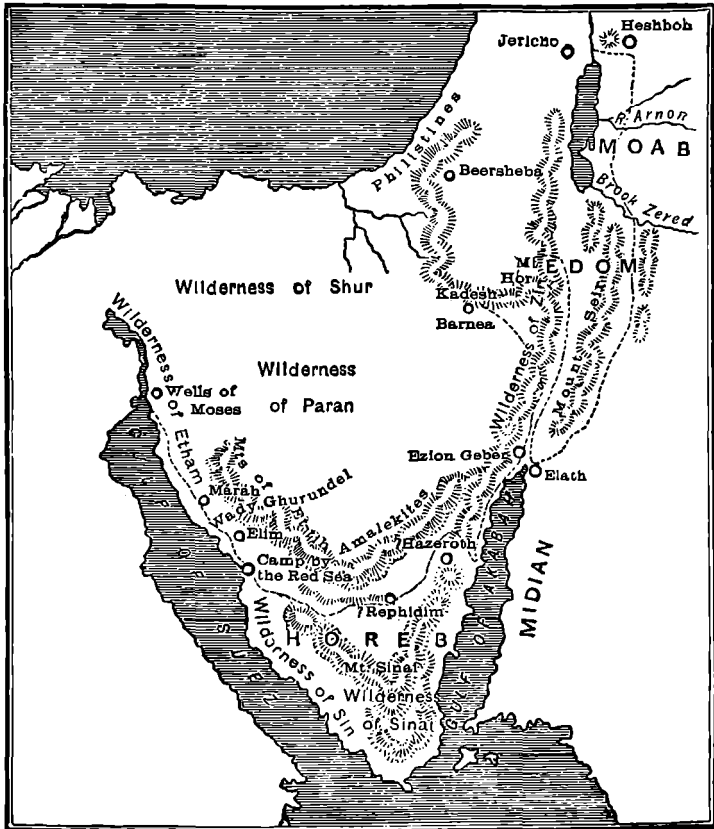
Swiftly the great exodus took place. A vast multitude of men, women, and children, led by Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, carrying little with them except **The Exodus.** clothes and weapons, and their "kneading-troughs" on their shoulders, full of unleavened dough not yet baked into bread, started forth on their unknown

journey eastward. They drove with them their flocks and herds. The women had already, at Moses' command, begged of their Egyptian neighbours "jewels of silver and jewels of gold," perhaps as some sort of wages for their services. They did not forget to carry with them the embalmed body of Joseph, which for so many years had been waiting for burial in the land of promise. Besides the Israelites, a "mixed multitude" of people of other races followed them to share their fortunes.

The starting-point of the exodus was the city of Rameses. The shortest and most natural way to Palestine would have been by the coast of the ~~The Egyptian~~ Mediterranean; but that way was guarded, ^{pursuit.} and the multitude were not ready for a battle. They were instructed to march in the direction of the wilderness, encamping first at Succoth, and then at Etham. They were divinely guided on their march by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

At Etham, on the edge of the wilderness, a command was given to turn south, to the head of the Red Sea. At first sight this must have seemed a disastrous move, for the host found itself shut in between the Red Sea on the left, and high ground on the right. And at this moment came the terrible news that they were being pursued by the Pharaoh in person, with an army and six hundred chariots. They seemed to be in a trap and defenceless, and they turned upon Moses with cries of despair—"Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness!" "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD," was the bold reply.

The scene which followed is one of the most remarkable in the history of the world (Exod. xiv.). The Egyptians



ROUTE FROM RED SEA TO RIVER JORDAN.

were prevented by the night from attacking Israel at once, the pillar of cloud blocking their view of the fugitives. "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," was the Divine command. Moses lifted his rod as a signal, and a way of escape was seen. They were by a shallow arm of the Red Sea; a strong east wind blew all night and drove back the water; probably, too, it was ebb-tide, and the sea was found easily fordable. All the host had passed through and gained the comparative safety of the wilderness before morning. Then at daybreak came the catastrophe of the Egyptians. They attempted to give pursuit, but the sea was returning, and their chariot-wheels soon became clogged with the sand. They were thrown into panic, and tried to return; but the chariots and cavalry, and all who had ventured into the sea, were overwhelmed by the rush of the flowing tide, and perished in the waters.

This was the great turning-point in the history of Israel; the birth of the nation; they were no longer slaves, but free. All their subsequent history looked back to this wonderful deliverance; and it has become a type of the Resurrection, the life from the dead.

Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, now called "the prophetess," led the great song of victory which the women of Israel chanted to the accompaniment of their timbrels (tambourines). "Sing ye to the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea" (Exod. xv.).

The march was resumed, skirting the Red Sea, and moving southwards towards Sinai. After three days through a waterless wilderness, they found the water-springs at Marah bitter. Under

Divine direction, Moses rendered them sweet by casting in a tree.

The next stage was Elim, a beautiful oasis with twelve wells and seventy palm trees.

But the next month brought them into the dry and pastureless wilderness of Sin, where food ran short, and a rebellion against Moses and Aaron was threatened. But God's providence supplied them miraculously with food. First, an enormous flock of quails settled upon the camp, and then in the morning appeared, for the first time, the manna. This name was given by the Israelites, and means either "What is it?" or "It is a gift." It is described as a "small, round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground,"—white, and tasting "like wafers made with honey." This new and supernatural food continued all the forty years that Israel was to spend in the wilderness; it was not given at all on the seventh day, but a double supply was ordered to be gathered on the sixth day (Exod. xvi.).

At Rephidim there was no water, and Moses was ordered to smite the rock with his rod, and when he did so, water flowed forth. The names **Water.** Massah (temptation) and Meribah (strife) given to this district preserved the memory of the strife and impatience of Israel.

Here also came the first battle. The Amalokites, a fierce tribe of wandering desert-dwellers, attacked Israel.

The first battle. Moses ascended a hill, and Aaron and Hur supported his uplifted hands; for it was seen that only as long as Moses lifted his hands (in prayer no doubt) did Israel prevail. The battle lasted till evening, and the Israelites, led by Joshua, won a complete victory (Exod. xvii.).

An altar was built here, and the name of Jehovah-nissi ("the Lord is my banner") was given to it.

Soon after, the host was visited by Jethro, the priest of Midian, who brought with him Moses' wife and his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Jethro rejoiced at the tale of deliverance and ^{Jethro.} victory, and confessed the greatness of Jehovah. After offering sacrifice and joining with the chief men of Israel in a banquet, Jethro gave Moses the practical advice, to discontinue trying to govern the people in every detail himself. He advised the appointment of subordinate officials, "men of truth, hating covetousness," who might judge all small matters; Moses acting as law-giver, intercessor with God, and the judge of great and important matters. This was done, and it must have been an important step towards the organization of an undisciplined host into a nation (Exod. xviii.).

CHAPTER XII

THE LAW-GIVING AT SINAI

IN the third month after leaving Egypt, the host arrived at the secluded and sacred region of Mount Sinai, where Moses had received his call. It is a district of steep and awe-inspiring mountains of red granite, and probably the Israelites encamped in a plain which lies to the north of one of the most impressive of these heights, Ras Sufsafeh, some 6900 feet above the sea. It was here where the Law was to be given to Israel by God Himself. This Law was to be the foundation of their national life, and marked a great turning-point in the religious history of the world.

Moses was bidden first by God to impress on the Israelites their solemn privilege as the people of God. They were to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Bounds were set round the mountain, and two days of solemn purification, by washing of their bodies and clothing, were enjoined before God delivered to them His Law (Exod. xix.).

On the third day a terrible thunderstorm broke: the mountain-top was hidden in a black cloud. A trumpet assembled the people, and the Voice of God Himself summoned Moses and Aaron to ascend the mountain and receive His message. They returned and delivered to the people the Law of God. This consisted of (1) the Ten Words or Commandments,

and (2) a series of precepts contained in Exod. xx. 22-xxiii., called the Book of the Covenant.

(1) The Ten Words spoken by God Himself, and afterwards written on stone tables by the hand of God, are the foundation of all religious duty. **The Ten Commandments.** Probably as originally given they were shorter in form than as now found in the Bible. The first four deal with man's direct duty to God.

1. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

This enforces the unity of God, and forbids polytheism.

2. *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.*

Thus idolatry is forbidden.

3. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*

Irreverence and profanity are forbidden.

4. *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day.*

The seventh day according to primeval institution (see p. 3) is to be kept sacred as a day of religious rest (Sabbath), for man's time belongs to God, and not to himself.

The remaining six are concerned with duty to man.

5. *Honour thy father and thy mother.*

6. *Thou shalt do no murder.*

7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

8. *Thou shalt not steal.*

9. *Thou shalt not bear false witness.*

10. *Thou shalt not covet.*

Thus at the very outset of this great giving of the Law, God impresses upon man that religion, the service of God, involves goodness to one's fellow-man. Heathen religions consisted chiefly in offering sacrifices, and performing various outward ceremonies; Jehovah must be

served by a holy life, and by doing to one's neighbour as one would be done by oneself.

(2) The Book of the Covenant, so called because, with the Ten Words, it was to form the basis of a "covenant"

The Book of the Covenant. between Jehovah and His people (see p. 15), consists of a number of simple enactments, partly civil, and partly religious, suited to the life of a primitive community. To understand them it must be remembered that the Hebrews probably possessed already many ancient laws and customs, handed down by tradition. The new laws did not attempt to do away with these, but to purify them, and to modify them to suit the times. Many of the laws of the Covenant were abrogated later on, and others developed and expanded. The great object of this legislation was to carry out, as far as possible, the spirit of the Ten Words, inculcating reverence to God, mercy towards one's fellow-man, and even-handed justice to rich and poor alike.

The religious precepts permit altars to be erected in different places, but the altar must be only of earth or of unhewn stones. The first-fruits of harvests, the firstlings of the flock, and the first-born sons (see p. 60). are to be offered to Jehovah. Not only one day a week, but one year in every seven is to be consecrated to Him. This is the Sabbatical year when the land was not to be cultivated (Exod. xxiii. 10, 11). Three annual religious festivals are established, at which all males are to "appear" before Jehovah, *i.e.* visit His sanctuary. These are :

- (1) The feast of unleavened bread, *i.e.* at the Passover time.
- (2) The feast of the first-fruits of harvest (afterwards the feast of Weeks or P'entecost).

- (3) The feast of the ingathering or end of harvest (afterwards Tabernacles).

The civil and social enactments aim at modifying the institutions of slavery and polygamy; a Hebrew slave must not be kept more than six years except by his own will: the first wife must not be defrauded or stinted if a second wife is married. Also the primitive custom of retaliation for injuries was restricted (*a*) by not allowing the punishment to exceed the offence: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, wound for wound"; (*b*) by providing some place (afterwards the six Cities of Refuge) where the homicide might flee to escape the vengeance of the victim's relations, until such time as his crime could be examined by judges, to see whether it was wilful or not.

The general spirit of the legislation may be seen in such words as these: "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child" (Exod. xxii. 21, 22).

A remarkable ceremony followed the delivery of these laws (Exod. xxiv.). A national sacrifice was offered at the foot of the mountain to signify the acceptance of Jehovah's laws by his people, and the ratification of the "Covenant." The making of the Covenant. An altar was erected, and twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes. "Burnt-offerings" and "peace offerings" were offered by chosen young men. Then Moses having written down the words of the Covenant in a book or roll, read them to the assembled people, and then took the sacrificial blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying: "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words." It was to this that our Lord referred when He instituted the Eucharist, saying: "This

is my blood of the *new* Covenant." (Cp. Heb. ix. 18, etc.)

Then followed a sacrificial banquet on the mountain itself, of which Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, the two **The Vision of God.** sons of Aaron, and seventy of the elders of Israel partook. There was granted to them also some mysterious and beautiful vision of the glory of God: "They saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone." Aaron and the others descended the mountain, but Moses remained with Joshua his servant for forty days on the mountain-top, concealed by a cloud.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES

WHILE Moses was on the mountain, withdrawn from view within the cloud, the conduct of the Israelites showed how little as yet they had been influenced by the pure and exalted religion delivered them by ^{The Golden} ~~Calf~~ Moses. They fell back at once into their old ideas of Jehovah as a tribal deity, worshipped under the form of an image, and with sacrificial feasts and revels. They were frightened apparently at the long absence of Moses and at the terrors which seemed to surround the lonely spot where they were encamped. They raised the appeal to Aaron. "Up, make us gods (Elohim), which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exod. xxxii. 1).

Aaron yielded to their clamour, and from their golden earrings (perhaps chosen because they were worn as amulets by women and children, and had religious associations) he fashioned a calf (possibly a winged bull, like the cherubim, or like the ox-idols of Egypt). It was welcomed with the shout, "These be thy Elohim, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." An altar was erected, and a solemn feast proclaimed by Aaron in its honour, as if it were actually the God it represented: "To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah." The feast-day was

celebrated with the usual burnt offerings and peace offerings, feasting, drinking, and riotous revellings.

This relapse into idolatry was revealed by God Himself to Moses on the mount. His faith in God and his love of his people were put to a great test. God declared His purpose to destroy Israel altogether, and make of Moses alone a great nation. But with earnest prayer Moses interceded for the sinners, and pleaded the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His prayer was heard : but before he knew what the issue would be, he turned to descend the mountain, accompanied by Joshua and bearing in his hands the two tables of stone, on which the hand of God had inscribed the Ten Words.

The noise of the drunken, dancing revellers came to Moses' ears as he descended, and roused him to furious wrath. Casting down and breaking the tables of the Law, he rushed like a thunderbolt upon the camp. The golden idol was the first object of his righteous anger—it was thrown into the fire, and then its remains were ground to powder, and mixed with water, and the idolaters made to drink them. Then turning upon Aaron, he demanded : " What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them ? " Aaron could only weakly plead that the people were " set on mischief," and that the idolatry had not been his voluntary act : " I cast it (the gold) into the fire, and there came out this calf ! "

Next followed a terrible scene of vengeance. Moses asked, " Who is on the LORD'S side ? " His fellow-tribesmen, the Levites, came forward, sword in hand, and at his command proceeded to kill three thousand of the idolaters.

On the following day Moses returned to the mountain top and the presence of God, and renewed his intercession for sinful Israel, offering even his own hope of salvation to atone for them.

31. Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin— ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

He was told that such an offering of man for men could not be accepted. The sinner himself must bear the penalty of his sin. His prayer had indeed been heard, and the threatened destruction of the whole nation averted. Nevertheless punishment must fall on them, and, worse still, Jehovah's near presence would no longer be with them on their journey. These heavy tidings moved the people to sorrow and mourning. Moses again renewed his intercession, urging that this special Divine presence was the one mark of Israel's unique calling, and without it even the promised land would be worthless. He won the answer he desired. "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken : for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name."

But Moses was not yet satisfied. He made a further and bolder request. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." He desired to see more than he had already seen of the greatness and splendour of God.

But this could not be : the glory of God was not to be revealed until the time when God Himself was to become incarnate. He was told that it was impossible for him to see God's face and live ; but he would be permitted to stand on a rock, and when God's "glory" passed by him,

he would be able to see at least the "back parts," the outer fringe, as it were, of the awful vision of God as He is (Exod. xxxiii.). This promise was fulfilled during the second period of forty days which Moses passed alone and fasting on the mountain. Two new tables of stone in place of the broken ones were hewn by Moses. And then came the solemn and mysterious moment when we are told "the LORD Himself descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the Name of the LORD." The "name" implies the character of God, and His ways with men, and is further explained by the words that follow: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth"—but also "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Moses "bowed his head towards the earth and worshipped." The covenant which the idolatry of the people had broken was renewed as a proof of the mercy of God, and Moses again descended the mount.

The near presence of God in which Moses had stood had left a mark which the people recognized with awe, "the skin of his face shone." This added impressiveness to the words which he spoke, and the law which he delivered. But it was a brightness that faded, and when he had finished speaking to the people, he put a veil over his face to conceal its disappearance (Exod. xxxiv.).

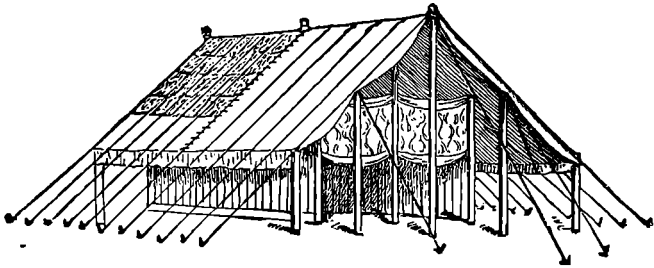
After this period in the mount, Moses continued to commune with God and receive laws from Him, first in a special tent, which he had pitched previously outside the camp, called "the tent of meeting" (*i.e.* of God and man), and afterwards in the Tabernacle. Here God is said to have talked with Moses "face to face as a man speaketh

to his friend." The Divine presence was manifested to the people by a cloud which rested upon the tent and the Tabernacle.

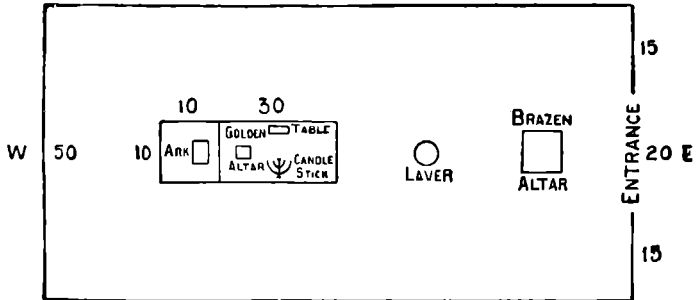
36. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys :

37. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

38. For the cloud of the LORD *was* upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. Exod. xl. 36-38.



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CHAPTER XIV

THE LAWS OF WORSHIP

DURING the year which the Israelites remained encamped at Sinai, Moses received from God many other laws and instructions, besides those in the Book of the **Further** Covenant. These are contained in the books **legislation.** of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and cover a great variety of subjects. Probably as we have them now, they have been revised and added to by later generations: but no doubt the foundations of these laws date from the stay at Sinai. The first-given and most important are concerned with the worship of Jehovah, the place of this worship, the priests who performed it, and the way in which it was to be conducted. These regulations, of course, were to last only till Christ came and the new worship of the Christian Church was established; but they are of great importance, because they not only embody great religious truths, but they are typical: *i.e.* they are meant to be suggestions and symbols of matters that were afterwards to be revealed in the Gospel (Heb. ix.).

The first instructions given to Moses were concerned with the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. xxv.-vii.), which was completed during the encampment **The Taber-** at Sinai. This Tabernacle was a portable **naole.** sanctuary which could easily be taken down and re-erected during the march. It is said expressly to have

been constructed on a heavenly pattern shown by God to Moses on the mount. It was not a place for a congregation to assemble in, being much too small for that purpose; only the priests were allowed to enter it, and its great object was to be a meeting-place for God and man. "Let them make Me a sanctuary," was the Divine command, "that I may dwell among them." It was built of the most costly and beautiful materials, most of them no doubt the treasures of Egypt which the Israelites had carried with them when they departed (p. 61).

The Tabernacle was a large oblong tent, with a framework of acacia wood covered with gold and fixed in sockets of silver. This framework was covered with four sets of curtains. The inner set was of fine twined linen, blue, purple and scarlet, embroidered with cherubims, and the others of goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins (or seal skins).

The part of the Tabernacle which faced east was of open pillars, before which hung a veil of rich colours and embroidery. Two rooms made up the simple interior: the first an oblong $20 \times 10 \times 10$ cubits called the Holy Place; the second, separated from it by another veil, was the Holy of Holies, a perfect cube $10 \times 10 \times 10$ cubits. The only furniture in the Holy Place was on one side the *golden lamp-stand*, with seven lamps fed with pure olive oil (this was the only light, as there were apparently no windows); on the other side a gold-covered *table of shewbread*; and the centre was the small *altar of incense*, likewise overlaid with gold.

The literal meaning of shewbread is "bread of the face," *i.e.* bread set for a memorial before the face of God. It consisted of twelve cakes of fine flour, arranged in two rows or heaps of six,

sprinkled with frankincense. These cakes represented the twelve tribes, continually commemorated before God. They were changed each Sabbath, and became the food of the priest in the Holy Place—the frankincense being burnt on the golden altar. Incense was burnt morning and evening—"a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations."

Within the darkness of the inner sanctuary stood the *ark of the covenant*, also called "the testimony," made of acacia wood overlaid with gold; it was a coffer measuring $2\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits, provided with feet on which to stand, and golden rings with staves running through them, by which it might be carried. This was to contain the tables of the commandments.

Above the ark was a golden slab, called the "mercy-seat," at the ends of which were golden figures of Cherubim, winged figures which apparently represented the angels of the great powers of nature, the whirlwind and the storm (*cf.* Ezek. i.; Ps. xviii. 10; Rev. iv.). The faces of these cherubim were turned towards each other and bent down over the mercy-seat.

This Tabernacle was the type on which later and more splendid temples were afterwards erected at Jerusalem. It stood in a courtyard, where the sacrifices were offered in the open air, and where the worshippers might assemble. The courtyard was 100×50 cubits, marked out by sixty pillars, which were draped with "fine twined linen" (a characteristic Egyptian product). Here stood the Altar of Sacrifice, a hollow case of wood, overlaid with brass. Perhaps this was placed over the prescribed "altar of earth" or unhewn stones (p. 68). There was also a brazen *laver* on a "foot" or

stand of brass, in which the ablutions so characteristic of ancient religions might be performed by the priests.

To offer the worship of Israel in this sanctuary a new order of priesthood was appointed. Hitherto the priest-
The hood had probably been exercised by the first-
Priesthood. born in each family. Instead of these, one tribe, that of Levi, was set apart to take charge of the tabernacle and its furniture and generally to act as servants of the sanctuary. And within this tribe, one family, Aaron and his descendants, were solemnly consecrated for the duties of offering sacrifice and burning incense (Exod. xxviii.).

Aaron's robes, made at the same time that the tabernacle was constructed, were elaborate and beautiful.
Robes of They consisted of a *mitre* or turban, on which
Aaron. was a gold plate, inscribed "Holiness to Jehovah"; a blue tunic without sleeves called *the robe of the ephod*, reaching to the feet and bordered with golden bells and "pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet"; the *ephod* worn above this, of gold and colours, made of two pieces of stuff, fastened at the shoulder with brooches of onyx, engraved with the names of the twelve tribes, and tied round the waist with a *girdle*. Upon his breast Aaron wore the *breastplate of judgment*, a linen bag, adorned with twelve jewels, also engraved with the names of the tribes. Within this bag were placed the Urim and Thummim (Light and Truth?) mysterious objects, perhaps jewels, by which the priest was enabled in some unknown way to ascertain the will of God and deliver "judgment" in cases of difficulty or doubt.

The Urim and Thummim are never mentioned after the time of David and seem to have disappeared. With this exception these robes became the traditional garments

of the high priests of Israel, except on the great occasion of his entry into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, when he wore only a plain white linen dress. The sons of Aaron, who were to be the pattern of the priests of later days, of lower rank than the high priest, wore a white robe similar in design to "the robe of the ephod," girded with a girdle of the sacred colours, and on their heads a bell-shaped cap of white linen.

The worship appointed to be offered by the priesthood was mainly sacrificial (Lev. i.-vii.). The sacrifices fall into three main classes. (1) The *burnt-offering*: The Sacrifices. the animal offered was slain and *entirely burnt* on the brazen altar to signify the consecration of the worshippers to God. With this was offered the *minchah*, or "meat (meal) offering," of cakes of fine flour, sprinkled with oil, frankincense and salt. Part of this was burnt, and the rest eaten by the priests. There was also offered a "drink-offering" or libation of wine.

(2) The *peace-offering*. The distinctive feature of this was the *sacrificial banquet*. After certain portions of the victim had been burnt, the priest and the worshippers partook of the remainder of the flesh; the priest having as his perquisite the breast and the right shoulder.

These two sorts of sacrifice were of very ancient origin; and were only re-enacted and reduced to rule by the Mosaic law. But (3) the *sin-offering* was a new institution, and was intended to awaken conscience and convict men of sin and of the need of atonement. The distinctive feature of this sacrifice was the *sprinkling* of the victim's *blood*. But it could only be offered for sins of ignorance or minor transgressions; for grave and wilful breaches of the commandments no offering could be made, or forgiveness granted on earth. Full forgiveness had to be

reserved till Christ came and offered the one and only perfect sacrifice, taking away the sins of the world (cp Acts xiii. 38, 39).

These sacrifices might be either personal, or national. Examples of the latter are seen in the perpetual burnt-offering of two lambs daily, one in the morning and one in the evening, offered by the priests upon the brazen altar; and in the great national sin-offering offered every year on the Day of Atonement. This was a solemn act of reparation for the sins of the whole people, observed on the tenth day of the seventh month, which was the only fast-day of the year (Lev. xvi.). On this day only the high-priest entered the Holy of Holies, carrying the blood of sin-offerings, first for himself and then again for the people, and a censer of smoking incense. He sprinkled this blood in front of and upon the "mercy-seat." The sin-offering for the nation was a goat chosen by lot from two; the other goat, after the high-priest had placed his hands upon its head and confessed all the sins of the nation, was sent away into the wilderness, as a "scape-goat" (or "for Azazel"—probably some evil spirit who was supposed to dwell in the wilderness).

The whole of this sacrificial system was typical of Christ and His Church, and the Day of Atonement especially (as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches) **Meaning of the Sacrifices.** was a type of Christ suffering death on the cross and shedding His blood for human sin, and then entering "within the veil," *i.e.* ascending into heaven to plead continually before God the Father His perfect and finished sacrifice—whence He will reappear at His Second Coming. So the Jewish high-priest came out of the Tabernacle and solemnly blessed the people after he had finished the work of atonement.

CHAPTER XV

THE DEPARTURE FROM SINAI

DURING the encampment at Sinai the Tabernacle was constructed, with the other sacred furniture. Two skilled artificers, Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, and Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, were set apart by Divine command to preside over this work, and free-will offerings for the purpose were received from the people, whose readiness to give was so great that they had finally to be restrained. When the work was completed, the Tabernacle was erected by Moses, and Aaron and his sons were consecrated by solemn sacrifices and anointing for their new priesthood. The Divine approval was shown by the descent of a miraculous "fire from before the LORD," which consumed the sacrifice offered by Aaron for the people, as it lay upon the brazen altar.

But two of the newly made priests, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, presumed to offer "strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded not," when they were burning incense. It is uncertain what the exact offence was; but evidently it was an act of irreverence, probably an attempt to conduct the worship of Jehovah after the heathen manner, and not as revealed to Moses. For this offence "the fire from the LORD" struck and slew them. The Divine command which followed emphasized the difference between the "holiness"

of Jehovah and any heathen sort of worship, which, like that of the golden calf, was often accompanied by drunkenness and revelry.

8. And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,

9. Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die : *it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations :*

10. And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean ;

11. And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

Lev. x. 8-11.

As an immediate preparation for departure, a census was taken of all the fighting men of the host, excluding the tribe of Levi, which was separated for sacred functions. The number is stated as 603,530.

Next came the command to make two silver trumpets, for giving an alarm on the march, and for calling to festivals and religious services.

Finally, on "the twentieth day of the second month in the second year" the signal for departure was seen in the lifting up of "the cloud" from the Tabernacle (Numb. x. 11). The host is described as moving forward or encamping in a fixed order, and with religious ceremonies. The veiled ark, borne by the Levites, apparently led the march (though its place, with the rest of the Tabernacle, was normally in the centre); the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun led the van; next came Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; then Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin; and Dan, Asher, and Naphtali formed "the rereward." The four leading tribes, Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan, are described as bearing

“standards,” which Jewish tradition stated to be the emblems afterwards connected with the cherubim that bore the chariot of Jehovah, a lion, a man, an ox, and an eagle (Ezek. i.; Rev. iv.). The services of “Hobab, the son of Raguel (Reuel) the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law,” were obtained, after some entreaty by Moses, as a guide in the journey: that he might be to them “instead of eyes.” “Rise up, LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee” (cp. Ps. lxxviii. 1), was the sacred invocation as the ark moved forward; “Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel,” the prayer at a resting-place.

The blessing appointed for Aaron and his sons to give to Israel is remarkable, and is seen by Christians to contain an allusion to the Trinity, ^{The priestly blessing.} the *three* Persons of the Godhead, who are included under *one* “name.”

24. The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

25. The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

26. The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

27. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them. Numb. vi. 24–27.

The march now proceeded through the wilderness of Paran, a limestone waste, with little water or vegetation. Its course was marked by continual murmurings and rebellions (Numb. xi.). The first ^{Murmurings in the wilderness.} occasion was at a place called Taberah (burning), in memory of a fire which broke out in the camp, and was only stayed by the prayer of Moses. A more serious murmuring followed shortly, when food ran short, and the manna was distasteful. It originated among the “mixed

multitude" of camp followers, who bitterly complained of their short rations, as compared with the free supply of fish they had enjoyed in Egypt, with "cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlick."

Moses poured out his own complaint to God: "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? I am not able to bear all this people alone." In

The answer to Moses' prayer.

answer to his prayer, God promised an abundant supply of flesh, and also directed the appointment of seventy elders, who might help Moses to bear his burden of government. These were chosen, and, as a sign that God's Spirit had been given them for their work, they burst forth into an utterance of prophecy, including even two, Eldad and Medad, who had remained in the camp, and not joined the other elders. The promise of flesh to eat was suddenly fulfilled by an immense flock of quails being brought by the wind from the sea, covering the ground for miles round the camp. The people ate them to such excess that a plague followed, in which many died, and left to the place the name of Kibroth-hattaavah, "the graves of lust."

At Hazeroth, some thirty miles from Sinai, a rebellion against Moses arose within his own family (Numb. xii.).

Aaron and Miriam rebel against Moses.

Aaron and Miriam were jealous because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman; and they asserted their own equality with him. God, they said, had spoken through them as well as through Moses. Moses himself, who is described as "very meek," was silent; but the majesty of God Himself intervened: "The LORD came down in the pillar of cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam." The Divine Voice proclaimed that Moses was more than any ordinary prophet who only knew of God through

“visions and dreams.” With Moses God would speak “mouth to mouth.” Miriam, moreover, was punished by being struck with leprosy, and healed only at the earnest prayer of Moses himself.

The next halting-place was Kadesh (holy place): or Kadesh-barnea (holy place of the wanderings); perhaps so called as the seat of some shrine, or the place of some supernatural occurrence (like Horeb). ^{The spies.}

This was eleven days' march from Sinai, and on the border of the territory of Edom (Numb. xiii.). Here Moses sent forth twelve spies, one from each tribe (Levi being omitted, and Ephraim and Manasseh counted as separate tribes). For forty days these men searched Palestine, and brought back with them a good report of the fertility of the land, with specimens of its fruits, pomegranates, and figs, and especially an extraordinary bunch of grapes from “the valley of Eshcol,” so heavy that two men carried it on a staff between them. But the spies had been frightened at the strength of the fortresses, and the giant size of its inhabitants. Only two of them, Caleb of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua (Oshea, or Jehoshua) of Ephraim, a near attendant of Moses, had faith enough to make little of these terrors, and advise an immediate attack on the land. But a tearful panic seized the host: they rebelled, threatened to stone Caleb and Joshua, and proposed to make another captain, and return to Egypt (Numb. xiv.)

This was the climax of the long course of murmuring. “The glory of the LORD appeared,” as at Sinai, and the threatened destruction of the whole of the people was again only averted ^{Rebellion and its punishment.} by the earnest intercession of Moses. But punishment could not be arrested. The sentence pronounced was that for forty years Israel must remain

wandering in the wilderness, until all the warriors from twenty years upwards had died—the faithful Caleb and Joshua alone being excepted. The people, struck with remorse, professed penitence, and made a futile effort, unaccompanied by Moses or the ark, to attack the Canaanites and Amalekites of the mountains. They were repulsed and driven back to Hormah.

For the next thirty-eight years the history is almost a blank. The people probably wandered about the peninsula, feeding their flocks and herds; perhaps, at times, assembling at Kadesh. Circumcision and the Sabbath were neglected; idolatry was again practised. Nevertheless, it must have been a period of training in the hardness and danger of desert life, and the younger generation must, to some extent, have taken in the religious teaching of Moses.

The only important event which seems to fall within this period is the double rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram against Moses and Aaron (Numb. xvi.). Dathan and Abiram, of the tribe of Reuben, rebelled against the civil authority of Moses. They had been disappointed of the promises made to them, they said, and Moses had made himself “altogether a prince” over them. An earthquake, which was foretold by Moses, as a proof of his Divine authority, swallowed up these malcontents, with their tents and all their families and adherents.

Korah, a Levite, with 250 eminent members of his tribe raised a different protest. “All the congregation,” they said, were “holy.” Why should Moses and Aaron, and their family, alone exercise priestly functions? As a test of their claim to priesthood, Moses proposed that all the rebels should present

themselves with censers to offer incense at the Tabernacle. They did so; and a "fire from the LORD" blazed forth and consumed Korah and all his company. As a memorial of this terrible judgment, the censers were rescued out of the burning, and made "broad plates for a covering of the altar."

A general "murmuring" of the whole people followed, and a pestilence which broke out, as a punishment, was averted by the intercession of Aaron, who burnt incense, and stood "between the dead ^{Aaron's rod.} and the living." This in itself was a vindication of Aaron's priesthood. A more mysterious sign followed. At Divine command, twelve rods, inscribed with the names of the tribes, Aaron's name being on the rod of Levi, were placed for a night within the tabernacle. On the morrow, Aaron's rod was found to have budded. It "brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." This rod was directed to be preserved "before the testimony," *i.e.* in the ark (cp. Heb. ix. 4), as a continual token that the priestly functions were confined to Aaron and his family.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MARCH TO CANAAN

AT last the period of "wandering" was completed, and at some unrecorded summons the armies of Israel again assembled at Kadesh, and prepared for the march on the land of promise (Numb. xx.).

**The sin of
Moses and
Aaron.**

Sorrow and chastisement marked the march from its outset. Before the armies moved from Kadesh, Miriam, the sister of Moses, died, and was buried. The lack of water caused an outbreak of the old murmuring, couched in language which had perhaps become traditional. "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink" (an allusion, no doubt, to the memory of the grapes and other fruits of Eshcol brought back by the spies). Moses and Aaron were bidden to repeat the earlier miracle (p. 64), and to speak to the rock, and "it shall give forth his water." But the two leaders themselves fell under the Divine displeasure.

They addressed the people with scorn and impatience. "Hear now, ye rebels: must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Such a temper was unworthy of the representatives of Jehovah. The sentence pronounced on them both was this: "Because ye believed me not,

to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

The nearest way into Palestine would have been through the mountain-passes of Edom (Numb. xxi.). A courteous message was sent to the King of Edom, asking, on the grounds of ancient brotherhood and the Divine call to enter Canaan, for permission to take this route. But it was refused; and the host turned southward again to make a long detour round the Edomite territory (see map, p 62). But before this new journey was begun, the approaching death of Aaron was announced by God. He ascended Mount Hor, clad in his priestly robes, which were then taken from him and put upon Eleazar, his son and successor; after which the first high priest of Israel died there on the mountain-top.

After thirty days' mourning for Aaron, the host moved southward to Elath at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, harassed first by the attacks of the Canaanites, led by the King of Arad; and then much distressed by the difficulties of the journey. The country south of the Dead Sea was barren, sandy and stony, and infested by serpents. These are described as "fiery," from the inflammation and death caused by their sting. The people confessed that this scourge was merited for their sinful complaints against God and against Moses. The Divine mercy was shown in the command given to Moses to make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole. Every one who had been bitten, when he looked on this serpent, lived. [This serpent was spoken of by Christ, as a type of Himself (St. John iii. 14, 15) lifted up on the cross, to be the Giver of everlasting life to all who look on Him with faith.]

North of the Edomites lay the territories of the kindred tribes of Moab and Ammon. The Divine Voice forbade these to be attacked, and as passage was refused by them, a further detour was necessary on the high plateau east of Jordan. Here the host apparently followed the ancient caravan-road. On the south bank of the Arnon serious warfare began, which led to the conquest of the whole land east of Jordan. Sihon, king of the Amorites, met Israel at Jahaz, was totally defeated, and all his territory from Arnon to Jabbok, with Heshbon, his capital, fell into the hands of the invaders. The Israelites now established themselves in the "plains of Moab," a low-lying district between the high plateau of Moab and the head of the Dead Sea. Next followed the conquest of the northern part of the East Jordan district. Og, the king of Bashan, was attacked and defeated at Edrei. Sixty fortified cities fell into the hands of the conquerors, the tribe of Manasseh. Og is said to have been a giant, the only survivor of an earlier giant race, the Rephaim (Deut. iii. 11).

The Moabites, who had previously been conquered by Sihon, did not dare to dispute by the sword the advance of those who had conquered him. They employed another weapon, magic. Balak, their king, sent a long distance to Pethor on the Euphrates, to summon Balaam, a notable magician and soothsayer, in the hope that for a large fee he would consent to curse the Israelites, and so stop their dreaded progress. This was a common expedient in ancient warfare, but in this case it was remarkable because Balaam was apparently a prophet of Jehovah (he came from the district of the family of Abraham); but one who used his sacred gift in a heathenish manner for money and for unworthy

Conquest of
Eastern
Palestine.

Balaam
sent for.

ends. Throughout the history of his dealings with Balak, we see him swayed by a double motive: to speak the truth as Jehovah's Spirit bade him, and to gain the rewards that Balak offered (Numb. xxii.-xxiv.).

Balaam rejected altogether the overtures of the first embassy; God, he said, refused him permission to curse Israel, for they were "blessed." A second **Balaam's** appeal followed, more ample rewards were **journey.** offered, and Balaam, while protesting that a house full of silver and gold could not make him go without God's permission, endeavoured to obtain that permission. It was granted him, but the events of his journey ought to have shown him that it was a sin to have asked for it. "The Angel of the LORD," with a drawn sword in his hand, stood in his way. The ass on which the prophet was riding first saw the apparition and refused to go on. Balaam, in his anger, beat her cruelly, and then was astonished, first at hearing the ass herself speak to him in protest, and then at seeing himself the angel-adversary standing in his way. The angel rebuked him for his cruelty as well as his "perverseness"; but when he offered to return home, bade him go on, but speak nothing to Balak but what Jehovah commanded.

He met Balak, and the two proceeded to "the high places of Baal," whence they could look down on the hosts of Israel on the plain. Seven altars were **Balaam's** erected and sacrifices offered, in three places, **prophecies.** in the hope that Jehovah might allow his prophet to utter curses. But each time that the inspiration came on Balaam, he was compelled to bless rather than curse.

First he was constrained, in spite of himself, to declare that Israel was not cursed by God, but destined to prosperity and favour.

In the second place of sacrifice, "the field of Zophim," he declared that God's purpose for Israel could not be altered by man's cursing. Jehovah was with Israel; it was He that brought them up out of Egypt. Israel was like a lion, no enchantment availed against such a people.

On the third occasion, Balaam burst out into admiration of Israel—"how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel," and foretold in glowing language the future greatness and victories of the nation. Balak was naturally angry with these unwelcome prophecies, he "smote his hands together," and bade the prophet return quickly to his home. "I thought to promote thee to great honour: but lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour."

But the king of Moab had yet to hear another and more tremendous prediction.

"I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh;
There shall come a Star out of Jacob,
And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."

Numb. xxiv. 17.

This is one of the early prophecies of Christ, the true Light of the world, and the King of humanity, Who was hereafter to appear in Israel: and for Whose sake indeed the whole history of Israel was being guided by God.

Balaam's enchantments had utterly failed against Israel, but a more serious danger threatened the people, which according to Jewish tradition was engineered by Balaam himself. They were lured by the Moabites and Midianites to join in their idolatrous worship of Baal-peor and the impure revels that accompanied it. This was sternly punished by the

The sin of
Baal-peor.

execution of the principal offenders, and by a pestilence which fell upon the host. A sacred war was then proclaimed against the Midianites; an army of twelve thousand, led by Phinehas the son of Aaron, utterly defeated them, and destroyed their towns. Among the slain was Balaam (Numb. xxxi. 8).

Phinehas, who had distinguished himself in zeal for Jehovah, was given "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood:" but "the iniquity of Peor" was always one of the dark memories of Israel. (See Josh. xxii. 17; Ps. cvi. 28.)

CHAPTER XVII

THE FAREWELL OF MOSES

MOSES had been forbidden to enter Canaan (p. 90), and the last period of his life coincides with the encampment **The last acts of Moses.** of Israel in "the plains of Moab," after the conquest of Eastern Palestine. Several important acts are ascribed to him during this period. He assigned territory on the east of Jordan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half Manasseh, as the broad plateaus of Gilead were well suited for pasture, and these tribes had many flocks and herds. But they received this land only on condition that they should assist their brother-tribes in the conquest of the country west of Jordan. Moses also appointed "six cities of refuge," three on each side of Jordan: Bezer, Ramoth-gilead, and Golan on the east, and Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron on the west, all cities of the Levites.

But by far the most important work of Moses at this time was the delivery of a series of charges to assembled Israel, laying down the main principles of **Deuteronomy.** the law, and exhorting them to obedience. These form the substance of the book of Deuteronomy (= "the second lawgiving").

The central feature of the Law is stated in remarkable

language to be belief in the unity of God, and the duty of whole-hearted love of Him.

4. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD:

5. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deut. vi. 4-7.

This religious summary of the Law was regarded with the greatest veneration by the later Jews. It was called from its first word the "Shema" (like our "Creed," from Credo); it formed part of the daily morning and evening service, and was and is still recited daily by every pious Jew. Our Lord Himself sanctioned the belief that this was "the greatest commandment of the Law" (St. Matt. xxii. 37, 38).

Throughout these discourses Israel is warned against the prevailing errors of the heathen world, especially against *idolatry*, and all sorts of *magic*. They had been called and separated by Jehovah for ^{The promise} of a Prophet. a special purpose—to be "a holy people." Hence they must not form alliances with nor intermarry with the heathen. Instead of the divination and magical arts of foretelling the future, which were widely practised by the heathen, a succession of inspired *prophets* was promised; and in one remarkable promise (Deut. xviii. 15) the Church, Jewish as well as Christian, has seen a prediction of Christ Himself. "The LORD

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thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren [*i.e.* from among the Israelites] like unto me (*i.e.* Moses); unto him ye shall hearken."

Among the practical directions of the Law is to be noted the insistence on charity and humanity to the poor, the stranger, and the helpless, and also to animals.

The Law of kindness.

7. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother : thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian ; because thou wast a stranger in his land.

15. Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee :

16. He shall dwell with thee, *even* among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best : thou shalt not oppress him.

Deut. xxiii. 7, 15, 16.

19. When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it : it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow : that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

Deut. xxiv. 19.

4. Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them : thou shalt surely help him to lift *them* up again.

10. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.

Deut. xxii. 4, 10.

4. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

Deut. xxv. 4.

Among the directions respecting worship, it was laid down that in days to come, when Israel was settled in the land of promise, there was to be *only one central sanctuary and altar for sacrifice* (Deut. **One Sanctuary.**

xii. and xvi.). The ancient custom of offering sacrifices and erecting altars in any place was to be done away with. But this law was never enforced until the later days of the monarchy. David, indeed, established the altar and the sanctuary at Jerusalem, and Solomon built a temple; but Hezekiah was the first who endeavoured seriously to suppress the local altars. Josiah carried this out more thoroughly, but the law of Deuteronomy was never loyally kept until after the return from the captivity in Babylon.

These discourses end (Deut. xxviii.—xxx.) with the promise of every sort of blessing upon Israel if the Law is kept, and the denouncing of terrible curses **Blessings** upon disobedience—disease, captivity, exile, **and curses.** and national ruin—curses which came to pass in the later history of the Jews, and still endure.

In addition to this oral delivery of the Law, Moses is stated to have ordained that it should be written on stones on Mount Ebal when Israel entered into Palestine, and its blessings and curses recited in a solemn assembly. He himself then wrote down all its precepts in a roll, which he delivered to the priests, to be kept beside the ark. He also, at God's command, appointed Joshua as his own successor, and laid a charge upon him to "be strong and of a good courage."

Two other great utterances are also attributed to Moses at this time—the Song (Deut. xxxii.) and the Blessings of the tribes (Deut. xxxiii.). The Song was intended as a continual reminder to Israel against the peril of disobedience and idolatry. The Blessings are wonderfully poetical and full of affection, especially those of Levi and Joseph. They conclude with a beautiful description of the happiness of Israel, if they will be faithful to their God.

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27. The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms : and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ; and shall say, Destroy *them*.

28. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone : the fountain of Jacob *shall be* upon a land of corn and wine ; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

29. Happy *art* thou, O Israel : who *is* like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who *is* the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Deut. xxxiii. 27-29.

The eventful and wonderful life of the great lawgiver had now come to its end. God permitted him to see the land which he was not allowed to enter. He was led to the top of Mount Nebo, and shown all the country.

1. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan.

2. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,

3. And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

4. And the LORD said unto him, This *is* the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed : I have caused thee to see *it* with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

Deut. xxxiv. 1-4.

Then, on the top of the mountain, Moses died, a hundred and twenty years old. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." His death and burial were shrouded in mystery. He was buried, apparently by the hands of angels, "in a valley in the land of Moab." "No

man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." For thirty days the people mourned over the passing away of the greatest man in the history of Israel, the prophet "whom the LORD knew face to face." No prophet was to arise his equal until Christ Himself came; and on the Mount of the Transfiguration, Moses himself, with Elijah, were to appear to bear their witness to Him, for Whom they had prepared the way.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN BY JOSHUA

THE invasion of western Palestine is described in the Book of Joshua. The first point of attack was the rich and fortified city of Jericho. Two spies were sent to enter it secretly and examine its defences. A woman named Rahab received and hid them in her house, confessing to them that she did this because she was convinced that Jehovah, the God of Israel, had universal power, and could not be resisted, and that He had given the land to His people, just as the territory of Sihon and Og had already been given them. She asked, therefore, that when the city was taken, she and her family might be spared. This was promised by the spies, on condition that a scarlet thread was displayed in her window, which could be easily seen by the besiegers, as her house was built into the city wall. Rahab saved the spies from the king of Jericho, who had heard of them; first by covering them with stalks of flax on the flat roof of her house, and then by letting them down by a rope from her window in the wall. The spies evaded their pursuers, and after three days returned to Joshua with the encouraging report that the inhabitants of Canaan were in great fear of the coming invasion.

The first movement was to cross the Jordan, which was performed as a solemn religious act. The priests went in front of the army, carrying the Ark of the Covenant. The river was in flood, as ^{The Jordan} crossed. usually happens in the spring, owing to the melting of the snows of Mount Hermon at its source. But as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, a miracle happened. The flow of the water was suddenly arrested at a place called Adam, some thirty miles up stream—perhaps by a landslip; the stream ran dry, and the whole army crossed without difficulty, “about forty thousand prepared for war.” The priests remained standing with the ark in the river-bed until all had crossed. Then to commemorate the event twelve great stones were set up in the river, and twelve others taken from the river-bed were set up at the first place of encampment, Gilgal. At this place the Passover was kept, unleavened cakes being made of the corn of Canaan; and the supply of manna ceased.

This strange passage of Jordan caused the greatest terror to the Canaanites. The courage of Joshua and his army was still further raised by the apparition of a man with a sword drawn in his ^{The taking} hand, who announced himself to Joshua as the “captain of the host of the LORD,” and commanded the general, like Moses at Sinai, to put off his shoes, for the place was holy. This apparition seems to have been more than an angel—it was probably an appearance of Jehovah Himself, *i.e.* of the Second Person of the Trinity. He gave Joshua instructions for the reduction of Jericho. There was to be no armed attack on the city. The army was simply to march round the walls, preceded by the priests blowing trumpets. This was done for seven days, and on the

seventh, after the city had been encompassed on that day seven times, Joshua said, "Shout, for the LORD hath given you the city." A great shout was raised, "the wall fell down flat," and the city passed without resistance into the hands of Israel. A sudden earthquake may have caused this event, but it was recognized as a God-given victory, and all the treasures of the city were declared by Joshua to be "accursed," *i.e.* devoted to Jehovah: they were not to be ordinary spoil. All the inhabitants were slain, except Rahab and her family. The city was razed to the ground, and Joshua pronounced a curse upon any one who attempted to rebuild it. All the sons of such a builder were to perish from the first-born to the youngest. The curse was literally fulfilled in the reign of Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 34) when Hiel of Bethel rebuilt the city: "he laid the foundation thereof in [*i.e.* with the loss of] Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son, Segub." ✓

Joshua was now ready to follow up his conquest of Jericho by an advance into the hill country. But at Ai a force of three thousand Israelites suffered an Achan's sin. unaccountable disaster (Josh. vii.). By a whole day's earnest prayer, prostrate before the ark, Joshua and the elders of Israel won from God the key to the mystery. The command to "devote" the spoil of Jericho had been secretly disobeyed. The sacred lots were cast, and Achan of the tribe of Judah was disclosed as the offender. He confessed to taking a "goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold," and hiding them under the floor of his tent. A terrible example was made: Achan and all his family were stoned to death and their bodies burnt with all his possessions. The place was marked by a cairn of stones, and the name

Achor (trouble) preserved the sad memory of one who had "troubled" Israel.

Ai was again attacked, and this time successfully. The garrison were enticed out of the city by a feint and an ambuscade of armed men rushed in at a signal given by the uplifted spear of Joshua. The place was taken and burned (Josh. viii.).

Joshua was now established on the central ridge of Palestine, and his success evidently spread terror among the surrounding tribes. The Hivites, a confederacy of four towns, Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim, succeeded by a crafty trick in making terms with the invaders. They sent ambassadors to Joshua who pretended to have come from a far country, influenced by respect for Jehovah. They "took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; and old shoes and clouted (patched) upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy." Pretending that all these things had been new and fresh when they started on their journey, they obtained a promise of alliance from Joshua. When the trick was discovered three days later, Joshua and the leaders of Israel refused to go back from their plighted word: they spared the lives of the Hivites, but reduced them to villanage and made them "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the sanctuary (Josh. ix.).

But the Amorite tribes, headed by Adoni-zedec, King of Jerusalem, resolved to resist. They began by an attack on Gibeon, as a traitor to the common cause. The battle of Joshua by a swift night march, in answer to the appeal of the Gibeonites for help, came unexpectedly upon the Amorites, and drove them in headlong rout over

the hills towards Beth-horon. A terrible hailstorm added to the terror and confusion of the fugitives. All day long Joshua pursued and slew them; and it was a day like no other day, for the sun's light, in answer to the prayer of Joshua, was miraculously prolonged. In the language of early poetry (a fragment quoted from the lost "book of Jasher"), "the sun stood, and the moon stayed . . . the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day" (Josh. x. 13).

The victory was completed by the capture and execution of the five allied kings who had taken refuge in a cave at Makkedah. Joshua was now master of southern Palestine, holding the passes both to the low hills (Shephelah) and the maritime plain of the west, and to the valley of Jordan on the east.

Next followed the conquest of the north (Josh. xi.). Another decisive battle was fought by "the waters of **The conquest of the north.** Merom" against a northern confederacy, headed by Jabin, King of Hazor, who was utterly defeated and his city burned. For seven years the subjugation of the Canaanite tribes went on, until thirty-one kings had been defeated and slain. Still the work was not completed, for the country of the Philistines, and the district of Lebanon remained unsubdued. But enough had been done to justify the partition of the land among the victorious invaders.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SETTLEMENT OF ISRAEL IN CANAAN

THE land of Canaan or Palestine is a very small country, about 180 miles long and varying in width from 50 to 75 miles, its whole area about equal to that of the The land six northern English counties. But it contains of Canaan. almost every variety of contour and scenery. In the north are the mountains of Lebanon and Hermon (9,000 to 10,000 feet). Southward runs a central mountain ridge, reaching its greatest height (2500 to 3000 feet) where the cities of Jerusalem and Hebron are situated. On the east this ridge drops rapidly into the Arabah, or ravine of the Jordan, which at its lowest is 1300 feet *below* sea-level. In the course of the Jordan are the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. On the west the central ridge slopes more gradually down to a line of lower hills, called the Shephelah, and thence to the plain by the border of the Mediterranean. East of the Jordan the ground rises rapidly to the great plateaus of Bashan, Gilead, and Moab. The land is very fertile, if labour and care are given to it. The vine and the olive flourish on the mountains; wheat grows well on the plain of Esdraelon (S.W. of the sea of Galilee), and on the maritime plain. The plateaus east of Jordan are suitable for pasture. It is a land of peculiar variety and beauty, secluded, and yet on the main lines of

communication between the great empires and civilizations of the ancient world.

Joshua had already taken solemn possession of the land in the name of Jehovah, and signified it by reading to assembled Israel on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim the words of the Law of Moses, with the blessings and cursings which the great Lawgiver had enjoined. The spot was memorable as the first place where Abraham had erected an altar. The ark with the priests was stationed between the mountains, and six tribes assembled on either hill solemnly answered "Amen" to the words of blessing and cursing. The land was the gift of Jehovah to Israel and His Law the condition of their retaining it (Josh. viii, cp. Deut. xxviii).

The division of the land was carried out on three main principles.

(1) The commands already given by Moses. He had assigned the land east of Jordan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh; and 48 cities, but no land, to the priestly tribe of Levi.

(2) The conquests of individuals. Judah and Simeon conquered the southern part of the land and were allowed to keep it. Jebus or Jerusalem was taken by them, but regained its independence until the days of David. Caleb, the other survivor of the twelve spies, conquered Hebron. Ephraim, to which Joshua belonged, and the other half of Manasseh, gained the central part of the land, rich and fertile, but dangerous through still unsubdued Canaanites.

(3) Partition by lot. Before the Tabernacle which had now been pitched at Shiloh, Joshua and Eleazar the priest cast lots and divided the rest of the land. Dan,

originally by the sea-coast, afterwards migrated to the far north.

The two and half tribes who had received the east of Jordan territory, having loyally helped their brethren to conquer, were now permitted to return. On their way, they erected at the fords of Jordan a memorial altar, as a sign that they were worshippers of Jehovah and part of the sacred nation (Josh. xxii.). At first this act was misunderstood, and thought to be a sign of rebellion or schism. A deputation headed by Phinehas the son of Eleazar was sent to expostulate with them. The answer they received was satisfactory: the altar was not for burnt-offerings or sacrifices, but as a perpetual witness of brotherhood. Civil war was averted, and the altar remained, bearing the name of Ed (witness.)

Joshua died at the age of 110, and was buried "in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in Mount Ephraim." It is also recorded that the bones of Joseph, which had been brought from Egypt in accordance with his wishes, were buried in Shechem, in a burial-place which Jacob had bought of "the sons of Hamor" (p. 41).

Before Joshua's death he delivered two farewell addresses to assembled Israel. Like Moses, he warned the people solemnly that their tenure of the land would depend upon their faithfulness to the Law. Especially they were cautioned against idolatry, old and new, and intermarriage with the Canaanites.

14. Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [*i.e.* the Euphrates], and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose

you this day whom ye will serve ; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell : but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Josh. xxiv. 14, 15.

The people readily enough professed their intention to be loyal ; they would "serve the LORD." Joshua, again warning them that this service would be no light matter, for Jehovah was "a holy and a jealous God," accepted the people's word, and set up a memorial stone in Shechem as a witness to the renewal of the covenant.

"Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us ; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us : it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God."

The influence of Joshua and his contemporary warriors lasted for some time. He and Moses had laid the foundation of the national life upon a pure, monotheistic religion. It would remain for later history to show how far this ideal would be maintained.

CHAPTER XX

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

THE period which follows the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, extending over about two centuries, is described in the Book of Judges. The lessons of Moses and Joshua were soon forgotten, and the picture drawn of the condition of Israel is one of dissension, distress, and religious failure. There was no capital nor central authority. The priesthood at Shiloh had little influence. Instead of a united nation, there was only a collection of tribes, jealous of one another, and only uniting occasionally to resist the various invasions and oppressions of surrounding nations. The historian sums up the condition of the period in the words, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Disunion.

But the religious failure was the most serious. The influence of the surviving Canaanites had a bad effect on the new settlers. They had never really, as a whole, surrendered themselves to the religious ideals of Moses. The older and corrupted Jehovah-worship, with its idols and teraphim, reasserted itself, and the Israelites easily conformed also to the idolatries and superstitions of Canaan. They mingled the worship of Jehovah with that of the Baalim ("lords"), or gods of the local sanctuaries of Canaan, often identifying Jehovah Idolatry.

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with the Baal, or nature-god of some heathen "holy place." And, in addition, they worshipped another Baal, the sun-god of the Syrians and the Phœnicians, Ashtaroth, the goddess of the moon, and the wooden images called "Asherim" (wrongly translated "groves").

Nevertheless, the purpose of God for Israel lived on, and He frequently urged them to repentance, sometimes

The Judges. by the direct word of a prophet, more often by the lessons of adversity and the oppression of their heathen neighbours. But most important was the rise and work of the "judges." These were a succession of heroes who from time to time in various places were called by God to take the lead, to deliver Israel from their oppressors, and to effect some reformation. They were warriors rather than judges in our sense, and may be compared to the "dictators" in early Roman history.

The first of these judges was Othniel, the kinsman of Caleb. He delivered Israel after eight years' oppression by Chushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia.

Next came Ehud, a Benjamite warrior, who assassinated Eglon, King of Moab, after eighteen years' oppression. Ehud then sounded his trumpet on mount Ephraim, and gathered a host of Israelites, who slew 10,000 Moabites at the fords of Jordan, and ended the period of oppression.

After Ehud appeared Shamgar, who is said to have slain 600 of the Philistines with an ox-goad. These

The Philistines. oppressors, who appear first about this time, were, like the Israelites, invaders of Palestine (from them the land gets its name), who came originally from Caphtor or Crete, and worked their way from Egypt up the coast, and finally settled in a

confederacy of five cities—Ashdod, Gaza, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron. Through most of the later history they appear as the obstinate rivals of the Israelites, and at times it seemed as if they, and not Israel, would be the possessors of the land.

For the present, however, the interest of the struggle with the heathen shifts to the north. The northern Canaanites, recovering from the conquests of **Deborah** **Joshua**, re-established themselves in Hazor, **and Barak** under another Jabin. He, with his commander-in-chief, Sisera, "mightily oppressed" the northern tribes of Israel, by the help of his "nine hundred chariots of iron." The judge who was raised up for their deliverance was a woman, **Deborah**, a prophetess. She summoned to her help **Barak** of Kadesh-naphtali; and the two called the tribes to make head against the oppressor. Five tribes obeyed the summons: Zebulun, Naphtali, Issachar, Ephraim, and Benjamin. **Barak**, at the word of **Deborah**, descended suddenly from his entrenchment on **Mount Tabor**, and with a little army of ten thousand men attacked the hosts of **Sisera**. "The stars in their courses fought against **Sisera**": a great storm flooded the river **Kishon**, and swept the charioteers to destruction. **Sisera** fled, and took refuge in the tent of **Jael**, the wife of **Heber** the Kenite, who, while he slept, slew him by driving a tent-peg into his head with a hammer.

The result of this victory was a rest of forty years from heathen oppression. The victory was celebrated by **Deborah** and **Barak** in a splendid battle-song, **The song of which will be found in Judges v., and is one** **victory.** of the earliest examples of Hebrew poetry. Thus the singers describe the battle and award praise to the brave and scorn to the laggards:—

18. Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

19. The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo ; they took no gain of money.

20. They fought from heaven ; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

21. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

22. Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.

23. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24. Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

31. So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD : but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

Judges v. 18-24, 31.

CHAPTER XXI

THE JUDGES—GIDEON

THE next "oppression" of Israel was at the hands of the Midianites. This seems to have been a general name for wandering tribes of the desert, who for long had made a highway through Canaan with their caravans of camels trading between Egypt and the East. At this period they made constant raids upon Israel, spoiling their harvests and stealing their flocks. They are described as being like "grasshoppers for multitude."

The Divine call to deliver Israel came to Gideon, the son of Joash, of Ophrah in the tribe of Manasseh. "The Angel of the LORD" appeared to him as he was secretly threshing wheat to hide it from the Midianites, and said to him:—

12. The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

13. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy night, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? Judges vi. 12-14.

It was to be a religious war, and in token of this,

Gideon not only built an altar to the God of Israel, but threw down the altar and the idolatrous pillar which his father had erected to Baal.

He then "blew a trumpet" and gathered his own tribesmen, as well as those of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, a large army of 32,000. But the **Gideon's army.** Divine Voice told him it was too large. God could work his purpose by a few faithful men. First, all who were afraid were told to depart. This left only 10,000. But these were further reduced to a band of 300 by the test of the way in which they drank at the well of Harod. Those only who lapped the water, putting their hands to their mouths, were chosen: while those who knelt down and drank a full draught were sent away. Perhaps the former were the more experienced warriors, who were accustomed to be watchful against an enemy, and to restrain their own desires in the moment of danger. On the eve of the battle, Gideon received encouragement by going down secretly under cover of night to the camp of the Midianites. He found them in a state of nervousness. One man was telling his dream to another, of how he saw a tent overturned by a cake of barley bread which rolled into the camp. The hearer replied that this was "the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash," and that Jehovah had delivered the Midianites into his hand.

Gideon then made his famous night attack. His 300 men each carried a trumpet, and a lighted torch concealed in an empty pitcher; and were divided **The attack on Midian.** into three companies. At a given signal, each man broke his pitcher, showed his torch and blew his trumpet, shouting the war-cry: "The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon." The Midianites were seized with panic, fought with each other in the darkness, and made a

general stampede eastwards to the fords of the Jordan at Beth-shean. But here the men of Ephraim were posted ready to receive them, and slew among others Oreb and Zeeb, two of their princes (Judges vii.).

The Ephraimites, however, the most powerful and the proudest of the tribes, were not satisfied with their share in the victory, and demanded why they had not been summoned at the first. Gideon ^{The pursuit.} succeeded in pacifying them by saying that their part was greater than his. "Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" He himself with his 300 warriors pushed on over the Jordan in pursuit; though with strange lack of national feeling the men of Succoth and Penuel refused to help him, or even to give bread to his fainting warriors. Still he went on, overtook the Midianites, took and put to death the other two Midianite princes, Zebah and Zalmunna, who he found had actually killed his own brothers previously. On his return he inflicted severe punishments on those who had refused to help him: scourging with thorns the men of Succoth; destroying the tower of Penuel and killing the inhabitants.

The Israelites, in a burst of gratitude, wished to make Gideon king. He refused, saying that Jehovah was their only King. He only asked and received from ^{Gideon's} the spoils of victory the golden ear-rings (or ^{ephod.} nose-rings) of the Midianites. From these, which weighed 1700 shekels, he made, as a votive offering to Jehovah, a golden "ephod" (Judges viii.). This was apparently an image used in the corrupt and traditional worship of Jehovah. Gideon's piety had not risen to the level of the religion of Moses and Joshua, and the ephod and its shrine became a centre of idolatrous worship in aftertime.

After Gideon's death Israel lapsed again into idolatry—especially the worship of Baal-berith, *i.e.* “Baal of the covenant,” perhaps the “Lord” of a covenant between themselves and the Canaanites. Though Gideon had refused the crown, one of the most worthless of his many sons, Abimelech of Shechem, aspired to it. He gained support and money (out of the temple of Baal-berith) from the Shechemites, and, hiring “vain and light persons,” slew all the family of Gideon, seventy persons, at Ophrah “on one stone.” Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, escaped, and from the top of Gerizim made a vivid appeal, in the form of a parable, against his murderous brother:—

8. The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

Jotham's parable. 9. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10. And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.

11. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

12. Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.

13. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which choereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

14. Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.

15. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

Judges ix. 8-15.

The vain-glorious bramble is, of course, Abimelech, willing to take an office which better men shrank from, and destined to bring destruction ("fire") on those who relied on him.

The parable at first was unheeded: Jotham escaped, and Abimelech for three years reigned as king. Then the Canaanite inhabitants of Shechem revolted against him, under one Gaal, the son of Ebed. **The end of Abimelech.** Abimelech took a horrible vengeance on the Shechemites, first destroying their city, and then burning alive the remnant of the garrison in a stronghold connected with the temple of Baal-berith, in which they had taken refuge. He next proceeded to besiege Thebez, a town some miles to the north of Shechem; but here he met an ignominious end by the hand of a woman, who threw upon his head a piece of a millstone from the wall of the "tower" or citadel. At his request his armour-bearer killed him, "that men may not say of me 'A woman slew him.'" Thus in civil strife and bloodshed ended the family of the great Gideon.

CHAPTER XXII

THE JUDGES—JEPHTHAH AND SAMSON

THE next judge of any prominence is Jephthah of Gilead (the district east of Jordan). He is described as a "mighty man of valour," but he had been disinherited by his family, and had become the head of a band of outlaws. The Ammonites had overrun Gilead, and were penetrating into central Palestine. The chief men of Gilead could think of no leader against these invaders except the outlaw chief, and he consented to lead their army on condition that he should be recognized afterwards as head and ruler in Gilead.

He first attempted to come to terms with the Ammonites by reminding them that Israel had always respected their territory, and that for three hundred years there had been no complaint of aggression. When they refused to listen, he led an army into the Ammonite country, destroyed twenty of their towns, and inflicted a complete defeat on them.

But before his advance, he made his rash and heathenish vow to Jehovah that, if victory were given him, he would offer in sacrifice as a burnt-offering whatever came first out of his house

to meet him, when he returned in triumph. His own daughter, an only child, came to meet him "with timbrels and dances" at Mizpeh.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. Judges xi. 35.

The daughter did not shrink from her fate; the vow, she said, could not be broken. She asked only for two months' respite "to go up and down upon the mountains" with her companions, to bewail the cutting off of her father's family, of which she was the only representative. "And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed." Her death was lamented four days in each year in after-time by "the daughters of Israel."

Nothing else is recorded of Jephthah except that after his conquest of Ammon he became embroiled in a civil war with the Ephraimites. As in the war of The men of Gideon with the Midianites, the tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was jealous of the honours of the victory in which they had not shared. Their complaints and insults led to open war with a tragic conclusion. The Ephraimites were intercepted by the Gileadites at the fords of Jordan. They were identified by the test of making each fugitive pronounce the word for a ford, "Shibboleth." If he called it "Sibboleth," he was known as an Ephraimite, and at once put to death. In this way 42,000 of the tribe were slain.

A new national enemy, a more serious rival to Israel than any previous, was now arising in the shape of the Philistines (p. 112). A champion of Israel appeared in Samson, the son of Manoah, of Dan, a man of supernatural strength. From his birth, at the command of "the Angel of the LORD," he had been dedicated to God as a "Nazirite," i.e. one "separated" to the Divine service, in token of which his hair was never to be cut, nor was he to touch wine or any strong drink, or anything unclean. Samson never seems to have led armies, or done anything for the social or religious life of his people. His career is only a series of stories of strange and miraculous feats of prowess, ending in disaster and tragedy (Judges xiii.-xvi.).

First, he wished to marry a Philistine woman at Timnath. On his way to see her, he killed a lion single-handed. Afterwards finding honey, which a swarm of wild bees had left in the carcase, he invented a riddle, which he propounded to the Philistines at his wedding-feast, wagering on it a stake of "thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments."

"Out of the eater came forth meat,
Out of the strong came forth sweetness."

The bride persuaded Samson to tell her the answer, which she promptly passed on to the guests, who were able to reply:

"What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?"

Samson, in his anger, killed thirty Philistines, and out of their spoil paid his wager. This, of course, embroiled

him with the Philistines. He burned their standing corn by tying firebrands to the tails of foxes; and "smote the Philistines hip and thigh with a great slaughter." His cowardly countrymen, frightened at the prospect of Philistine vengeance, desired to surrender him to his enemies. He allowed himself to be taken and bound with two new cords. But as soon as he was delivered to the Philistines he broke the cords, and attacked and slew a large number of them with the jawbone of an ass. The spot was called in memory Ramath-lehi, "hill of the jawbone." Another exploit was the carrying away of the town-gates of Gaza on his back by night, when the Philistines had, as they thought, captured him there, and only waited till morning to seize him.

The end of Samson was strange and tragic. He fell into the power of a woman of the vale of Sorek, Delilah, who was bribed by "the lords of the Philistines" to discover the secret of his great ^{Delilah.} strength and betray him. At first her wiles were unavailing: he gave false reasons. To be bound "with seven green withs," he said, would reduce him to the level of any other man. But the withs went, when the "liers in wait" tried to take him, "as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire." "New ropes that never were occupied" proved just as useless. So, too, did the binding of his seven locks of hair to the web of the loom—"he went away with the pin of the beam and with the web."

At last, however, he yielded to Delilah's reproaches and entreaties, and confessed that the secret of his strength lay in his unshorn locks (which were the sign of his dedication to Jehovah). She caused these to be cut off while he was asleep, and when the cry, "The Philistines

be upon thee, Samson," was raised, which he had so often scorned, he found that "the LORD was departed from him." The Philistines took and blinded him, and made him grind corn in his prison-house, laden with fetters of brass. But with the growth of his hair, combined no doubt with repentance, his strength returned; and when the brutal Philistines had their blind slave brought into a theatre, on the occasion of a festival of their idol Dagon, "to make sport," he prayed his last prayer, and wreaked his final vengeance on his country's enemies.

He besought his God to strengthen him "only this once," and then, clutching in each of his hands one of the **Samson's end.** great central pillars that supported the roof of the theatre, he pulled down the building, killing all that were in it, and perishing himself, as he had desired, in the same overthrow. "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." But this could not retrieve the loss to Israel of the champion, who had spoiled his career by his own moral weakness. Samson had, for the present, no successor; and the Philistines seem to have overrun Palestine, established forts and garrisons, and gained a more or less complete domination over Israel.

It was a dark time, but the Book of Ruth gives a more pleasing picture of the piety and the kindness which **Boaz** were to be found in the country life of Israel. **and Ruth.** Boaz, a wealthy farmer of Bethlehem, is described as being on affectionate terms with his work-people, whom he greets with, "The LORD be with you," and is answered with, "The LORD bless thee." He received kindly Ruth, the Moabite widow of an Israelite, who had refused to leave her mother-in-law, Naomi, when she was returning to Bethlehem in sorrow and poverty. He

allowed Ruth to glean in his fields during barley and wheat harvest, protected her, helped her mother-in-law to regain her lost inheritance, and ultimately himself married Ruth, and became the father of Obed, whose grandson was to be the great King David.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE JUDGES—ELI AND SAMUEL

THE next judge after the death of Samson was Eli, a descendant of Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron, who was established as high priest of the Tabernacle at Shiloh. From this centre he judged for forty years the central part of Palestine. He is portrayed in 1 Samuel as a man of piety and kindness, but lamentably weak in ruling his own family. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who also acted as priests at Shiloh, disgusted Israel by their bad lives and their covetousness. They were not content with the ordinary priestly dues from the worshippers, but seized the best part of the sacrifices for themselves, before any part was offered. The result was "men abhorred the offering of the LORD"; religious observances, such as the gatherings for the great feasts, fell largely into disuse. Moreover, the voice of prophecy was silent, "there was no open vision." Israel was conscious of a want of Divine guidance, and there was a general decay of religion. Eli had his warnings. An unnamed prophet delivered a heavy message to him from Jehovah, and told him that he was honouring his sons above God. Both Hophni and Phinehas would die in one day. The priesthood would pass to a worthier successor, "a faithful priest that shall do according to all

that is in my heart and in my mind," and Eli's descendants would be reduced to beggary.

The warning was disregarded. Eli only uttered mild protests to his sons, but did nothing to reform or check them. But meanwhile a great prophet and ^{The birth of} restorer was being raised up in the person of Samuel.

Samuel, the last of the judges. He was born in answer to the prayers of his mother, Hannah, who, being childless, prayed earnestly at Shiloh, which her husband, Elkanah, visited with his family yearly to offer sacrifice, that a son might be given her. She promised that if her prayer was answered she would dedicate him for ever as a Nazirite, to the service of the sanctuary. Eli, the priest, at first thought that her earnestness in prayer was the result of drunkenness; but, learning her sorrow and sincerity, accepted her vow, and gave her his blessing.

The child was born, received the name of Samuel ("asked of God"), and was presented by his parents at Shiloh, where he remained henceforth under Eli's care, and ministered as a child to Jehovah, wearing the linen "ephod" of the priesthood. Year by year his mother visited him, bringing him "a little coat"; but she was faithful to the vow, and never claimed him back. She expressed her joy and thankfulness in an inspired song, which is in the Old Testament like the Magnificat in the New Testament, as will be seen from the opening verses.

1. My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

2. *There is* none holy as the LORD: for *there is* none beside thee: neither *is there* any rock like our God.

1 Sam. ii. 1, 2.

The child Samuel grew up unharmed by the sins and irreverence of those around him. The turning point in his life came when the Voice of Jehovah, so long unheard by prophets, spoke to him out of the darkness of the Tabernacle, and called him by his name. At first he thought that Eli had called him, but when the call was three times repeated, Eli himself recognized that "Jehovah had called the child," and bade him reply, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." The first message he received was one of coming judgment. "I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle." The sin of Eli's family was about to receive a startling punishment. This was the beginning of Samuel's career as a prophet. All Israel heard and believed that Jehovah had appeared again and that Samuel was the mouthpiece of His word.

The foretold disaster soon fell (1 Sam. iv.). The Israelites attempted to drive out their Philistine lords. When they were unsuccessful in their first battle, they were prompted by superstition rather than faith, to send for the ark of God out of the Tabernacle, that it might save them from their enemies. Hophni and Phinehas, against the wishes apparently of their father, fetched the ark and brought it into the camp. The Philistines were awestruck, but fought all the more desperately, routed the Israelites, slew 30,000, including Hophni and Phinehas, and worst of all captured the ark itself. A messenger brought the terrible tidings to Eli, now a blind old man of ninety-eight. When he was told of the loss of the ark, Eli fell backwards from his judge's seat by the gate of the town, and broke his neck. The wife of Phinehas died of grief, giving to her new-born son

the name Ichabod (no glory)—“the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.”

The triumphant Philistines placed their trophy in the temple of their idol Dagon at Ashdod. But the idol fell twice from his pedestal, a plague of boils The Ark afflicted his worshippers, and a plague of restored. mice overran and spoiled their harvests. In terror they sent the ark about from one city to another, and finally decided, on the advice of their priests, to restore it to Israel, with a trespass-offering of five representations in gold of the boils which had afflicted them, and five golden mice. These were placed with the ark on a cart drawn by two cows, which were allowed to go where they wished. Instead of returning to their calves, they drew the cart some fifteen miles to the Levite city of Bethshemesh. The men of Bethshemesh received the ark with joy, but they themselves suffered a heavy punishment for looking irreverently into the ark. A large number of them, probably seventy, were struck down with death. The ark was then removed to Kirjath-jearim and placed in the house of Abinadab, where it remained for many years, until David took it to Jerusalem.

The twenty years which followed were a period of darkness and oppression. The symbol of Jehovah's presence and covenant was no longer in the Tabernacle, the Philistines ruled over the land, and all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah (1 Sam. v.-vii. 2).

But at last Samuel stood forth as champion and deliverer. He called Israel to a great national repentance, and made them put away their idols. The Samuel de- Philistines were totally defeated at Mizpeh, livers and through the prayer of Samuel, and fled back judges Israel. into their own land. Samuel commemorated the victory

The child Samuel grew up unharmed by the sins and irreverence of those around him. The turning point in his life came when the Voice of Jehovah, so long unheard by prophets, spoke to him out of the darkness of the Tabernacle, and called him by his name. At first he thought that Eli had called him, but when the call was three times repeated, Eli himself recognized that "Jehovah had called the child," and bade him reply, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." The first message he received was one of coming judgment. "I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle." The sin of Eli's family was about to receive a startling punishment. This was the beginning of Samuel's career as a prophet. All Israel heard and believed that Jehovah had appeared again and that Samuel was the mouthpiece of His word.

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by setting up a stone in the place where twenty years before the ark had been captured, and called it Ebenezer ("stone of help"), saying, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

Samuel was now established as "judge" of Israel. He lived at Ramah, and made yearly circuits to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, administrating justice. He also seems, in the abeyance of the regular priesthood, to have acted as priest, at an altar at Ramah. In addition he established a guild or school of prophets, called "the sons of the prophets." The Philistines do not appear to have recovered from their defeat at Mizpeh for some time, and Israel seemed on the way to national and religious recovery under the last and greatest of the judges.

CHAPTER XXIV

SAMUEL AND SAUL

THE good rule of Samuel naturally awakened national feeling in Israel, and a desire for unity and settled government. But nothing was to be hoped for from Samuel's own family. He had made his two sons, Joel and Abiah, "judges" in Beersheba, *i.e.* southern Palestine; but they proved corrupt rulers, who "took bribes and perverted judgment." The request for a King.

The elders of Israel approached Samuel himself with a request for a king "to judge us like all the nations."

To Samuel, as to Gideon previously, this was a falling away from the ideal. Israel was not intended by God to be "like all the nations," but to be a theocracy, *i.e.* a nation under God's direct government. Jehovah himself, in answer to Samuel's prayer, pronounced the request of the elders to be sinful, "they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." Nevertheless it was to be granted, for

"God fulfils Himself in many ways."

Only first Samuel was bidden to explain to Israel what a change in their ancient liberty would result from setting up a king. The king would compel their sons to fight and to work for him, their daughters to be his domestic servants; their lands would not be safe from his rapacity;

he would take what he pleased, and exact taxes of a tenth from the rest; their servants, too, would have to work for the king.

“And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you: and the Lord will not hear you in that day” (1 Sam. viii. 18).

This picture of an Oriental tyrant did not alter the will of the people; so Samuel was guided to choose and anoint a king.

The first King of Israel was Saul, the tall and handsome son of Kish, an influential man of the tribe of Benjamin. His meeting with Samuel was caused by his being sent to find the strayed asses of his father. Failing to find them, he decided on the advice of his servant, to consult Samuel as a “seer” or soothsayer. But when he came to Ramah he found that Samuel was expecting him, and he was treated as an honoured guest at a sacrificial banquet over which the prophet was presiding. Moreover, he was told by Samuel to give up caring for the asses, as they were already found, and he was informed that “the desire of all Israel” was upon himself. Next day the meaning of this was disclosed, for Samuel poured oil on Saul’s head when they were alone together, and told him that Jehovah had made him “captain over His inheritance.”

The seer also gave him three signs in confirmation of this—foretelling three incidents which would befall him on his homeward journey. First, at Rachel’s sepulchre he would be met by two men, who would inform him that the asses were found, and his father was now concerned only for his son’s safety. Next, he would meet three men “going up to God to Bethel,” i.e. going to consult an oracle, or offer sacrifice at this

traditional holy place. They would salute him, and present him with two loaves of bread, part of the materials for sacrifice which they were carrying (three kids, three loaves, and a bottle of wine). Lastly, he would come to "the hill" (or Gibeah) "of God," where was the garrison of the Philistines. Here he would meet a company of prophets coming down, with musical instruments, and uttering "prophecies," ecstatic utterances of praise or worship. The Spirit of God would seize upon Saul also, and he too would utter prophecies. All these signs came to pass, and the last one, the most remarkable, gave rise to a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The question was asked, it is said, by one of Saul's townsmen. But another reproved him by replying, "But who is *their* father?" Prophetic power, he meant, did not depend on a man's origin or parentage. It was a direct gift from God (1 Sam. ix., x.).

The choice of Saul as king was revealed to assembled Israel at Mizpeh by Samuel. Lots were cast, and the lot fell on Saul. He had modestly hidden himself among the baggage waggons, but when discovered, Samuel presented him to the people and wrote down rules for the government of the new kingdom. Saul was received with enthusiasm and shouts of "God save the king," though certain malcontents ("sons of Belial," i.e. children of worthlessness) despised him, and "brought him no presents."

The new king soon had the opportunity of showing his spirit and courage. Nahash, the King of the Ammonites, whose encroachments had apparently been one of the reasons why Israel had asked for a king, laid siege to Jabesh-Gilead, the most important town east of Jordan. He refused the surrender

The Corona-
tion of Saul.

Saul's first
victory.

of the inhabitants, except on the humiliating condition of blinding them all of their right eyes (to make them unfit for military service). A message was sent from the town to Saul imploring help, while the seven days' respite continued which Nahash had allowed. Saul cut in pieces the yoke of oxen he was plowing with, and sent the pieces round, as a war summons to Israel, threatening that whoever disobeyed the call should have his own oxen similarly treated. A large army gathered at Bezek; a message was sent to the besieged—"To-morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help"—and by a night march and an attack at dawn, the Ammonites were surprised and scattered. Saul was now hailed by all as king, and at a great national gathering at Gilgal his throne was established. He nobly refused to have the men punished who before had refused to recognise him as king (1 Sam. xi.).

It was on this occasion apparently that Samuel delivered his great farewell to his own judgeship and to Israel, though he appears afterwards for long as the ruling spirit in Saul's wars. He first challenged his hearers to bring any charge against his own past government:—

2. I am old and grey-headed; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

3. Behold, here I *am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's land.

5. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

1 Samuel xii. 2-5.

Next he reproved Israel for their own past idolatries and for their presumption and want of faith shown in asking for a king. And as a sign of the truth of what he said, a great thunderstorm (unusual and terrible at the time of harvest, when it occurred) burst over the people in answer to his prayers, and moved them to terror and repentance. Samuel accepted their words, assured them that God's mercy might still be theirs, if they and their king were obedient to Him ; and spoke in memorable words of his own readiness to pray for them—

“God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way.”

Though no longer judge and ruler, Samuel would still act as teacher, prophet, and priest for Israel.

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PART II



CHAPTER XXV

SAUL

THE reign of Saul was mostly occupied with wars against the Philistines. They had never relinquished their claim to be lords of Palestine, and they retained garrisons The Philistine oppression. in the country. Sometime after Saul's accession we find them endeavouring to disarm the Israelites, and forbidding any smith to exercise his trade, so that even the implements of agriculture had to be taken to the Philistine country to be sharpened (1 Sam. xiii). Saul commenced an attack on them with a small army of 3000, of which 1000 was commanded by Jonathan his son. The latter was successful in defeating the Philistine garrison at Geba. A general call to battle ensued, Saul taking up his position at Gilgal, the ancient headquarters of Joshua. The Philistines now invaded in force, raided the country, and drove the terrified Israelites to hide in caves and thickets, and even to take refuge beyond Jordan.

Saul was eager to attack them, but he had been bidden by Samuel to wait at Gilgal till he himself should come and offer the preliminary sacrifice. Here Saul's impatience. occurred Saul's first lapse from obedience. His army was dwindling away, he would not wait and so offered the sacrifice himself. Samuel arrived immediately afterwards, and announced that Saul's impetuous disobedience would be the cause of his family

losing the kingdom. Jehovah had already sought another king, "a man after his own heart."

For the present, however, Saul's campaign was successful. Jonathan and his armour-bearer single-handedly made an attack on the Philistine stronghold at a place in the ravine between the two armies, which were encamped at Michmash and Gibeah. The Philistine defenders at first mocked at the two daring warriors: but when they actually climbed the cliff, seem to have been seized with sudden panic, which was increased by the shock of an earthquake. The confusion was seen by Saul and his men on the opposite hill. Saul's impetuosity again led him into irreverence and forgetfulness of God. He first, indeed, bade the priest who was in his camp consult the ephod, *i.e.* probably the Urim and Thummim. But before the Divine answer could be given, he said to the priest "withdraw thy hand," and a general rush was made upon the Philistines. This was successful and the invaders were driven back over the mountains towards Philistia, just as the Canaanites had fled before Joshua at Beth-horon.

The rout might have been more complete had not Saul forbidden under a curse any of his warriors to taste Jonathan's food till the evening. The result was that in life in danger. their famished state they broke the Divine commandment not to taste blood, and ate indiscriminately of the spoil which they had taken. Jonathan unwittingly found himself under the curse which Saul had invoked, for during the pursuit he had tasted some wild honey found in a wood. This was disclosed by the sacred oracle and Saul sentenced his own son to death. But the popular voice refused to allow Jonathan, the hero of the day, to be slain (1 Sam. xiv.).

A second reason for Saul's rejection by God and his loss of the kingdom is given in 1 Sam. xv. The Amalekites, a wandering tribe of desert-dwellers to the south-west of Palestine, had opposed the march of Israel at Rephidim, and had fallen under the displeasure of God. Saul was commanded by Samuel to execute judgment on them. It was to be a holy war, not for the sake of spoil or conquest; all the Amalekites were to be slain and their goods "devoted" to Jehovah. Saul gathered an army and crushed the Amalekites, but kept the best of the spoils to reward his warriors, and Agag the Amalekite king was spared, probably out of vanity as a distinguished prisoner to adorn Saul's triumph.

Samuel was bidden by God to go at once to Saul and pronounce God's final judgment. Saul tried to excuse himself by laying the blame on his people, and pretending that the flocks and herds had been spared in order to do sacrifice to Jehovah. Samuel swept away his excuses and pronounced his sin to be rebellion against Jehovah, and as bad as witchcraft and idolatry. "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Saul was now ready to profess penitence, but Samuel refused it. It was too late. "The LORD," he said, "hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou."

Saul besought Samuel not to put him to shame before his people, to which the prophet so far consented as to go with him and take part in the worship of Jehovah. But he himself with his own hands put Agag to death "before the LORD," carrying out the Divine sentence which Saul had failed to execute.

This was the last meeting in life of Saul and Samuel. Saul's character gradually deteriorates, and we see his ruin inevitable. He had never learned self-restraint; and he did not grasp the religious nature of his kingdom, which could only stand by obedience to the law and word of God.

Samuel sorrowed long over Saul's failure, but he was finally bidden by God to go and anoint as the future king one of the sons of Jesse, at Bethlehem.

Seven of Jesse's sons were passed in review before the prophet, but each was rejected, for the Divine Voice bade **The anointing of David.** "The LORD seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." Finally, Jesse's youngest son, David, was sent for, who was keeping his father's sheep.

12. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 13.

Samuel remained the rest of his life in seclusion at Ramah. The meaning of David's anointing was apparently not understood by his family. They may have thought that Samuel was only setting him apart as a future prophet. So for the present David remained at home, in charge of the flocks. Nevertheless this anointing of David is one of the greatest turning points in the sacred history, for he was not only to be the greatest king of Israel, but also the type and ancestor of Christ Himself.

CHAPTER XXVI

SAUL AND DAVID

Two distinct accounts are given in 1 Sam. xvi. and xvii. of David's first meeting with Saul, which cannot be harmonized, as we do not know all the circumstances. The first account states that Saul ^{David's} music. was troubled by the attacks of an evil spirit, which produced terrible fits of depression or madness. Music was recommended as a help, and Saul's servants spoke to him of David of Bethlehem, who was a "cunning" player on the harp. So David was sent for, and found favour with Saul, whose attacks were often alleviated by the young musician's skill.

The second account connects David's appearance with the outbreak of another war with the Philistines. In the valley of Elah, the two armies confronted one another for forty days. Each day the Philis- ^{Goliath.} tino champion, the giant Goliath of Gath, challenged the Israelite warriors to single combat. But no one dared to confront him, for he was over nine feet in height, and his armour and weapons were great in proportion. He was clad in panoply of brass; "the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron." Saul offered riches, the freedom of Israel, and his own daughter as wife to any one who could kill Goliath, but in vain.

Finally, David appeared, who had been sent by his father, Jesse, to inquire after his brothers, who were **David's duel with Goliath.** serving in Saul's army, and to carry a present to their captain. He heard the story, and was indignant that Goliath should defy "the armies of the living God." He offered himself to accept the challenge, and was brought into Saul's presence. Saul warned him of the inequality of such a duel; but David described how he had already slain a lion and a bear which had attacked his father's flocks. The king offered him armour and a sword, but he refused them, as not accustomed to their use, and entered the battle with nothing but his shepherd's sling and five smooth stones from the brook, in his shepherd's bag. The giant derided him as he approached, but David met him with words of lofty faith and courage.

45. Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and and he will give you into our hands.

1 Samuel xvii. 45-47.

The battle was soon decided. Before Goliath could get within striking distance of David, one cast of the terrible sling had pierced with a stone the giant's forehead, and stretched him on the ground. David, with

Goliath's own sword, cut off his head. The Philistines fled in panic towards Ekron, and Abner, Saul's commander-in-chief, presented David, carrying the head, to the king.

Two results for David followed that day. The king's son, Jonathan, a strong and beautiful character, became David's life-long admirer and friend. On the other hand, the king himself was seized with jealousy, especially as the women of Israel met the returning warriors with the refrain—

“Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands.”

1 Sam. xviii. 7.

“What can he have more but the kingdom?” he asked. Next day, as the fit of madness seized him, he twice tried to murder David with a cast of his javelin. David escaped; but he was constantly being entrapped into danger by Saul, who plotted against him, and even suggested to Jonathan that David should be put to death. At last David's exploits and popularity drove Saul to such murderous frenzy that David felt he must escape for his life (1 Sam. xix.). His wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, saved him from assassination by pretending he was sick. She let him out of a window, and put in his bed an image, with a rug of goat's hair at its head, so as to deceive his would-be murderers as long as possible.

David first took refuge with Samuel and “the sons of the prophets” at Naioth, in Ramah. The king himself pursued him, but, on arriving, he was seized by the mysterious spirit of prophecy, and lay naked on the ground for a day and a night, uttering “prophecies” or ravings. Thus was suggested another reason for the proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

Jonathan now endeavoured to mediate between his father and David—or, at least, to find out definitely whether any reconciliation was possible (1 Sam. xx.). The nobility of Jonathan comes out very clearly in the story, as he had already realized that David, and not himself, was to be the future king. He renewed his covenant of friendship with David, asking only that when David came to the throne he would show kindness to himself and his children.

Jonathan, in order to find out his father's real intention, arranged that David should be absent from the royal table, and made the excuse for him that he had gone to Bethlehem to take part in a family festival. Saul's anger blazed out. He abused and insulted Jonathan, telling him that David's life was fatal to his own succession, and when he expostulated, actually hurled his javelin at his own son. Jonathan left the table "in fierce anger," and recognizing that matters were hopeless, went to give David, in his hiding-place, the news by a secret code already arranged between them.

According to the words spoken to the boy who carried Jonathan's bow and arrows, it was to be known whether David might return in safety or not. If, after shooting, Jonathan said to the boy, "The arrow is on this side of thee, take it," the omen was good; but if he said, "The arrow is beyond thee," David must flee for his life. The fatal word was heard by David in his hiding-place—"Is not the arrow beyond thee? Make haste, stay not." Neither the boy with the quiver, nor any other hearer but David, was the wiser. David, however, abandoning the attempt at secrecy, rose out of his hiding-place as soon as the boy had been sent back to the town, took a pathetic and tearful farewell of his loyal and self-sacrificing friend,

and henceforth, till Saul's death, was a refugee and an outlaw.

His first care was to provide himself and his followers with food and weapons. He visited Ahimelech, the priest at Nob, a place of unknown locality, which apparently had taken the place of Shiloh as **David at Nob** the central sanctuary of Israel. The poverty of the priesthood is seen in the fact that there was not even any bread except the sacred shewbread, which only the priests might eat. After some hesitation the priest consented to give this to David and his men; and also gave him the sword of Goliath, which had been laid up as a trophy, "wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod." The action was observed by an enemy—Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdman, and brought terrible consequences afterwards.

David, apparently despairing for the present of maintaining any followers, fled alone to the court of the Philistine Achish, King of Gath. But his **David at Gath** identity was discovered, and his life was in danger. The Philistines knew of the ballad sung in Israel, with its refrain, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." David adopted the Oriental expedient of shamming madness, knowing that popular superstition would consider him sacred—"He changed his behaviour, and scrabbled on the door of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." Achish declared that he had no "need of madmen," and allowed his guest to depart unmolested (1 Sam. xxi.).

David now sought various hiding-places in the south of Palestine. He collected a band of out- **David an outlaw.** laws around him at the Cave of Adullam, in the valley of Elah, and then, finding that unsafe, moved to

“the forest of Hareth,” in Judah—probably among the hills near Hebron. He carefully abstained from any acts of rebellion against Saul, and restrained his men from robbery. He was apparently popular in the neighbourhood, being looked upon rather as a defender of Israel against the Philistines than as a freebooter.

Saul took terrible vengeance on the priests of Nob, against whom Doeg the Edomite brought information. Ahimelech was sent for, and pleaded ignorance of any quarrel between David and the king. But the king ordered that he and all the priests of Nob should be put to death. Even Saul's own tribesmen refused to carry out such a bloodthirsty and sacrilegious sentence; and Doeg himself with his own followers were allowed to do it, destroying Nob, and slaying in one day “eighty-five persons that did wear a linen ephod” (1 Sam. xxii.).

David and his six hundred followers now took refuge in Keilah, a town among the lower hills, near the valley of Elah. But the inhabitants, although David had delivered them from the Philistine raiders, were found to be meditating treachery. To escape being delivered up to Saul, David and his men now fled to the wild and difficult region of Jeshimon, “the wilderness of Judah,” near the village of Ziph.

One only refugee from the priests of Nob had joined him, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, who brought with him “the ephod,” or Urim and Thummim, by which Divine guidance was often given to David. One more interview took place between David and Jonathan. The latter encouraged his friend. “Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee.”

The people of Ziph, like those of Keilah, were found

to be traitors, and to be carrying information to Saul. Again David fled, pursued by Saul so closely that on one occasion only one hill divided him and his men from Saul's army. But a rumour of a Philistine invasion drew off Saul's attention, and for a time the pursuit ceased (1 Sam. xxiii.).

CHAPTER XXVII

DAVID AND SAUL

DAVID'S next hiding-place was Engedi, on the west shore of the Dead Sea, a remarkable and beautiful spot, protected by cliffs, with fresh water and abundant vegetation. Saul, with three thousand picked men, renewed his pursuit. Two vivid stories have been preserved of David's chivalry in sparing his antagonist when he had fallen into his power (1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi.).

The first occasion was when Saul had entered a cave where David and his men were hiding. He was so near to them that David in the darkness was able to cut off a piece of the king's robe. When Saul had left the cave, David called to him, and showed the piece of cloth, pointing out to Saul how his life had been spared, and imploring him to cease from this quarrel, which was entirely of the king's own making. Saul was touched for the moment, and with tears confessed that David was a better man than himself, and that he would be the future king.

Again the pursuit was renewed. In the wilderness of Ziph, David and his men found Saul and Abner and their warriors all sound asleep behind a rampart of waggons. David carried off Saul's spear without waking them, and

restrained his followers' wish to kill the king. Then from a hill-top near at hand, David roused the unguarded camp with shouts, showed the spear, and again appealed to the king to recognize his innocency and cease from the pursuit. Saul confessed his sin, and even gave David a blessing. The spear was returned, but Saul's repentance was as short-lived as before.

The story of Abigail (1 Sam. xxv.) illustrates not only David's character, but also the general sympathy of Israel with him. She was the wife of Nabal, a rich but churlish farmer of Carmel (not to be confused with Mount Carmel, but the name of a wooded district south-east of Hebron). David's men had protected Nabal's flocks, but when they asked for a present, Nabal scornfully refused, saying, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master." David, hot with anger, went with four hundred men to punish Nabal. But Abigail met him, apologized for her husband, saying that "Nabal (fool) is his name, and folly is with him," offered a present of food and wine to David's men, and went on to state her own conviction that David was fighting the battles of God. And she urged that it would be a grief to David after he had come to the throne to remember that he had shed blood without cause, or in revenge. David acknowledged Abigail's wisdom, gave up his vengeance, and when, shortly afterwards, Nabal died in a drinking bout, married Abigail.

David is next found in alliance with the Philistines (1 Sam. xxvii.). Their king, Achish, gave him and his six hundred followers the town of Ziklag, where he lived a year and four months, and was joined by warriors from various tribes and districts, who

were attracted by his fame, and won to devotion by the spell of his brave and chivalrous character. His followers were now become a great army, and employed themselves in making raids on the wandering Arabian tribes of the south.

Again war broke out between Saul and the Philistines. It was a difficult position for David, for Achish regarded him as his ally, and proposed that he should act as captain of the bodyguard. But the jealousy of the Philistine princes saved David from engaging in war against Saul, for when the Philistine army reached Aphek, they insisted that he and his men should return (1 Sam. xxix.).

On the third day they were back at Ziklag; but a scene of desolation awaited them there. The Amalekites had made a raid of reprisal, burnt the undefended city, and carried off all the women and children, including David's two wives. It was very nearly the end of David's career. His men "spake of stoning him," in their sorrow over their empty homes. But he "encouraged himself in the LORD his God": Abiathar's oracular ephod counselled an immediate pursuit of the raiders. Leaving two hundred men behind at the brook Besor, who were too weary for the pursuit, he pushed on with six hundred hardier warriors. An Egyptian straggler, a servant of one of the Amalekites, who, being sick, had been cruelly left behind on the march by his master, was found at the point of death by starvation. Reviving him with food and water, they gained the information they desired as to the course of the raiders. Led by the Egyptian, they surprised the Amalekite camp "eating and drinking and dancing," routed them completely, killing all except four hundred

cavalry (mounted on camels), and recovered all the spoil and all the captives. The courage and generosity of David appeared again in his conduct as to the division of the spoil. He insisted, in spite of the complaints of the more ill-conditioned among his warriors, on giving an equal share to those two hundred who had started on the pursuit, but had been compelled to fall out through fatigue. He also took the politic step of sending presents from the spoil to the elders of the towns of Judah, who were known to be his friends (1 Sam. xxx.).

Meanwhile Saul had engaged in his death-struggle with his ancient foes the Philistines. He had no stomach for the fight—a strange contrast to the Saul of other days. When he saw the Philistine The Witch of Endor. army, “he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.” He was conscious of the loss of Divine help and guidance—“The LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.” In his desperation he lowered himself to seek guidance from a witch, though Moses had forbidden the practice of magic, and Saul himself, in his earlier days, had tried to stamp it out in Israel. He was told of a woman who was supposed to have a familiar spirit—an attendant demon—at Endor, about twelve miles from his camp. She was believed to be able to call up the spirits of the dead. Saul disguised himself and went by night to the witch, and asked her to call up the spirit of Samuel. An awful apparition, like an old man covered with a prophet’s mantle, appeared. The witch was terrified at the result of her own incantations, and recognized now that her visitor was the king. Whether it was the shade of Samuel or not, the spectre, in answer to Saul’s questions, gave a terrible and decisive answer. Saul’s kingdom had been taken from him for his

disobedience: Jehovah had become his enemy: Israel would be defeated by the Philistines, and "to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

Saul fell to the ground at these tidings, and was with difficulty persuaded by the witch and his followers to take some food. Then, while it was still night, he returned to his camp to fight his last and fatal battle (1 Sam. xxviii.).

The armies met in the plain of Esdraelon, the greatest battle-field of Palestine. The Philistines drove the Israelites southwards, up the heights of **Saul's last battle.** Gilboa, and here their archers still pursued them. Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua, all fell, and, finally, Saul himself, sorely wounded, begged his armour-bearer to slay him, and when the man refused, fell on his own sword. A slightly different version—perhaps a false one—was brought to David at Ziklag by an Amalekite straggler, who asserted that he himself had killed Saul at the king's desire, and brought with him the king's crown and bracelet.

The Israelites were completely routed, and the Philistines set up Saul's armour as a trophy at Askelon, in the temple of Ashtaroth, and exposed the bodies of the king and his sons on the wall of Beth-shan. The bodies were rescued by night by the men of Jabesh-gilead, in gratitude for Saul's gallant deliverance of their city in earlier days, and were buried at Jabesh (1 Sam. xxxi.).

So far from rejoicing over the death of Saul, David put to death the Amalekite who professed to have slain **David's sorrow.** "the LORD's anointed." He and his men fasted and mourned till evening, and David commemorated the prowess of Saul and Jonathan, and his own tender love for the latter, in a dirge, afterwards

known as the Song of the Bow, a poem of singular beauty and pathos, especially in its closing laments :—

26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan : very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !

2 Samuel i. 26, 27.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DAVID KING OF ISRAEL

AFTER the death of Saul, David was at once recognized as king by his own tribe of Judah, but owing to the scattered state of Israel under the Philistine domination, and the lack of national feeling, it was some time before this recognition became general. He established his capital at the ancient city of Hebron, sacred by its association with the patriarchs, and here he reigned for seven and a half years.

Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, set up a rival kingdom east of Jordan, with Mahanaim for its capital. The leading spirit in this kingdom, which lasted for two years, was Abner, Saul's former commander-in-chief. A desultory warfare was carried on between the rival kings, usually to the advantage of David. One battle is recorded at "the pool of Gibeon," five miles north-west of Jerusalem. First at Abner's suggestion twelve picked warriors from either side met in combat. So fierce was the fight, that each of the twenty-four slew and was slain by his opponent. The place was known afterwards as Helkath-hazzurim, "field of heroes," "field of sword-blades." A general battle ensued in which Abner's force was defeated by the army of Joab, David's cousin and captain (2 Sam. ii.).

A fatal feud resulted from Abner's slaying Asahel,

Joab's brother. When Abner quarrelled with his master and came to Hebron to make terms with David, Joab treacherously murdered him with his own hand in the city gate. David professed the greatest sorrow, followed Abner's body to the grave, and composed a dirge over the dead warrior. But he did not feel himself strong enough to quarrel with Joab, though he invoked a curse on him and his family. "I am this day weak," he complained, "though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah [David's sister] be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness" (2 Sam. iii.).

Ishbosheth's kingdom came to an end with his assassination by two of his captains, Baanah and Rechab. They brought his rival's head to David, thinking to be rewarded; but David, indignant at their treachery, ordered them both to be slain. All the tribes of Israel now approached David, through their elders, and accepted him as king. He "made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord," which no doubt shows both the religious character of his kingdom, and its foundation upon popular consent.

The first recorded act of David as king of all Israel, was to seize for his capital the stronghold of Jebus or Jerusalem. The Jebusites had recovered it after the conquests of Joshua, and it was thought so strong, that they mocked at David, telling him that "the blind and lame" were enough to defend it. But Joab led a force into the city, by a way which he had discovered up a "gutter," or water-course, and took it. David established himself on Mount Zion in the east of the city, and a palace was built for him there by the help of Hiram, King of Tyre.

In two great battles David defeated the Philistines and put an end to their claim to be lords of Palestine.

Final defeat of the Philistines. On the first occasion they invaded Israel and encamped in the valley of Rephaim, southwest of Jerusalem. David burst suddenly upon them from the hills, scattered their army, and captured and burnt the images of their idols which they had carried with them.

A second time an invading army reached the same place, where they were outflanked by David, and he smote them from Geba to Gazer. A mysterious Divine oracle had guided him:—

23. And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; *but* fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.

24. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. 2 Sam. v. 23, 24.

David's power and influence continually increased, not only by the fame of his victories, but by the justice of his rule, and the charm of his own character. **David's warriors.** He gathered round him a devoted body-guard of foreign soldiers called "Cherethites and Pelethites," perhaps of Philistine origin. But he had also a band of mighty men chiefly of Israelite birth, such as Joab; Abishai his brother, who slew three hundred men single-handed with his spear; Eleazar a man of Benjamin, who "smote the Philistines till his hand clave unto the sword;" and Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who had distinguished himself in single combat with the Moabites, and with an Egyptian, "a goodly man," whom he overcame with a

staff only, and also in a battle with a lion, which he killed in a pit "in time of snow," when it would be most ferocious with hunger.

David's chivalrous spirit is illustrated in the incident recorded of him in a battle at the gate of Bethlehem. He was seized with longing, in the heat of David's battle, for a drink of water from the well of nobility. Bethlehem. Three of his mighty men broke through the Philistine host and fetched him the water. But he refused to drink it as having been brought at the risk of men's lives and poured it out as an offering to Jehovah (2 Sam. xxiii.).

A similar spirit was shown, very unlike the usual conduct of Eastern kings, in the care with which he sought out Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Mephibosheth. He was lame, having been dropped by his nurse, when the tidings had come of the death of Saul and Jonathan, and was living in retirement at Lo-debar. David, instead of putting him to death as a possible claimant to the throne, sent for him, spoke kindly to him, restored him all Saul's private possessions, and gave him an honoured place at the royal table. Thus David was faithful to his old covenant with Jonathan his beloved friend (2 Sam. ix.).

The establishment of David's capital at Jerusalem was followed by an act that showed that his kingdom was to be based on loyalty to Jehovah. Calling a The Ark at great national assembly, he proceeded to Jerusalem. remove the sacred ark from its long seclusion, in the house of Abinadab in the "Gibeah" or "hill" near Kirjath-jearim, and establish it as the centre of the national worship in his capital. It was solemnly escorted by the king and a long procession of musicians playing on

“ harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals,” the traditional and artless popular music which accompanied the religious ceremonies of Israel. But its progress was checked by an act of perhaps involuntary irreverence on the part of Uzzah, the son of Abinadab—he “ put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it.” The sudden death of Uzzah struck terror into the rejoicing worshippers. David refused for the present to carry the ark further, and it remained for three months in the house of Obed-edom, “ the Gittite,” a Levite of Gath-rimmon. Encouraged by finding that its presence there had been a blessing to the house of Obed-edom during this time, and that Jehovah had shown Himself a God of mercy as well as wrath, David again, with extraordinary precautions of reverence, resumed the translation of the ark. Sacrifices were offered as soon as the ark had gone “ six paces,” and the king himself, vested in the garb of a Levite, a linen ephod, led the procession with a solemn religious dance. The ark was brought into the sacred tent already prepared for it at Jerusalem; and the king blessed the people “ in the name of the Lord of Hosts,” and distributed food and wine to all the multitude.

A remarkable incident illustrates the simple sincerity of David’s religion. His queen, Michal, Saul’s daughter, watching the religious procession, was indignant at the king’s share in it—she “ **Michal’s** **pride.** despised him in her heart” for his “ leaping and dancing before the LORD”—and when he returned to his house, scornfully upbraided him for making himself, as she thought, ridiculous in the eyes of the handmaids his servants. “ How glorious,” she cried, “ was the King of Israel to-day!” David’s reply was characteristic. He reminded

Michal that he himself owed everything to Jehovah, and it was to Him that he paid this reverence. Moreover, in thus abasing himself, he would, so far from being despised, receive honour from his servants. The punishment of Michal's pride was seen in the fact that from this time she remained childless (2 Sam. vi.). ✓

CHAPTER XXIX

DAVID'S GLORY AND HIS SIN

AFTER establishing the ark at Jerusalem, where it was kept in a sacred tent or tabernacle, David's next thought was to build a temple, a permanent sanctuary as a centre for the worship of Israel. It seemed to him, he said, unfitting that he should dwell in "a house of cedar," and the ark of God only "within curtains." At first the prophet Nathan encouraged the king in this desire, but a revelation from God informed him that such a temple had never as yet been required by Him; and that moreover, David, a man of constant warfare, was not a fitting person to build it. That task would be reserved for his son, who would be a man of peace.

But at the same time the Divine Voice made a most important promise to David (2 Sam. vii.). He was told that the kingdom should remain in his family; it should be "established for ever." And David's descendants should stand in a new relationship to Jehovah. "I will be his father, and he shall be My son." This promise pointed to something greater than the mere continuance of David's line on the throne, or the building of the Temple by Solomon. He himself recognized it as more. He exclaimed in great reverence: "Is this the manner of *man*, O Lord God?" The promise

pointed to a greater Son of David, more than man, namely Jesus Christ, and to the establishment of an Eternal Kingdom by Him in the Catholic Church. In this way the promise is understood both in Old Testament and New Testament, and it is constantly referred to in later psalms and prophecies.

The wars of David with foreign nations are described only briefly in the Bible, as the history is religious rather than secular (2 Sam. viii.). He thoroughly ^{The wars} subdued the Philistines, taking from them ^{of David.} their "mother-city," probably Gath; also the Moabites, who became tributaries. Next, he conquered the northern kingdoms of Zobah and Damascus; and on his return inflicted a crushing blow on the Edomites in the "valley of salt." These conquests were probably necessary if Israel was to be a united nation, instead of a mere collection of tribes at the mercy of every invader. The Ammonites, however, were unsubdued, and they deliberately provoked a war by insulting David's ambassadors, whom he had sent to the new king, Hanun. David sent an army, led by Joab and Abishai, which defeated the Syrian allies of Ammon, and invested the Ammonite capital, Rabbah (2 Sam. x.).

David himself stayed at Jerusalem, and here fell into a sin which spoiled the rest of his life. He took Bathsheba, the wife of one of his captains, Uriah ^{David's sin.} the Hittite, who was with Joab's army, and made her his own. Then, to hide his sin, he arranged with Joab that Uriah should be exposed to unnecessary danger and killed during an attack on the wall of Rabbah (2 Sam. xi.).

The mercy of God brought home David's sin to his conscience and led him to repentance. God sent Nathan the prophet to him, who told him the following parable: —

1. There were two men in one city ; the one rich, and the other poor.

Nathan's 2. The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks
parable. and herds :

3. But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up : and it grew up together with him, and with his children ; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him ; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man ; and he said to Nathan, *As* the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die :

6. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7. And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man.

2 Samuel xii. 1-7.

David was stricken with remorse, and confessed, " I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan pronounced to

David's re- him the Divine forgiveness, " The LORD hath
pentance and also put away thy sin ; thou shalt not die."
punishment.

But the king would have to suffer a life-long punishment. He had been false to those higher truths about God, and His requirements from man, which it was the special function of Israel to teach the heathen world. " By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme."

The punishment began at once to fall. The child of Bath-sheba and David fell sick and died, in spite of the king's fasting and prayer. He accepted the sorrow in

words of noble resignation: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Another son was granted to David and Bath-sheba, who lived and became great, Solomon (peaceable). He also received the name Jedidiah (beloved of Jehovah), as a mark that God had accepted David's penitence.

David himself, at Joab's request, completed the conquest of the Ammonites, entering the citadel of Rabbah, and putting on his own head the gold and jewelled crown of the King of Ammon.

The retribution for David's sin began to show itself in his own family. The king had many wives, as was the custom of the age, and quarrels broke out among their various children. In these ^{Absalom.} Absalom, the son of a princess of Geshur, made himself prominent. He was a vain and restless man, of great personal beauty and charm, but ambitious and unprincipled. He treacherously killed his half-brother Amnon at a shearing feast, for wrong done to a sister, Tamar. He then fled to the court of Talmai, King of Geshur, where he remained three years.

Joab, for some reason, was eager to bring him back, and set a trap for the king by sending a widow woman from Tekoah, with a made-up story to excite ^{The plots} David's sympathy. She asserted that one of ^{of Joab.} her two sons had killed the other, and now the relations wished, in revenge, to kill the murderer, thus leaving her destitute. She extracted from the king a promise that this should not be done, and then turned upon him with the charge that he was more cruel to his own family than he had been to hers. Even God Himself, she urged, in words that seemed prophetic, "deviseth means that his banished be not expelled from him." David recognized

the plots of Joab in all this, but agreed to permit his exiled son to return to Jerusalem, and after two years more was reconciled to him (2 Sam. xiv.).

It was a fatal step, for Absalom took advantage of this restoration to plot against his father's throne. He **Absalom's treachery.** ingratiated himself with all those who were discontented, representing to them that there was no one to do them justice, and that if he himself were king, everything would be put right. He also made a great display in Jerusalem, with his chariot and horses and fifty runners. Men took him at his own valuation, and "he stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

When he thought the moment had come, he asked permission from his father to go to Hebron, his birthplace, **David's flight.** secretly gathered his partisans, including Ahithophel, David's chief counsellor, and proclaimed himself king in Hebron. David was taken by surprise, and fled from Jerusalem, accompanied only by a few faithful servants and his foreign bodyguard of six hundred men. The king's flight is vividly described (2 Sam. xv., xvi.). It brought out both friends and foes in their true colours.

Ittai, a newly arrived captain of the Gittites, who formed part of the royal guard, although offered by David **Faithful friends.** the chance of returning, promised to stay with the king in whatever place he might be, "whether in death or life." Zadok and Abiathar, and the priests generally, were faithful. They wished to share David's flight, carrying the ark with them; but the king sent them back, saying that he was in God's hand, and it rested with God whether he should ever see the ark and the sanctuary again or not.

Crossing the ravine of Kidron, the king and his

companions fled eastward up the Mount of Olives. On the top another loyal friend appeared, Hushai, the Archite, with "his coat rent and earth on his head," in sign of mourning. David advised him also to return to Jerusalem, and pretend to join Absalom's side, keeping at the same time in touch with the king.

Next appeared one who professed loyalty to serve his own ends, Ziba, the head servant of Mephibosheth (p. 159), who came with presents of food and represented that his master had turned traitor A time-server. in the hope of regaining the throne of Saul. David too impulsively believed the story, and promised Ziba all the possessions of Mephibosheth.

Last came an exhibition of the hatred to David, which still smouldered in the family of Saul. Shimei threw stones at David from a ridge above the way, An enemy. and cursed him as "a man of blood," and rejoiced that Saul was at last avenged. Abishai was eager to rush forward and cut off Shimei's head, for cursing "the LORD's anointed"; but David forbade it. "It may be," he said, "that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day."

CHAPTER XXX

ABSALOM'S FALL

ABSALOM entered Jerusalem as king as soon as his father had left it. Here he held a council, at which the cunning Ahithophel advised that an immediate blow should be struck. He wished to pursue David himself with 12,000 men, and coming upon him while he was "weary and weak-handed," kill him, crush all opposition and secure Absalom's throne. But the usurper wished also to consult Hushai, who was secretly plotting for David's return. Hushai made a flattering oration (2 Sam. xvii.), pointing out that to attack such mighty warriors as David and his men without preparation would be unwise. Absalom had better assemble a great army and lead them in person. Such an attack would be irresistible. Absalom was gratified, and accepted this advice to his own ruin. Ahithophel, seeing the issue, went away and hanged himself.

The news of this decision was conveyed to David at the risk of their own lives by Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the sons of the priests. The delay gave David's army. David opportunity, as Hushai intended, for establishing himself in a strong position at Mahanaim, laying in a store of food, and organizing his own army. He arranged them in three divisions, commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, and prepared to meet the army

of Absalom which had already crossed the Jordan. David at the request of his followers did not himself go out to battle, but gave most earnest instructions to his commanders that for his sake they were to "deal gently" with Absalom.

The two armies met at a place called the "wood of Ephraim." Absalom was defeated, and in the flight from the field, his head was caught in the boughs of an oak, as he was riding underneath. His mule went on from beneath him, and he was found hanging helpless. Disregarding all the king's instructions, Joab hurried to the place and with his own hand thrust three darts into the unhappy prince's body. A cairn of stones was raised over the place of his hasty burial.

Tidings were carried to King David by two messengers, an Ethiopian or "Cushite," and Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. The latter was anxious to spare the king as long as possible the dreadful news of his son's death, and overran the Cushite, and announced only the victory. But soon the other runner arrived and somewhat exultantly gave the rest of the tidings. When the king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" he replied, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." The king was almost heart-broken, he went to his chamber, weeping, and crying out, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. xviii. 33).

The king's grief spoiled the joy of victory, his army began to disperse, almost as if they had been defeated, and Joab had to threaten the king with a loss of their loyalty unless he showed himself. The king left his

chamber at this and "sat in the gate," but he could not forgive Joab, and actually appointed Amasa, Absalom's commander-in-chief, to take Joab's place.

After much delay the king returned to Jerusalem, escorted by the priests and by his own tribesmen of Judah. Shimei, who had cursed and thrown stones at him, now came to beg mercy, which the king magnanimously granted. Mephibosheth too arrived, protesting against the slander of Ziba (p. 167). David apparently could not decide which was speaking the truth, and divided the possessions of Saul between the two of them.

Barzillai, a wealthy and aged inhabitant of Gilead, who had given freely to the king's maintenance while at Manahaim, was offered an honoured place at the court, which he declined in favour of his son Chimham (2 Sam. xix.).

At Gilgal a quarrel broke out between the tribesmen of Judah and some of the other tribes, who were jealous of the predominance of Judah. "We have ten parts in the king," they cried, "and we have also more right in David than ye." The quarrel grew into a rebellion, headed by a Benjamite, Sheba the son of Bichri, who raised the cry, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse" (2 Sam. xx.). He was followed by the ten tribes, and David's first work on returning to Jerusalem was to send Amasa with a force to pursue and defeat the rebels. Amasa did not long hold his new office, for Joab deliberately murdered him and assumed the command again himself. He and Abishai pursued Sheba northwards and besieged him in the town of Abel. The inhabitants had a reputation for wisdom, and when Joab, at the appeal of a certain "wise woman,"

agreed to raise the siege if Sheba were given up, they promptly threw his head over the wall, and so ended the rebellion.

In David's latest years, when he was old and bed-ridden, the question of the succession to the throne again became serious. Adonijah, next to Absalom ^{Adonijah.} in birth, and like him in ambition, made a bold bid for the throne (1 Kings i.). He gained the alliance of Joab and Abiathar the priest and of some of the other sons of the king. At a spot in the ravine of Kidron, called "the stone of Zohelath," he held a great feast and had himself proclaimed king. But Nathan, knowing that David intended the crown for Solomon, urged Bath-sheba to enter the royal presence and obtain a decision from the king. He at once confirmed his choice of Solomon.

Solomon was conducted on the king's mule to Gibeon on the other side of the valley and solemnly anointed by Zadok among the cheers and music of the ^{Solomon} people. The sound was carried across the ^{crowned.} valley to Adonijah and his friends. Their banquet broke up and Adonijah fled to sanctuary, laying hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon promised him his life, and this promise was kept until after David's death, when Adonijah showed that he was still intriguing for the kingdom, by asking for Abishag, David's nurse and attendant, in marriage. Solomon then put him to death, along with Joab, who was taken from the very horns of the altar. Abiathar, though his life was spared because he had accompanied David in his early wanderings, was banished from Jerusalem to his home at Anathoth.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE LAST YEARS OF DAVID

BEFORE Adonijah's rebellion, and evidently while David was still in possession of his strength, the displeasure of

David numbers the people. God fell upon Israel for their king's presumption in numbering his people (2 Sam. xxiv.).

He apparently did this in a vain-glorious spirit, desiring to know the number of fighting men, and perhaps meditating fresh wars. There was nothing in itself wrong in taking a census; Moses had done it by Divine command in the wilderness.

Joab, to whom the task was entrusted, at first demurred; but afterwards he took it in hand, made a circuit throughout the kingdom, which lasted nine months and twenty days, and reported the numbers as 800,000 in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah. Some sign of disaster convinced David of his presumption, and he prayed and confessed that he had done foolishly.

The prophet Gad then came to him with the offer from God of the choice between three forms of punishment, seven years of famine, three months of **The three punishments.** invasion by enemies, or three days' pestilence. He chose the last, preferring to fall, as he said, into the hands of a merciful God, rather than into the hands of man. The pestilence came, and 70,000 of Israel fell victims.

Finally, David saw a vision of the destroying angel with a drawn sword in his hand standing above Jerusalem to destroy it. He prayed earnestly for his people, asking that further punishment might fall on himself rather than on the innocent.

The threshing
floor of
Araunah.

The angel stayed his sword, and the place where he had stood was pointed out by Gad to David as the appointed site for an altar. It was the threshing-floor of Araunah or Ornan, apparently a descendant of the ancient kings of Jebus. He offered to give it to the king; but David characteristically refused to offer sacrifice to God of what had cost him nothing, and he bought the ground with the oxen and threshing-instruments for fifty shekels of silver. Here, on the solid rock foundation of the threshing-floor, the altar was erected, sacrifice offered, and the plague ceased. This transaction is of immense importance, for this spot was pronounced by David to be the very place where the future temple would be built and the one central altar for sacrifice for all Israel would be established (see p. 98). Jewish tradition states that this was also the spot where Abraham had offered up Isaac.

David now set himself to make preparations for the temple which he was not allowed himself to build, and to impress on Solomon and on his people the importance of this work. He therefore collected a vast store of cedar wood from the Zidonians, iron, brass, and also precious stones. He arranged the courses of the Levites, and organised the choir of singers and musicians for the future temple. Moreover, it is recorded (1 Chron. xxviii.) that the Holy Spirit revealed to him the actual plan of the Temple, just as the plan of the Tabernacle had been revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai.

Preparations
for the
Temple.

The king then called a great national assembly, at which he commended this work to the generosity of his people and his son, and offered prayer for their perseverance in the building.

16. O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name *cometh* of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

17. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

18. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

19. And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision. 1 Chron. xxix. 16-19.

Solomon was crowned king "the second time," *i.e.* probably by a more splendid and public ceremony than was possible during the rebellion of Adonijah. To him David gave a special charge to be strong and show himself a man, and above all to keep the law of God as it had been written down by Moses.

David died after forty years' reign "in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour." The history of his reign was compiled by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. He set the type of kingship to which all future generations of Israel looked back. He had shown himself brave and merciful, and there is no doubt he was a sincere worshipper of Jehovah. His own great

fall left a blot on his fame; but on the other hand, must be remembered the sincerity of his repentance, and the humility with which he accepted both the rebuke of the prophet and the chastisements and sorrow that fell on him in his later life. And it must never be forgotten that Jesus Christ, in His human nature, was descended from David, and He was the true inheritor of David's kingdom and the promises made to him.

Besides his generalship and his personal valour, David was famed for his musical and poetical gifts. He is spoken of as "the sweet psalmist of Israel" ^{David's} (2 Sam. xxiii. 1), and the prophet Amos refers ^{poetry.}

to him as an inventor of musical instruments (Amos vi. 5). And it was the constant belief, both of Jews and Christians, that he was the author of some at least of the Psalms. Psalm li, the most wonderful expression of penitence in the Bible, was probably written by him, and some of his wars are commemorated in verses which are almost certainly from his own pen, and occur both in Ps. lx. and cviii.

6. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

7. Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

8. Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe:¹ Philistia, triumph thou because of me. (Ironical.)

9. Who will bring me *into* the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

And in other verses quoted in 2 Sam. xxiii. he expresses the ideal of his kingdom, which would be fulfilled in Christ.

¹ These are figurative expressions which refer to the Moabites and Edomites being reduced to the position of David's servants.

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3. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be just*, ruling in the fear of God.

4. And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

CHAPTER XXXII

SOLOMON

SOLOMON inherited from his father not only the kingdom of the twelve tribes, but the overlordship of the surrounding nations, Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, **Solomon's Empire.** and the Syrians of Damascus, a district stretching as far as the Euphrates. He was allied also with two of the greatest empires of the time, by hereditary friendship with Tyre, the great sea-power; and with Egypt by marriage with the Pharaoh's daughter. He appears in the Bible record as a splendid king, of vast wealth and wisdom, like the magnificent potentates of the East; but there is little of the vivid personal portraiture that is given of Saul and David.

At the beginning of his reign he was devoted, like his father, to the worship of Jehovah. At Gibeon, where the brazen altar of Moses still stood, he offered **The gift** huge sacrifices, "a thousand burnt-offerings." **of wisdom.** In a dream he was bidden to ask a gift from God. He asked with great humility for wisdom to rule so great a people. His reply was pleasing to Jehovah, who granted him not only wisdom, but riches, honour, and long life, provided he walked in the footsteps of the religion of David. His wisdom soon became famous, not only in

Israel but among distant nations. Two instances are quoted. The first (1 Kings iii.) was the case that came before him for decision between two mothers who both claimed the same child. In order to discover which of them was speaking the truth, the king ordered a sword to be brought and the child to be divided. One agreed to this, but the other refused, and said she would rather the child were given to her rival. This proved the latter to be the true mother, as she showed a mother's love; and the child was at once given to her.

The second instance is seen in the famous visit to Solomon of the Queen of Sheba (in South Arabia), who came to Jerusalem with a splendid retinue, to prove the king "with hard questions." Not only were her questions answered, but she confessed herself thoroughly overawed by the splendour of the king, his court and his buildings.

6. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

7. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. 1 Kings x. 6-7.

Presents were interchanged, the queen giving Solomon "a hundred and twenty talents of gold and of spices very great store, and precious stones."

Solomon had a wide knowledge of nature, "he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes" (1 Kings iv. 33). His writings.

writings included "three thousand proverbs," and a thousand and five "songs." The "Song of Solomon," however, which describes the splendour of his court, and his love of a Shulamite maiden, probably belongs to a later period.

He appears to have organized his kingdom on an Oriental model: twelve high officials presiding over the revenues (666 talents of gold yearly, about four million pounds), and taking charge month by month of the royal household. He introduced the horse into Israel, having besides dromedaries and camels, forty thousand stalls for horses, and 12,000 horsemen. He enriched himself much by commerce, both by land and sea. He recognized the favourable position of his country for the carrying trade between Egypt and the East, and especially cultivated the trade in horses and chariots between the Egyptians, the Hittites, and the Syrians.

But his most remarkable achievement was his development of trade by sea. Hitherto the Israelites had done nothing in this direction; but by the help of his allies the Tyrians, he established a port at Ezion-geber in Edomite territory at the head of the gulf of Akaba. Hence his large merchant-ships, manned by Tyrians, made regular voyages to the East and elsewhere, notably to Ophir, perhaps in India, and to Tharshish, an unknown place, from which they brought every third year gold and silver, ivory, apes and peacocks (1 Kings x.).

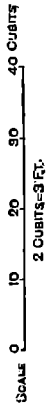
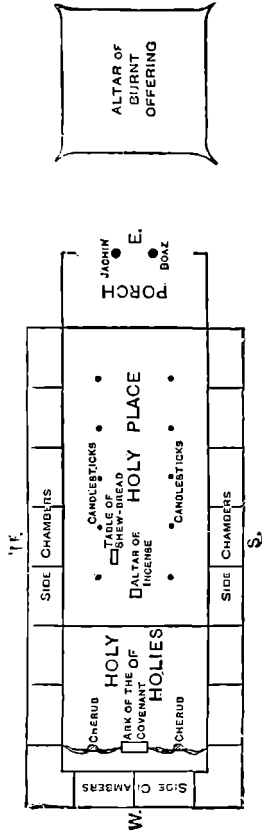
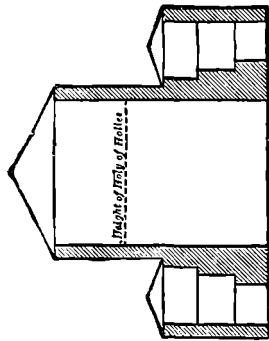
Such an empire was a vast change for Israel from the simple, agricultural life of the earlier times; and it is not surprising that it failed to last. At first, indeed, the change seemed to have increased the general prosperity, his people are described as being

“ as many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry ;” but later events showed that heavy burdens of labour and taxation came to be laid on them to maintain the splendour of the realm, though probably at first the burden fell chiefly on the tributary nations.

The secret, however, of Solomon’s failure is ascribed by the Bible to another cause (1 Kings xi.). In imitation of the practices of his contemporary potentates, he gathered a large harem of wives, foreign princesses, of Moab, Ammon, Edom, and also from the Zidonians and the Hittites. With these wives came the worship of their various heathen idols. Solomon not only sanctioned these, but built temples for them on the Mount of Olives, *e.g.* for Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and for the horrible Moloch, the fire-god of the Ammonites. He even himself joined in these worships, and it is written of him in his later years, “ his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”

Warnings came to Solomon from prophets, that this conduct would involve the loss of all his kingdom except one tribe, if not in his own days at least in those of his son. It is also said that “ the LORD stirred up adversaries against him.” Among these were Hadad the Edomite, Rezon the Syrian, and a man of Ephraim, of whom more will be heard hereafter, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. Hadad was a survivor of the royal house of Edom, who had been conveyed as a child to Egypt, after Joab’s crushing defeat of the Edomites. Like Moses he was brought up at the Egyptian court and married the sister of Tahpenes the queen. But at the news of David’s

death he insisted upon returning to his own land, and trying to stir up disaffection against Solomon. So also Rezon, a servant of the former King of Zobah, established himself as king at Damascus, and as an enemy of Solomon.



CHAPTER XXXIII

THE TEMPLE

SOLOMON left a permanent mark on Israel not so much as a ruler as by his building of the Temple (1 Kings vi.). This was the work which David had specially commended to him, and it appealed to his own ideas of magnificence and dignity. The work took seven years to accomplish ; everything was prepared at a distance, and made ready to fit into its place before the actual building began. The wood of cypress and cedar came by sea, floated down in rafts from Tyre and unloaded at Joppa. Skilled Tyrian workmen undertook the more elaborate part of the work : and especially one Hiram or Hiram, a man of mixed birth, half Tyrian and half Israelite, who was recommended by the King of Tyre to Solomon as having great skill in metal work, the special feature of Phœnician art.

The site of the Temple was close to the royal palace on Mount Zion, and the rock threshing-floor of Araunah was the place already pointed out for the brazen altar of sacrifice. The general plan of the building followed that of the Tabernacle, the chief difference being (1) the permanent nature of the materials used ; (2) the size, which was exactly twice that of the Tabernacle ; and (3) the porch and side-chambers, which were additions to the plans of Moses. The courtyard was

Building
of the
Temple.

General plan.

paved with stone, and had a fence of stone and cedar-wood. The building had its Holy Place $40 \times 20 \times 30$ cubits, and its Holy of Holies $20 \times 20 \times 20$. The porch was probably a portico with pillars, rising considerably higher than the main building. In front of it stood two great brass columns crowned with ornamental capitals. These bore the names of Jachin and Boaz, "establishment" and "strength." Round the other three sides of the Temple ran three stories of side-chambers, entered by a side-staircase, and probably used for storing the treasures of the Temple. The whole building was of stone, but the interior was covered with wainscoting of cedar, and this again with sheets of hammered gold, decorated with figures of cherubim and palm-trees. The floor also was overlaid with gold.

The Holy of Holies was cut off by doors of olive-wood and golden chains and probably also by a veil, and was in total darkness. Within it was the Ark, and the mercy seat, and the two great figures of cherubim, 10 cubits high, of olive-wood overlaid with gold. The Holy Place had its golden altar of incense as in the Tabernacle, but there were *ten* golden lampstands, and apparently also ten golden tables for shewbread or other offerings. Outside in front of the porch stood the brass-covered altar of sacrifice; the "sea," which took the place of the "laver" of the Tabernacle for the ablutions of the priests, a great brass vessel resting on twelve brazen figures of oxen; and also twelve smaller lavers of brass adorned with figures of animals and cherubim, and moving on brazen wheels, which were used for the washing of the sacrifices.

The Dedication of this Temple in the twelfth year of Solomon's reign (1 Kings viii.) was a great national event;

the representatives of all Israel being present. First the priests solemnly installed the Ark in its new resting-place; it contained at this time nothing but the two stone tables of the Ten Commandments. The Divine approval was visibly shown by a mysterious cloud which filled the Temple and overawed the ministering priests.

Next, the king himself stood forth before the altar, and with hands outstretched uttered a prayer of dedication, and of intercession for his people. He prayed that God's eyes might be upon this Temple night and day, and that He would hear from heaven every petition offered there. Especially he asked that the prayer of the nation might be heard in all times of oppression by enemies or exile, and when there was peril of drought or of pestilence. He prayed, too, in a remarkable spirit for the strangers and foreigners who might be led to come and pray before this Temple, and asked that their prayers too might be answered, "that all people of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as do thy people Israel." Thus in Solomon's eyes, the Temple was not only a sign of God's presence with Israel, and a centre of unity in the national worship; it was also to be a witness to the heathen world of the true religion, and a means of attracting them away from their idolatries to one true and living God. Lastly, he prayed for the warriors who were to fight Israel's battles; and if in time to come for their sins the whole people should go into exile, he implored God to help them and accept their repentance, if in the land of their exile they remembered and prayed toward Jerusalem and the Temple.

The festivities lasted fourteen days, with great rejoicings, many sacrifices, and the sacred music of the Levite

choir. When the great gathering had dispersed Solomon received from God a second revelation like the earlier **God's** one at Gibeon, in which God accepted and **approval.** blessed his work, promised His continual presence in the Temple, but added the solemn warning that if the Law were forsaken Israel should go into exile, and the Temple itself would be destroyed (1 Kings ix.).

Solomon also erected other magnificent buildings (1 Kings vii.), including a palace for himself, and a house **Other** for his queen. The most remarkable parts of **buildings.** the palace were "the house of the forest of Lebanon," and the "porch of the throne," or the throne-room. The former was so called because of the cedar used in its construction. It had a central hall with four rows of pillars of cedar, supporting three tiers of side-chambers, and was used as an armoury. In it were stored 300 targets of beaten gold, and 300 smaller shields, also of gold. The throne-room in which the king gave audience was very splendid, and the throne was more magnificent than that of any other king (1 Kings x.). It was overlaid with ivory and gold, the seat had a carved lion on each side, and two other lions stood on each of the six steps which led up to the throne. Gold seems to have been the great feature of Solomon's court. All his drinking vessels were of pure gold; silver "was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon."

Solomon was also a builder of cities. He fortified Jerusalem, and strengthened "the Millo" or citadel. He also erected fortresses to guard his trade routes, such as Megiddo which commanded the plain of Esdraelon and the ancient road leading from Egypt to Syria (called "the way of the sea," because it skirted the sea of Galilee).

He built also many store cities, and cities for chariots and cavalry.

At the end of his building, which lasted twenty years, he gave Hiram, King of Tyre, a present of twenty cities in Galilee, called "the land of Cabul." Hiram was not satisfied with the gift, but he still appears to have remained the friend and ally of Solomon.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

SOLOMON'S successor was his son Rehoboam. He was a much weaker man than his father, and he inherited a kingdom which was ripe for rebellion. The **Popular** people, as a whole, were tired of the burdens which Solomon had laid on them in order to build his magnificent buildings, and to maintain his state. Solomon's ideals of empire and commerce did not appeal to them. The other tribes, and especially Ephraim, were jealous, as they always had been, at the supremacy of the royal tribe of Judah. Moreover, the people, as a whole, had not risen to the idea of one central sanctuary of Jehovah. They regarded the Temple as only the royal chapel, and they preferred to worship at the old local sanctuaries, the "high places," which custom and superstition had consecrated. They worshipped Jehovah, indeed, at these shrines and altars, but often under the name of Baal, or "lord," and the style of worship was very much that of the old Canaanite religion; or of the primitive and idolatrous Jehovah-worship which Moses had tried to do away with.

One prophet, Ahijah of Shiloh, had, before Solomon's

death, made himself the mouthpiece of the popular feeling, though his reason was the apostasy of the king himself in joining in the foreign worships of his wives. He singled out Jeroboam, a ^{Ahijah.} man of energy and courage, whom Solomon had made an overseer in the work of fortifying Jerusalem, and announced that he would be the king of the ten tribes. One tribe (Judah and Benjamin being counted together) was to be left to the family of David, he foretold, in fulfilment of the Divine promise. He made this prediction to Jeroboam himself by one of the symbolic acts which the prophets constantly used. He met Jeroboam in a solitary place outside Jerusalem, and tearing his new garment in twelve pieces, gave ten pieces back to him as a sign of his future kingdom, promising that it would remain in his family, if he would be loyal to Jehovah (1 Kings ix.).

The news of this came to Solomon's ears; Jeroboam fled for his life to Egypt, and remained under the protection of the Pharaoh, Shishak.

Rehoboam met the assembled tribes at Shechem that they might confirm his accession to the throne. But they presented a petition of grievances, asking that Rehoboam's the "heavy yoke" of Solomon might be made ^{folly.} lighter. Jeroboam was summoned from Egypt, perhaps to act as their spokesman. The king took three days to consider the matter. The older councillors were asked their opinion, and they advised the king to answer the people graciously, and promise to grant their request. But the king preferred the foolish advice of the younger men, who had grown up with him, and told the people when they re-assembled, "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins."

And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke : my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

This was quite enough : the old cry raised at Sheba's rebellion was heard again :

What portion have we in David ? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse : to your tents, O Israel : now see to thine own house, David. 1 Kings xii. 10, 11, 16.

The king's chief officer, Adoram, who had presided over the exactions of Solomon, was stoned to death. Rehoboam had to flee in his chariot to Jerusalem ; and at once Jeroboam was proclaimed king of the revolted ten tribes. An attempt by Rehoboam to win back his kingdom by the sword was forbidden by the prophet Shemaiah, who announced that this thing was from Jehovah himself. (For continuation of Rehoboam's reign see p. 219.)

Henceforth till the end of the monarchy, there were two kingdoms in Israel : the southern kingdom, ruled by **The two** the representatives of the house of David, **kingdoms.** which had as its capital the stronghold of Jerusalem. The northern, much the larger and richer, was ruled by various dynasties and usurpers.

Jeroboam fixed his capital at Shechem, which he fortified, as also Penuel on the opposite side of Jordan, **Jeroboam's** commanding the fords. But he recognized **golden calves.** that the weakness of his position lay in the fact that his rival possessed the Temple, the centre of the religion of Israel, and the visits paid to Jerusalem at the great annual feasts might easily attract his people back to the kingdom of the line of David. He took the clever, but fatal step of setting up rival centres of worship. He made two calves of gold to represent Jehovah, and set

them up in the ancient shrines of Bethel and Dan, and announced these to Israel as the God which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. He appointed a priesthood, drawn from the people generally, not from the tribe of Levi, to serve these idols; and instituted a festival to take the place of the feast of tabernacles (evidently the most popular of the annual festivals), to be held on the fifteenth of the eighth month, instead of the seventh. This scheme seems to have been completely successful from Jeroboam's point of view; but it met with stern rebuke from the prophets, and Jeroboam in the sacred writings is everywhere described as the king "who made Israel to sin."

One most remarkable protest was made by an unnamed prophet from Judah (1 Kings xiii.). He appeared suddenly at Bethel, as the king was sacrificing before his golden calf, denounced the idolatrous worship, and foretold to the king's face that a future king, Josiah by name, should desecrate the altar, and kill the priests. As a sign, he announced that the altar would immediately break in pieces and the fire be scattered. This took place; the king stretched out his hand to seize the prophet; but his arm was miraculously rendered powerless, and only restored at the prayer of the prophet. The king then invited him to entertainment at the palace and offered him a reward. But this the prophet refused, as the Divine voice which had sent him had bidden him neither to eat bread nor drink water at Bethel, and to return by the same way that he had come. ✓

Royal favour could not shake the prophet's obedience, but he fell a victim to the wiles of one of his own calling. An "old prophet" at Bethel, not sincere enough himself to rebuke the king's idolatry, was eager to have the credit of

entertaining the bold stranger from Judah. Hurrying after him on his ass, he persuaded the younger prophet

The prophet's own disobedience.

to return, by telling him that he too was a prophet and pretending that he had received a Divine communication from an angel, bidding him offer hospitality to the stranger. But as they were sitting together at table, the Divine inspiration really came upon the old prophet, and compelled him to denounce his guest for his disobedience and foretell his immediate death, and that his body should not even be buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.

The meal ended, the prophet from Judah went his way, and was met by a lion which killed him, but spared the ass belonging to the old prophet, on which he was riding. The old prophet, hearing the fulfilment of his involuntary prediction, brought back the body, which the lion had not even torn, and buried it sorrowfully in his own sepulchre, giving instructions that he himself, when his time came, should be buried beside the man of God, whom he had led astray.

A further rebuke to Jeroboam was given by the very prophet whose words had pointed to his attaining the crown, Ahijah the Shilonite, now an aged man (1 Kings xiv.). The king's son, Abijah, was lying sick at Tirzah, a country residence of Jeroboam and several of his successors. The king sent his wife in disguise, with a present suited to a simple country-woman, loaves and cakes and honey, to inquire of the aged prophet whether his child would recover. Neither disguise nor the prophet's blindness could conceal her. The Divine message was ready—"Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings."

Ahijah rebukes Jeroboam.

These "tidings" were that Jeroboam himself should be punished for his idolatry by the destruction of his whole family: his sick child would die, and early death would be a better thing for him than life; and that all Israel would be removed from their land and scattered "beyond the river" (Euphrates) because they had provoked Jehovah to anger by their idolatries.

Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years, persisting in his policy, and unmoved by Divine warnings. The promised doom soon began to fall. His son Nadab, after Evil kings of Israel. a short and evil reign of two years, was murdered by a usurper, Baasha, who seized the throne and destroyed all the descendants of Jeroboam. Baasha reigned twenty-four years, but with no improvement on the ways of Jeroboam. Like him he was denounced by prophets and threatened with the loss of his kingdom. He carried on a warfare with the southern kingdom of Judah, going even so far as to erect a fortress at Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem, commanding the approach to the city. Asa, King of Judah (p. 221), called in the help of Benhadad, King of the Syrians of Damascus, who made a raid on the north of Palestine, drew off Baasha, and enabled Asa to destroy the new fortress.

Baasha was succeeded by his son Elah, who after two years' reign was assassinated during a drinking bout in his steward's house at Tirzah by Zimri, one of his captains. Zimri destroyed all the family of Baasha, but himself reigned only seven days. Another aspirant to the throne, Omri, attacked him at Tirzah, and Zimri, rather than fall into his hands, set fire to the palace and perished in the flames. For four years Israel was divided between Omri and a rival, Tibni: ultimately Omri triumphed, Tibni was put to death, and his conqueror reigned for eight years.

CHAPTER XXXV

ELIJAH

OMRI, an able ruler, was the first to found a dynasty in northern Israel. Three generations of his sons followed him. He transferred the capital from Shechem to a new city, Samaria. He subjugated the Moabites, and renewed the old alliance with Tyre, marrying his son Ahab to the Tyrian princess Jezebel.

When Ahab succeeded his father on the throne, Jezebel, who was a fanatical worshipper of Melkart, or the Tyrian "Baal," and of Asherah, a goddess already well known in Israel, set herself to drive out altogether the worship of Jehovah, and substitute her own idolatries.

Ahab, during his evil reign of twenty-seven years, seems to have been largely ruled by her. An illustration of the general disregard for the true religion is seen in the fact that one, Hiel, of Bethel, rebuilt Jericho, in defiance of the curse pronounced upon it by Joshua, and suffered the punishment foretold—the loss of all his children, from the eldest to the youngest.

But in this dark time appeared suddenly a hero of faith (1 Kings xvii.). Elijah, a man of Gilead (called "the Tishbite," not from his residence, but from his birthplace, Thisbe, in Naphtali), was a prophet—the greatest, indeed, of all the prophets of

northern Israel—a recluse who lived in the wilderness, and wore only rough garments of hair and a leathern girdle. He stood before Ahab and delivered his message of Divine punishment: “There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”

Then he disappeared as mysteriously as he came, and by God’s command hid in the ravine of Cherith, one of the tributaries of the Jordan. Here he was miraculously sustained by ravens, that brought him bread and flesh morning and evening. When the brook dried up with the drought, he was guided to another refuge, Zarephath, in the territory of Zidon, where a widow woman maintained him with her little store of meal and oil, which was miraculously multiplied. A greater miracle followed, for her son died, and Elijah, by his fervent prayers, won from God his restoration to life. The woman, though a heathen, confessed Elijah to be a man of God, and a true prophet.

Meanwhile the drought prevailed in Israel, lasting over three years, and causing the greatest famine and misery. Jezebel’s only answer was to massacre all the prophets of Jehovah. However, Obadiah, Ahab’s steward, managed to save the lives of a hundred, whom he hid “by fifty in a cave, and fed with bread and water.”

At last Elijah himself appeared to Obadiah, who, with the king, was searching for water and pasturage for the royal horses and mules. He bade him take the news of his arrival to Ahab. The king met the prophet with the words, “Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?” But Elijah reminded him that he was the real cause of trouble, having forsaken Jehovah and followed the Baalim.

The prophet then proposed a public trial between the claims of Jehovah and Baal. A great gathering was summoned to Mount Carmel, and there Elijah alone faced the 850 prophets of Jezebel's gods. Addressing the people, he asked indignantly, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." No reply came, and Elijah challenged Baal to a final test. Let two altars be erected, one for Jehovah and one for Baal: let their worshippers pray for a sign. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." This was accepted. The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice, and howled and shrieked all day long to the god of fire, dancing round the altar, and even cutting themselves with knives and lances. But there was no response, and Elijah mocked them by suggesting that Baal was busy, or on a journey, or perhaps asleep, and they must yell louder to waken him.

At last came the hour of the evening sacrifice, and Baal had made no sign. Now it was Elijah's turn. He repaired the fallen altar of Jehovah, which **Elijah's** had stood on Mount Carmel, with twelve **prayer.** stones corresponding to the number of the tribes, laid his sacrifice of a bullock upon it, and ordered four barrels of water to be thrice poured over altar and sacrifice, and into the trench surrounding them. Then he offered his prayer:—

36. LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have done* all these things at thy word.

37. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that thou hast turned* their heart back again.

1 Kings xviii. 36, 37.

The answer came, swift and terrible. "The fire of the LORD fell"—perhaps a sudden thunder-bolt, but miracle enough, coming when it did—and burnt up The fire of sacrifice and altar, and even the water in the the Lord. trench. The spectators fell on their faces and confessed, "Jehovah is God." And then, at the command of Elijah, they seized the false prophets of Baal and Asherah, dragged them down the mountain side, and slew them all at the brook Kishon.

A further sign was given in the break-up of the great drought at the prayer of Elijah. On the top of Carmel he threw himself on the ground, with his face The end of between his knees, in the attitude of a solitary the drought. wrestler with God. Seven times he sent his servant to look towards the Mediterranean for the sign of an answer. At last it came. "Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." At once the message was sent to the king, "Prepare thy chariot and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." But before the king could do it, "the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." Through the deluge Ahab's chariot hurried to Jezreel, and Elijah, with supernatural strength, "girded up his loins" and ran before the chariot to the very entrance to the city.

The only effect of this stupendous event on Jezebel was to rouse her to murderous fury. She sent a message to Elijah that to-morrow his life would be as The wrath the life of the prophets whom he had slain. of Jezebel. He fled for his life towards the south, and at Beersheba, dismissing his servant, he wandered for a day in the wilderness, and then in deep depression prayed for death. Twice he was visited by an angel who provided him with food—"a cake baked on the coals and a cruse of water."

CHAPTER XXXVI

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

ON Mount Carmel Elijah had asserted the supreme claim of Jehovah as the one and only true God. He next appears before Ahab himself to teach that Jehovah **Naboth's vineyard.** requires *righteousness* (1 Kings xxi.). Ahab had coveted the vineyard of Naboth, which was close to his own palace gardens at Jezreel, and offered to buy it or exchange it for another. Naboth refused: family property was regarded as sacred. But Jezebel was equal to the occasion. She planned the murder of Naboth, and by false accusation of "cursing God and the king," she contrived that he should be stoned to death by his own townspeople. Ahab went to take possession of the vineyard, but Elijah confronted him and delivered fearlessly the Divine message. For this sin evil should come on Ahab and his family. In the very spot where Naboth had been stoned the dogs should lick up the blood of the king, and Jezebel herself should be eaten by dogs at the wall of Jezreel. Ahab was struck with terror; he made some show of repentance, fasted, and put on sackcloth. For this God granted a postponement of the curse. The evil should come in the days not of Ahab himself but of his son.

Little else is recorded of Ahab but his wars with the Syrians, which ultimately led to his death in battle.

Twice indeed he defeated the Syrians, but did not take advantage of his victories. On the first occasion Ben-hadad, King of Syria, besieged Samaria. His **Ahab's wars** army was so large in proportion to Ahab's **with Syria.** that he apparently despised precautions. While he was drinking in his tent a sortie of two hundred and thirty-two young Israelite warriors surprised him, and led to a complete rout of the Syrian army.

Next year the Syrians returned, and decided to try a battle in the plain of Jezreel, thinking, as they said, that the God of Israel was "a God of the hills." But here again the little army of Ahab defeated them, as the prophets had foretold. Ben-hadad fled to Aphek, and being told that the kings of Israel were merciful, sent an embassy to Ahab, wearing sackcloth, and with ropes round their necks. They succeeded in flattering Ahab into granting easy terms, and Ben-hadad was allowed to return to Damascus (1 Kings xx.). For this Ahab was rebuked by the prophets and told that he had really forfeited his own life and the life of his people by his weakness.

So it turned out. In the third year after this, Ahab, who was at that time allied with Jehoshaphat of Judah, began a campaign against the Syrians, with **Prophets false** the intention of recovering Ramoth-Gilead **and true.** which they held. Before starting Jehoshaphat asked that the prophets might be consulted. Four hundred assembled, and flatteringly assured the kings of success. But one other prophet, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, was bold enough to give a different answer. "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have no shepherd." Moreover, he declared that these favourable answers of the other prophets were part of God's plan for the destruction of Ahab. "The LORD hath put a lying spirit

in the mouth of all these thy prophets." The prophet said that he himself in a vision had actually seen and heard this decided upon in the councils of heaven. The other prophets reviled him, and Ahab ordered him to be shut up in prison and fed "with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction" until he returned in peace. "If thou return at all in peace," was the bold answer, "the Lord hath not spoken by me" (1 Kings xxii.).

Ahab was apparently uneasy at these predictions, and he disguised himself on going into battle. But one of the Syrian archers aimed at him and inflicted a mortal wound. The king refused to leave the battle and was held up in his chariot till evening, when he died. The Israelites were scattered; the dead king was brought to Samaria: and it was seen how Elijah's prophecy was fulfilled, for as his chariot was washed, the dogs licked up his blood.

Ahab was succeeded by his son, Ahaziah (2 Kings i.), who reigned only two years. His death was the result of a fall from a window. While lying helpless on his sick-bed he sent messengers to consult, not Jehovah, but Baal-zebub, the god of the Philistine town of Ekron. But Elijah himself met the messengers and ordered them to return and take back the tidings to the king that he should never rise again from his bed. The messengers did not recognize Elijah, but the king knew him from their description as clad "in a garment of hair with a leathern girdle about his loins." He sent three times in succession a body of fifty soldiers to seize the prophet, who was found sitting on the top of a hill. But the first two detachments were burnt up by fire from heaven, which fell at the word of Elijah. The third fifty were preserved by the humility of their captain, who besought

Elijah to spare the lives of himself and his men. The prophet came down with them, stood before the king himself, and repeated his message of doom. So great was the terror that Elijah inspired, that he was allowed to depart unhurt.

The closing scene in Elijah's life is wrapped in mystery. He is recorded (2 Kings ii.) to have made a last journey from the hills to the Jordan, accompanied by The Passing Elisha, who refused to leave him. At each of Elijah. halting-place, Bethel, Jericho, the bank of Jordan, he was met by companies of "the sons of the prophets" (members of the guilds or schools of professional prophets), who warned Elisha that his master was about to be taken from him. "Yea, I know it," was his only answer; "hold ye your peace." Crossing the Jordan, whose waters were divided by the stroke of the prophet's mantle, Elisha in answer to his master's inquiry, "What shall I do for thee, before I be taken away from thee?" asked for a "double portion" (*i.e.* a first-born's portion) of Elijah's prophetic spirit. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," was the answer; "if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee: but if not, it shall not be so." The request was granted, for Elisha proved able to see the great vision which accompanied Elijah's passing: "a chariot of fire, and horses of fire parted them asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Elisha cried out in grief, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof," meaning that a prophet like Elijah was a better defence for Elisha suc- Israel than the cavalry of its kings. He took ceeds Elijah. the mantle of Elijah which had fallen to the earth, and when he returned to Jordan, he cried, "Where is the

LORD God of Elijah?" and with the mantle struck the waters as his master had done. The waters divided to give him passage, thus proving that he was indeed Elijah's successor. The "sons of the prophets" who witnessed this hailed him as their new leader—"The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha," and bowed to the ground before him. But they were not satisfied, apparently, that Elijah had really departed, until fifty of them had for three days searched the country-side in vain.

Elijah's disappearance from earth may be compared to the translation of Enoch (p. 12). He appeared again with Moses at our Lord's Transfiguration; his glorified spirit was seen and recognized by the three Apostles. His work in Israel was to vindicate the great foundation truths concerning God, and he is the representative of the Prophets, as Moses of the Law.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ELISHA

ELISHA was not a man of the desert like his master ; he seems to have lived in the public view, and was often at the court of Israel, and on one occasion at that of Damascus. He had a house of his own, and was largely occupied in guiding and teaching "the sons of the prophets." He performed many miracles, more than any one else in the Old Testament, and these were mostly of mercy and healing. If Elijah was typical, with his fire from heaven, of the terrors of the Old Covenant, Elisha's works are more like those of Christ.

At the beginning of his work, he healed the unwholesome water of the spring at Jericho, by casting salt into it in the name of Jehovah. But at Bethel, the seat of idolatry, his curse brought destruction upon a number of insolent young men who had mocked him. Two she-bears came "out of the wood" and killed forty-two of them.

He next appears (2 Kings iii.) in connection with a campaign of the allied kings, Jehoram of Israel, Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the King of Edom, who were invading Moab: the Moabites having thrown off their allegiance to Israel, and

Contrast
between
Elisha and
Elijah.

Elisha and
the war
against Moab.

refused to pay the annual tribute of wool. Jehoram the brother of Ahaziah had abjured the worship of Baal, but like all the kings of Israel continued the calf-worship of Jeroboam.

The three kings finding their armies without water in the wilderness asked for Elisha's help. He foretold a supply of water, though neither wind nor rain would be seen, and ordered trenches to be dug for its reception. "There came water by the way of Edom"—some sudden deluge among the mountains at a distance—which flooded the lower country, and filled the trenches. Another strange result followed: the crimson light of the dawn reflected on the new-made water-courses was mistaken by the Moabites for blood. Imagining that the allied armies had turned their swords against each other, they rushed heedlessly to their own ruin.

Several other miracles wrought by Elisha are now recorded (2 Kings iv.). Three were concerned with the necessities of life. A widow of one of "the sons of the prophets," with her two sons, was delivered from the danger of slavery for debt, and from her poverty, by the miraculous multiplication of her little store of oil. On another occasion, at Gilgal, a dearth of food caused a search to be made for herbs to prepare a simple meal for "the sons of the prophets" who were attending on Elisha's instruction. In ignorance a poisonous plant ("wild gourds" = probably colocynth, easily mistaken for a melon) was boiled for pottage. On the cry being raised, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot," Elisha threw in meal, and rendered the pottage wholesome.

Further
Miracles
of Elisha.

Again, a little rustic present sent from Baal-shalisha to the prophet, twenty cakes of barley, and some fresh ears of corn, the first-fruits of the harvest, was miraculously multiplied so that it furnished enough and to spare for a hundred men.

A greater miracle was the raising to life of a dead child. He was the son of a rich lady of Shunem, who had provided hospitality for Elisha, and given him in her house a room with furniture (a bed and a table, a stool and a candlestick) ^{The son of the Shunammite.} which he might use on his journeys. The son had been born in answer to the prophet's prayer as a reward for her kindness. But as the child was in the harvest-fields with his father, he died of sun-stroke. The mother brought the sad news to the prophet, who by his earnest prayer won from God the return of the child's soul to his body.

Another remarkable story (2 Kings v.) is that of the healing of the leprosy of Naaman, "the captain of the host" of the King of Syria. The news of Elisha's powers had been brought to the Syrian court by an Israelite captive, ^{Naaman's leprosy healed.} "a little maid." The king sent Naaman bearing a great treasure of gold and silver and "changes of raiment" to Samaria, asking the King of Israel to cure him. The King of Israel thought this was a mere pretext for beginning another war; but Elisha heard of it, and asked that Naaman might be sent to him. But when Naaman arrived, the prophet merely sent him a message: "Go wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." The great captain was angry. He expected to have been treated with more deference, and that the prophet, as he said

would come out and call on the name of Jehovah and wave his hands over the leprosy and so cure him. He asked indignantly, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean?" But his servants persuaded him to do as the prophet bade, seeing it was such a little thing. He dipped himself seven times in Jordan, and "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child." Naaman tried in vain to get Elisha to accept a present; and then asked that he might be allowed to take back with him "two mules' burden of earth." He intended henceforth, he said, to worship Jehovah only, and as the heathen generally thought the presence of a god was only to be found in his own particular country, Naaman thought he might carry with him Jehovah's presence by taking some of the soil of Palestine.

Gehazi, Elisha's servant, a covetous and deceitful man, followed Naaman and managed to get from him some of the treasures which his master had refused.

Gehazi.

But Elisha knew it, and pronounced a curse on Gehazi, that the leprosy of Naaman should cleave to him and his family for ever.

Another example of Elisha's wonderful powers over nature is given in 2 Kings vi. The "sons of the prophets" were cutting down timber by Jordan to build a new and larger house for their company. An iron axe-head fell into the water, to the dismay of its user, who had borrowed it. Elisha threw a stick into the water, the iron rose to the surface, and was recovered.

The war between Israel and Syria was again renewed, and Elisha by his gift of prophecy rendered great service

to Jehoram, King of Israel. The Syrian king discovered this and sent an army to surround Dothan and seize the prophet. The prophet's servant was terrified at the Syrian cavalry and chariots; but Elisha reassured him by telling him that there were more on their side than on that of Syria. And then he prayed that his servant's eyes might be opened. The prayer was granted. For a moment at least "the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha"—angelic guardians who would protect him from the Syrians. At Elisha's prayer the Syrian host were struck blind, and were led by him into the midst of Samaria. But the prophet forbade them to be harmed; by his prayer he restored their sight, ordered them to be given food and water, and sent them back to their master. For a time after this the Syrian invasions ceased.

Again Ben-hadad of Syria came and besieged Samaria, reducing it to the greatest straits of famine. Just when the king thought the city must be surrendered, and confessed that this was a punishment from God, Elisha foretold that the siege would be raised at once, and on the very morrow food would be as cheap as it was then scarce and dear. A sudden panic seized the besieging Syrians; they fled in headlong haste, leaving their camp and all their stores. These were discovered by four lepers, who in their misery had thought of surrendering to the besiegers. News was brought to the king, who at first suspected a stratagem, but finding it true, was able to satisfy his famished people from what the Syrians had left behind. One of the courtiers had derided the prophet, and told him his prediction could

only come true if Jehovah made windows in heaven. The prophet told him he should see it with his own eyes and not eat of it. This was also fulfilled, for the courtier was appointed to guard the city gate, and the hungry crowds rushing out trod him to death (2 Kings vii.).

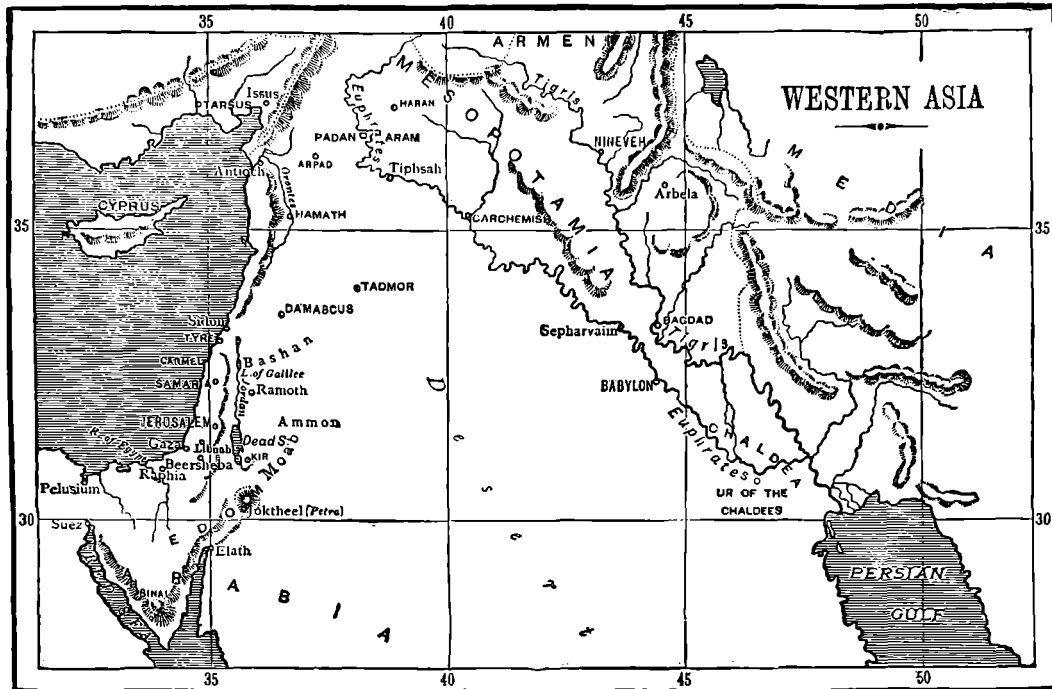
Two of the commands given to Elijah at Horeb were still unfulfilled, and in different ways it fell to Elisha to accomplish them. At Damascus, Ben-hadad, **Hazael.** who was ill, sent to Elisha to ask whether he would recover. The bearer of the inquiry was Hazael, one of his trusted servants. Elisha replied that he might recover but would not. And then with tears the prophet told Hazael that he foresaw what evil he would do Israel. Hazael, with feigned humility, pretended this was impossible; but went away, murdered Ben-hadad in his bed, seized the throne of Syria, and became the scourge of Israel (2 Kings viii.).

The second command, to anoint Jehu King of Israel, was carried out more literally, as will be seen from the subsequent chapter.

Nothing more is recorded of Elisha until many years later (2 Kings xiii.), when we read of Joash, King of Israel, **Elisha's last** visiting the prophet on his death-bed and **prophecy.** lamenting over him. The dying prophet bade the king shoot an arrow as a symbol of defiance to Syria, and then smite on the ground. The king only struck the ground three times, and Elisha, perhaps reading his character, told him that if he had smitten five or six times, he might have made an end of Syria, but as it was, he would only defeat them thrice.

Even after death a supernatural power seemed to cling to Elisha. A funeral party were disturbed by the approach

of a band of Moabite raiders, and in their haste to escape, placed the body they were carrying in the **His last** tomb of Elisha; "and, when the man was **miracle.** let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet."



CHAPTER XXXVIII

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

THE punishments which the prophets had foretold for the idolatries of the northern kingdom fell first on the survivors of Ahab's family and the worshippers of Baal, through the usurpation of Jehu. A more gradual punishment fell on the whole kingdom through foreign invasions by the Syrians and afterwards by the Assyrians.

Jehu was one of the captains of the army of Israel in a campaign against Syria at Ramoth-gilead (2 Kings ix.). Elisha sent one of the prophets with a vial of Jehu oil to anoint him king. This was immediately anointed. followed by a proclamation through the army, "Jehu is king." The usurper drove his chariot with headlong haste to Jezreel, where the kings both of Israel and Judah were staying. Both kings went out to meet him; Jehoram of Israel fell in his chariot pierced to the heart by an arrow from Jehu's bow. Ahaziah of Judah fled, but was pursued and mortally wounded. After Jehu had ordered the body of Jehoram to be thrown into the piece of ground which had once been Naboth's vineyard (p. 200), he rode on to the walls of Jezreel. Jezebel, a queen to the last, appeared in robes and crown and painted face, and tauntingly asked, "Is it peace, thou Zimri, thou master's murderer?" But the palace servants, at Jehu's word,

threw the queen from the wall; the conqueror rode over her in his chariot, and her body was eaten by the dogs.

Jehu carried out his revolution in the most blood-thirsty manner, killing every descendant and connection of the family of Ahab, and even massacring **He destroys Baal-worship.** forty-two of the brethren of Ahaziah of Judah, who, in ignorance of what had happened, allowed themselves to fall into his hands. Next Jehu treacherously massacred all the worshippers of Baal. He invited them all to a great sacrifice in the temple of Baal, pretending that he himself was going to be a devotee of Baal. Then soldiers were stationed at the doors, who rushed in and put to the sword all the worshippers. The temple and its images were burnt.

But Jehu continued the old idolatry of the golden calves, and the twenty-eight years of his reign are dismissed almost in a word (2 Kings x. 34). **Jehu's failure.** His descendants reigned for four generations, but the bloodshed he had been guilty of was denounced by the prophet Hosea (i. 4); and he proved unable himself to defend Israel against the invasions of Hazael, who overran all the district east of Jordan.

His son, Jehoahaz (2 Kings xiii.), was weaker still, and his fighting force was reduced in the Syrian wars to 10,000 men, and a few chariots. But a change **Jehu's weak successors.** began to come towards the end of his reign, in answer to his prayer. Syria herself began to be pressed by the encroachments of a great and growing power, Assyria.

Joash or Jehoash, whose last interview with Elisha has already been described (p. 210), defeated Syria in three battles, and recovered Hazael's conquests. He also

defeated his neighbour Amaziah of Judah (p. 227), who had deliberately provoked him to battle.

The next sovereign, Jeroboam II., reigned forty-one years with remarkable prosperity. Syria had ceased to trouble, the old frontier of Israel was restored, and the country enjoyed a period of wealth and rest. But we see from the prophets Amos and Hosea (the first prophets who have left written books), that it was a period of corruption, luxury, drunkenness, and oppression of the poor by the rich. Outwardly there was a great show of religion, especially in the worship of the golden calves, and at the different "high places," but there was little of the moral fruits of religion.

Amos was not a prophet by training, he received the Divine call while he was pursuing his humble work of shepherd, and dresser of sycamore trees at Tekoa, in Judah. He suddenly appeared at Bethel and announced a coming Divine judgment. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, was anxious to get rid of the unwelcome visitor, and told him to prophesy no more at Bethel, for it was "the king's chapel." He seems to have returned to his home and written down his prophecies, which contain vivid predictions of captivity "beyond Damascus" for the whole nation, and the loss of all Israel's religious privileges.

11. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord :

12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. Amos viii. 11, 12.

Finally, he foretold the kingdom of the Messiah. "In

that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen."

Hosea was a prophet of different style and character. He seems to have prophesied for a long period, watching with deep sorrow the gradual deterioration of his nation. He denounces plainly the golden calves, and speaks of the priesthood as ignorant, covetous, and even murderers. He describes Israel as continually seeking for foreign alliances, one party favouring Egypt, and another Assyria. In vain, for a captivity of the whole nation was coming; Israel would be carried away to the very countries with which they were seeking to ally themselves. Hosea repeatedly speaks of Jehovah as the *husband* and the *father* of false and rebellious Israel. He shows knowledge of the earlier writings of the Old Testament, and he refers clearly to the written Law:—

"Though I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts, they are counted as a strange thing" (R. V. viii. 12). Like Amos he foretells in the latter days a Messianic kingdom under "David" as prince.

The reign of Jeroboam was succeeded by a period of anarchy, and rapid national decay, ending in utter ruin.

National Zachariah, after six months' reign, was assassinated. He, a month later, fell before another usurper, the brutal Menahem. During the ten years of his reign the Assyrians invaded Israel, and had to be bought off by 10,000 talents of silver, which Menahem exacted from his wealthier subjects.

Pekahiah, Menahem's son, succeeded him, but he was murdered after two years by Pekah, one of his captains. Pekah allied himself with Rezin of Syria, and the two endeavoured to overthrow the Davidic monarchy of the

southern kingdom (2 Kings xvi.). Ahaz of Judah, against the warnings of the prophet Isaiah, called in the aid of Assyria against these invaders, and after doing much damage, the allies withdrew, taking with them many captives. These captives, however, they released and sent home again, in obedience to the protests of Oded, a prophet of Samaria (2 Chron. xxviii.).

In 732 the Syrian empire came to an end. Tiglath-pileser of Assyria took Damascus, and carried the Syrians into captivity. Pekah was now face to face ^{The} with the terrible Assyrians, who overran the ^{Assyrians.} whole of the north of Palestine, and began to threaten Samaria itself.

Hoshea, another usurper, succeeded Pekah. His nine years' reign was the end of the northern kingdom (2 Kings xvii.). He tried to throw off the posi- ^{The Captivity.} tion of tributary to Assyria, and made an alliance with So, the Egyptian Pharaoh. Shalmaneser then besieged Samaria, and after three years it was taken by his son Sargon, in 721. Egypt failed to bring any help. Sargon carried away the whole of the inhabitants of northern Israel in captivity to northern Mesopotamia. Hence, as a body, they never returned.

The prophetic author of the Books of Kings, after briefly recording this captivity of Israel, states the inner reason of the national ruin to have been their apostasy and idolatry :—

16. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

17. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments.

and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.

18. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight. 2 Kings xvii. 16-18.

Northern Palestine lay waste and unpeopled for many years. In the reigns of the Assyrian kings, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, various colonies were sent from Babylonia to settle in Samaria and the neighbouring cities. The new settlers were attacked by lions, which they attributed to the anger of Jehovah (whom they thought to be still the God of the land), because they did not know how to worship him. They petitioned the King of Assyria, who sent them an Israelite priest to instruct them. But they continued to worship also for a time their own Babylonian idols. At a later time they seem to have worshipped Jehovah only. And when the Jews of the southern kingdom returned from their own captivity in Babylon, these northern settlers appear as "Samaritans." They wished to take part in rebuilding the Temple, but were refused as being of heathen origin, and became in consequence the constant enemies and rivals of the Jews of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

THE revolution of Jeroboam separated Israel into two kingdoms. The fortunes of the northern kingdom of the ten tribes have been traced continuously till the kingdom disappeared before Assyria. It now remains to take up the history of the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin from the time of the separation (p. 190).

Rehoboam endeavoured to make the best of his scanty kingdom. He fortified fifteen cities, chiefly on his southern frontier, as a defence against Philistia and Egypt, providing them with stores of ^{Rehoboam.} provisions, weapons, and garrisons (2 Chron. xi.). He had also the religious support of priests and Levites from the north, who refused to acquiesce in Jeroboam's new worships and took refuge at Jerusalem. But he followed unfortunately the later ways of Solomon. Not only did he gather together a large harem of wives and concubines, but he acquiesced in a general falling away from pure Jehovah-worship and the acceptance of heathen religions and impure rites. His people built "high places and pillars (Asherim) on every high hill, and under every green tree."

In his fifth year came a great invasion under Shishak of Egypt, in which the prophets saw the Divine retribution for this religious apostasy. Shemaiah again stood

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forward and denounced the sin of king and princes and people. His words produced humiliation and repentance, **The Egyptian** for which the prophet was empowered to invasion. promise at least a partial deliverance from the threatened ruin—"My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless, they shall be his servants: that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

Jerusalem was compelled to submit to the Egyptian invader, with his vast force of cavalry and chariots. The city was spoiled of its treasures, especially of the golden shields which Solomon had placed in "the house of the forest of Lebanon." For these Rehoboam was only able to substitute shields of brass, which were placed under the charge of the chief of the guard, and carried in state when the king entered the Temple. Shishak's successful invasion is recorded by himself on the walls of the Temple of Karnak. He seems to have overrun Palestine generally, but retained no Jewish territory. Rehoboam was left the rest of his reign undisturbed, except by constant warfare with his northern rival. He died at the age of fifty-eight after seventeen years' reign, leaving his kingdom to his favourite son Abijah, the child of Maachah, daughter of Absalom.

Abijah or Abijam carried on a war with Jeroboam of Israel; and defeated him in a battle at Mount Zemaraim.

Abijah. Before the battle Abijah is recorded to have upbraided his opponents for having cast out the true priests, the sons of Aaron, and forsaken the pure worship of Jehovah for the golden calves; he warned them that it was in vain to fight against the throne of David, and against Jehovah, the God of their fathers (2 Chron. xiii.).

Asa, the next king, who reigned for forty-one years, began his career as a religious reformer, destroying idols and deposing the queen-mother from her high position, because she had made "an **Asa.** Asherah" for her own worship. In the king's fifteenth year, at a great national gathering at Jerusalem, the people entered into a covenant to be faithful to Jehovah. A long period of peace followed, broken in Asa's thirty-sixth year by the attacks of Baasha (p. 198). Asa's invitation to the Syrians to assist him against Baasha was sternly rebuked by the prophet Hanani, who reminded him that trust in the Almighty Jehovah ought to be his real strength. Asa was very angry and put the prophet in prison, but not long afterwards he himself fell ill of a fatal disease. It is recorded that "he sought not to the LORD but to the physicians" (2 Chron. xv., xvi.).

Jehoshaphat his successor appears as a righteous and pious ruler. He lived at peace with the northern kingdom, unlike his predecessors, but committed the grave error of entering into **Jehoshaphat.** alliance with its king. One result was the introduction of the Tyrian Baal-worship into Judah, by the marriage of his son Jehoram with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Jehoshaphat himself, however, endeavoured to root out foreign idolatries, though he left untouched the irregular Jehovah-worship of "the high places." In the third year of his reign he sent a commission of priests and Levites to visit the cities of Judah, and instruct his people out of "the book of the law of the LORD." On his return from the disastrous campaign against the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead, in which Ahab had perished, he was sternly rebuked by a prophet, Jehu, the son of Hanani,

who asked, "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?" He seems to have taken the rebuke in good part, and endeavoured both to restore the worship of Jehovah and also to improve the administration of justice. He put judges in the larger towns, and a central court of appeal in Jerusalem, warning his judges, "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD" (2 Chron. xix.).

The most remarkable event in this reign is the great victory, won without striking a blow, against a combined invasion of Moabites, Ammonites, and other tribes. News came to Jerusalem that the host was on its way and had got as far as the oasis of Engedi on the west of the Dead Sea. The king, standing before the Temple, called upon Jehovah, as the ruler of all the nations of the heathen, and prayed for help. A sudden inspiration of prophecy came upon one of the Levites, Jahaziel, who proclaimed—

Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

2 Chron. xx. 17.

The army of the faithful set forth to meet the invader, preceded by a choir of Levites. Jehoshaphat, on the advice of his prophets, set ambuscades which proved successful, and threw the whole of the mingled host of heathen tribes into panic and confusion. They fought one another, and a complete rout followed. It took three days to collect the spoil, including a vast quantity of jewellery. On the fourth day a great thanksgiving was held in a valley

south of Bethlehem, afterwards called in memory of the event, Borachah ("blessing").

Jehoshaphat again allowed himself to be entangled in an alliance with the northern king, Ahaziah. We have already seen him joining in an attack on Moab (p. 205), and later he was persuaded to take part with Ahaziah in building a fleet at Ezion-gaber, to sail like Solomon's ships to Ophir. A prophet, Eliezer, foretold ruin to the enterprise: his words were verified, for a great storm destroyed the fleet.

His son, Jehoram, proved a cruel and idolatrous and unsuccessful king. He began his reign by murdering all his six brothers, and under the ^{Jehoram.} influence of his wife, Athaliah, he forsook Jehovah, and encouraged the Baal-worship.

The Edomites, who had been tributary to Judah since the days of David, now revolted and established their independence. Jehoram himself narrowly escaped falling into their hands, being cut off from the main body of his army, and only under cover of night succeeded in cutting his way through the Edomites. A mysterious writing (2 Chron. xxi. 12-15), said to be the work of Elijah the prophet (now long dead), came to the king, foretelling his death by a horrible disease. This came to pass, but not before he had the humiliation of seeing his kingdom invaded by Philistines and Arabians, who spoiled his palace and carried off all his family except Ahaziah his youngest son.

Ahaziah, his successor, reigned but one year. His alliance with Jehoram of Israel led to his death at the hands of Jehu (p. 213).

Athaliah, true daughter of Jezebel, seized the opportunity to establish herself and her Baal-worship. She

destroyed, as she thought, "all the seed royal of the house of Judah," and for six years, a dark and unrecorded period, she reigned over Jerusalem and Judah (2 Chron. xxii.).

One infant son of Ahaziah, however, escaped her tyranny; Joash, one year old, was hidden by his aunt Jehoshabeath, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, and brought up secretly within the precincts of the Temple, waiting a favourable moment for restoring the line of David.

In the seventh year a successful revolution was planned and carried out by Jehoiada, with the assistance of the guards of the Temple and the palace, and the Levites. On the Sabbath, Jehoiada armed the Levites with weapons from David's armoury, both those who were finishing their course of service and those who were entering. The guards were distributed: one-third to watch the palace, to prevent a sudden movement by Athaliah, and two-thirds to protect the infant king. The latter was brought forth from his hiding-place, and solemnly anointed and crowned by Jehoiada and his sons. "They put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony," *i.e.* without doubt some written document, probably some part of the Law, as the charter of his kingdom. The outburst of popular applause, and the trumpets of the Levites, roused the tigress within the palace. She rushed out with the cry of "Treason." At the orders of Jehoiada she was hurried out of the Temple courts, between the lines of armed men, before any supporters could rally, and slain with the sword in the broad chariot way that led to the palace.

This coronation of Joash was the signal for a great

attack on the foreign idolatries. Under the direction of Jehoiada, who acted as regent, the temple and images of Baal were destroyed, and Mattan, the chief priest of Baal, put to death before the altar. Jehovah-worship was restored (2 Kings xi.; 2 Chron. xxiii.).

CHAPTER XL

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH—ISALAH

As long as the influence of Jehoiada the high priest lasted, the reign of Joash was religious and prosperous.

Repair of the Temple. The first work of the young king was to urge on the repair of the Temple, which Athaliah and her Baal-worshippers had robbed and neglected. But it was not till the king's twenty-third year that much was done, for the attempts to collect money by sending priests and Levites about the country were not very successful. Finally, the money was collected from the free-will offerings of those who actually visited the Temple; a box being placed beside the altar, in which the money might be dropped. The Temple was thus placed in good repair.

The death of Jehoiada at the great age of one hundred and thirty brought about a change for evil. Joash fell under the influence of the princes of Judah, who favoured the old idolatries. A prophet who made a public protest, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, was stoned to death at the king's orders in the very Temple-court (see St. Luke xi. 51). His last words, "The LORD look upon it, and require it," were long remembered, and Jewish legend told how his blood never ceased to bubble forth from the ground until the day of the sack of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Joash's failure.

Disaster followed, in which the hand of God was seen. Hazael of Syria, after a successful campaign against the Philistines of Gath, attacked Jerusalem, defeated an army much larger than his own, and had to be bought off by Joash, by the sacrifice of all the treasures and gold of the Temple and the royal house. "So they executed judgment against Joash." Joash was "left in sore diseases," perhaps the result of wounds in battle, and was assassinated on his bed by two of his own servants, "for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada" after a reign of forty years (2 Chron. xxiv.).

Amaziah, his successor, began his reign well, and showed great respect for the law and for the utterances of prophets. In a campaign against the Edomites he hired an army of mercenaries ^{Amaziah.} from the northern kingdom for a hundred talents of silver. But an unnamed prophet protested against this as showing lack of faith in Jehovah. Amaziah sacrificed the money he had spent and sent the mercenaries home. His war against Edom was successful, but following the heathen ideas of his time, Amaziah took the idols of the Edomites and burned incense to them, either with the idea of averting their anger, or of uniting Edom with his own kingdom. A prophet rebuked him for his folly, but this time he would not listen and threatened the prophet with blows.

Amaziah seems to have been puffed up with pride by this conquest of Edom, and he proceeded ^{War with} to challenge Joash of Israel to battle. Joash ^{Israel.} tried to read him a lesson by the following parable:—

18. The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife :

and there passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

19. Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to *thine* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou, and Judah with thee?

2 Chron. xxv. 18, 19.

Amaziah refused the warning: the two armies met at Beth-shemesh, Judah was defeated, and Joash had Jerusalem at his mercy. He broke down 400 cubits of its wall, and ransacked the treasures of Temple and palace, before returning to Samaria. Amaziah's reign of twenty-nine years ended in his assassination at Lachish, where he had taken refuge from a conspiracy formed against him at Jerusalem.

The reign of his successor Azariah or Uzziah was long (52 years) and prosperous. He crushed the Philistines, and broke down the walls of their **Uzziah.** towns, and also asserted his supremacy over the Arabs of the south, and the Ammonites. He refortified Jerusalem, raised a powerful army, and introduced the use of engines of war to shoot arrows and great stones from the city walls, like those used by the Romans in later days. He also did much to develop the wealth of his country by encouraging agriculture, and the keeping of cattle. He dug wells for the storage of water, and built towers to protect shepherds and others from the attacks of raiders.

But in his later years Uzziah committed the presumptuous act of entering the Temple and insisting on burning incense himself, which at that time **His sacrilege.** only the priests were allowed to do. Azariah, the chief priest, and eighty other priests resisted him:

telling him to go out of the sanctuary. But while he stood there with the censer in his hand, and full of anger against the fearless priests, he was suddenly struck with leprosy. He made haste to go out of the Temple, and for the rest of his life lived in seclusion, his son Jotham acting as regent (2 Chron. xxvi.).

Jotham was a good ruler, though unwilling to restrain the people from worshipping at the various high places. He had his father's taste for building, erecting among other things a great gate for the Temple. He fought with the Ammonites, and made them pay him for three years in succession a large indemnity of silver and corn. He was succeeded by Ahaz, his son, who proved a weak, obstinate, and idolatrous king (2 Chron. xxvii.).

About this time the prophets of Judah began, like Amos and Hosea, to write their prophecies, and two books of the highest value bear the names of Micah and Isaiah. The former prophet sprang from Moresheth near Gath: and the latter was a citizen of Jerusalem, and probably connected with the royal family.

Isaiah is one of the greatest men of history, a statesman as well as a prophet. His call came to him in the last year of Uzziah; as he describes it himself in chap. vi. of his book. He saw in the Temple a vision of Jehovah, surrounded by the six-winged seraphim who were crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." He was appalled by this vision, and felt keenly his own sinfulness. But when he confessed this, one of the seraphim came to him and touched his lips with a burning coal from the altar, saying that by this his sin

was forgiven. Then he heard the voice of God Himself asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" To this he replied, "Here am I, send me." His offer of himself was accepted, and he was bidden to declare to the people a message of judgment. They had refused to see and hear the previous warnings of God, and now they were to be deprived of the power of doing so. And when the prophet cried out in dismay, "Lord, how long?" he was told that it would last until the land was desolate, and the people carried far away into captivity. One word of hope closed the dreadful message. A few, the remnant, like the life which still remains in a tree root when the tree is cut down, would be spared—to be the new Israel of the future: "the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

For the rest of his life Isaiah devoted himself to the teaching of these great lessons which had thus been impressed on himself at his call: the *holiness* of Jehovah, the sinfulness of His people, the call to repentance, the certainty of Divine judgment for sin, and the indestructible hope of a restored Israel and a Messiah.

CHAPTER XLI

ISAIAH, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH

ISAIAH and Micah, like Amos and Hosea in the previous generation in northern Israel, denounce unsparingly the corruptions of rulers and people. Isaiah **Isaiah calls** compares their wickedness to that of Sodom **to repentance.** and Gomorrah. Micah likens the oppression of the people by the rich and powerful to the feasts of cannibals. What made these social evils of covetousness, luxury, bloodshed, and party strife all the worse was the hypocrisy of a splendid outward religion. The Temple was thronged with worshippers, but there was little holiness. Both prophets insist on the supremacy of holiness over sacrifices; and both, in the name of Jehovah, utter the call to repentance.

16. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ;

17. Learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah i. 16-18.

Micah, in remarkable words, contrasts the popular idea that the service of Jehovah consisted merely **Micah teaches** in sacrifices, with the real claim of Jehovah **true religion.** on man.

6. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Micah vi. 6-8.

Both prophets again, in the most striking manner, foretell the coming of Christ.

Isaiah's first great public appearance was on the occasion of the attack on Jerusalem by the combined forces of Israel and Syria (p. 216). He stood forth and assured King Ahaz to his face that this attack would fail. Both Samaria and Damascus, he said, were but like smouldering fire-brands just about to be extinguished. He foresaw the ruin of them both through the rise of Assyria. The true strength of Jerusalem lay in faithfulness to Jehovah and His promises.

Ahaz showed his unbelief by refusing to ask for the "sign" which the prophet offered him. Isaiah proceeded to give him a sign, which only the faithful could understand, and the full meaning of which was still hidden in the secrets of the future: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (= "God with us").

Isaiah himself apparently thought at first that this "son" would be born in the course of the next few years, but later on he realized that his words would be fulfilled in the Messianic kingdom of later days. And he was

inspired to explain more fully that this son would not merely be a son of David, and a great restorer, but be God Himself, born on earth.

6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

7. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall* be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

Micah uttered a similar prophecy of the birth of a Divine champion—

But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

The Prophecy
of the birth
at Bethlehem.

Micah v. 2.

It is uncertain what meaning the prophets attached to this virgin, who was to be the mother of so wonderful a son. They may have thought of the nation of Israel personified, but the fulfilment was seen afterwards in the Blessed Virgin Mary (see St. Matt. i. 22, 23).

Isaiah's warnings and encouragements fell on deaf ears. Ahaz preferred the fatal policy of inviting the King of Assyria to his assistance, and bribing him with the Temple treasures to draw off the Syrian and Israelite invaders. The immediate terror was removed, but Ahaz had not bettered his position. His realm was attacked on the south by the Edomites and the

Philistines, and he himself was now but a vassal of Assyria.

After the fall of Damascus (732), and the carrying captive of the Syrians to Kir, Ahaz was apparently summoned to Damascus to do homage to his new lord, Tiglath-pileser. Here he saw an altar which pleased him so much that he sent the pattern to the priest Urijah at Jerusalem, with orders to have it copied; and on his return he substituted this for Solomon's brazen altar, which he moved away to a subordinate place. Perhaps it is this foreign innovation to which the chronicler refers: "He sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him." Ahaz also mutilated the "lavers" and the "sea" which Solomon had made, and made other alterations in the Temple, apparently in fear of further demands from the King of Assyria (2 Chron. xxviii.).

Ahaz appears during his sixteen years' reign as the typically idolatrous king, a lover of foreign worships of every description—even burning his own son as a sacrifice to Moloch; erecting "altars in every corner of Jerusalem," and making shrines and high places to his various gods throughout his whole kingdom.

Hezekiah, the son and successor of Ahaz, was a monarch of very different character. Throughout his reign of twenty-nine years he showed himself a strong and religious ruler, absolutely faithful to Jehovah, and willing to be guided by the inspiration of Isaiah. At the beginning of his reign he restored and cleansed the Temple from all the corruptions of the idolatry of Ahaz, addressing a special exhortation to the Levites to be diligent. Then followed a public restoration of the worship of Jehovah, with sin-offerings, burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings. The different "high places"

were visited and their altars destroyed, and among the objects of superstition which Hezekiah did away with was the brazen serpent made by Moses in the wilderness, called Nehushtan ("the brazen thing"), which had been worshipped with the burning of incense.

Next the king celebrated the Passover with great solemnity, a feast which had been long neglected. He even endeavoured to collect all the twelve **Hezekiah's** tribes together for this, and to restore the **Passover**. religious unity which Jeroboam had broken. He sent written invitations by his "posts" to all the northern tribes. Most of them mocked at this; but some out of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, "humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." The Passover was held with great splendour and joy, though circumstances made it necessary to hold it on the 14th day of the second month instead of the first. Some of the visitors from the northern tribes had not "purified" themselves according to the proper ritual, but Hezekiah prayed for them, and asked that God would pardon every one that prepared his heart to seek the God of their fathers. No such Passover, it is said, had been held since the days of Solomon (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.).

CHAPTER XLII

THE GREAT DELIVERANCE

HEZEKIAH had inherited from his father, Ahaz, the position of being tributary to the Kings of Assyria. But there **Hezekiah** was a strong party at Jerusalem, who were **and Assyria.** constantly urging him to break free, and seek protection by alliance with Egypt. Isaiah protested against this policy. The Egyptians, he knew well, never brought help to any one; "their strength," he said, "is to sit still." But his protest was disregarded. Some encouragement for rebellion against Assyria seemed to arise, when in 722 Merodach-baladan, a Chaldean prince, declared his independence, and reigned as king at Babylon for twelve years.

This prince made some overtures to Hezekiah, sending an embassy nominally to congratulate him on his recovery after a dangerous illness, and to inquire about **The embassy from Babylon.** a miracle that had taken place. This illness of Hezekiah's would have been fatal, but for the prayers of Isaiah. A Divine promise was given him that he would recover, and live for fifteen years longer. And as a sign that he would recover so speedily as to be able in three days' time to visit the Temple, the shadow cast by the sun on "the dial of Ahaz," returned ten degrees backward. When the ambassadors came to enquire about these things Hezekiah foolishly showed

them all his treasures and preparations for war. For this he was rebuked by Isaiah, who foretold that in days to come all this treasure would be carried to Babylon, and even the king's own descendants would be servants in the Court of Babylon (2 Kings xx.).

Merodach-baladan was finally overthrown by Sargon : but under the latter's successor, Sennacherib, Babylon again revolted, and this seemed to the "patriot" party at Jerusalem a good moment for refusing tribute to Assyria. The Philistines and other neighbouring peoples joined in the revolt ; and Hezekiah seems to have relied both on the support of Egypt, and of the Ethiopian king, Tirhakah. The people of Jerusalem welcomed this move, and made preparations for war in an eager and light-hearted manner. They little knew the strength of Assyria.

In 701 Sennacherib, invaded Phœnicia and Palestine. Isaiah had for years predicted such an invasion, and had also foretold its failure in some supernatural way. For the moment the Assyrian swept all before him. He subdued Phœnicia and the Philistines ; took all the fortified towns in Judah (forty-six is the number given in the Assyrian inscriptions), seized a vast number of prisoners ; and shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem, as he said, "as a bird in a cage."

The position was hopeless, and Hezekiah offered to surrender. Sennacherib accepted the offer, and received an indemnity of 300 talents of silver, and 30 of gold : to pay which the king had even to strip the Temple of its gold.

But the Assyrian was not satisfied. He sent from Lachish an army with three of his chief officials ; the commander-in-chief, the chamberlain, and the "cup-bearer"

(called "the Rabshakeh"). These demanded the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. Before the walls, and in full hearing of the garrison, the Rabshakeh delivered his master's message. Jerusalem was no easy fortress to take, and the Assyrians hoped to awaken fears, and cause dissension among the defenders. In pompous language the Rabshakeh told them of "the great king, the King of Assyria," of the impossibility of resisting him, and of the folly of trusting to Egypt. Next he played upon the superstitions of those who heard him. He told them that Hezekiah had offended Jehovah by taking away the high-places, and allowing only the one altar in the Temple. Nay, he asserted, the Assyrians were the actual ministers of Jehovah's anger. "The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land and destroy it."

The Jewish officers, fearing for the loyalty of the defenders of the walls, besought him not to speak in Hebrew, but in his own language of Syriac (or Aramaean), which they understood, and the common soldiers did not. On the contrary, he shouted louder, in the Hebrew tongue, and addressed the garrison directly. Resistance, he said, was hopeless. Hezekiah was deceiving them. Jehovah could no more deliver them than the gods of the other nations subdued by the Assyrians had been able to do. He counselled them to surrender at once. Then they might eat and drink in peace, "until I come and take you away to a land, like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive, and of honey, that ye may live and not die." He spoiled the effect of his speech by this last suggestion. The prospect of being carried captive out of their own land was enough to make the Jews fight to

**The Rab-
shakeh.**

**The call to
surrender.**

the death. The defenders returned no answer to him (2 Kings xviii.).

The royal officials of Hezekiah reported the words of the Assyrian. Isaiah was ready with an answer of defiance, from God Himself. The Assyrian king would be compelled to change his purpose, he would return to his own land and there die by the sword.

The Rabshakeh and his companions returned to Sennacherib with the news of their failure. The Assyrian king then wrote an insolent letter to Hezekiah, telling him not to deceive himself—no gods had saved the cities of his former conquests, and Jehovah could not save Jerusalem.

Hezekiah in deep distress carried the letter into the Temple and spread "it before the LORD." He prayed to Jehovah:—

Hezekiah in deep distress carried the letter into the Temple and spread "it before the LORD." He prayed to Jehovah:—

15. O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou art the God, *even* thou alone, Hezekiah's of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made *prayer*. heaven and earth.

16. LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands.

18. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD God, *even* thou only.

2 Kings xix. 15-19.

Once again Isaiah in the sublime language of faith

and confidence foretold that the Assyrian would never enter Jerusalem. He would not even begin the operations of a siege. Sennacherib was but the instrument of the Almighty Jehovah, and the time had come for him to be taught this. He would be compelled to go home by the way that he came. "I will defend this city to save it," was Jehovah's word, "for mine own sake, and my servant David's sake."

It seemed a hopeless defiance. Jerusalem was absolutely in the power of Sennacherib. He only needed to starve it out. But the blow fell on him with startling suddenness:

It came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

2 Kings xix. 35.

Probably this great disaster was caused by the outbreak of some sudden pestilence, but it was the hand of God and the fulfilment of Isaiah's words.

Sennacherib with the remnant of his army at once left Palestine and returned no more. Some years later he was assassinated by two of his sons, while he was worshipping at Nineveh, in the temple of Nisroch his god.

Hezekiah died some three or four years after this great deliverance. He was not a great warrior, but a man of faith. He seems to have been a patron of literature (see Prov. xxv. 1). He also fortified Jerusalem and brought a supply of water into the city by an underground aqueduct from Gihon.

CHAPTER XLIII

JOSIAH

HEZEKIAH was succeeded in 697 by his son Manasseh. His long reign of fifty-five years was an evil time of national decay (2 Chron. xxxiii.). Hezekiah's ideals of religion were abandoned. Foreign worships **Manasseh.** and foreign alliances were favoured. The king himself seems to have taken the leading part in idolatries, erecting altars to the heavenly bodies in the Temple courts, and placing in the Temple an "Asherah." He was devoted to superstition and magic, and offered his own son to the fire-god Moloch. But the worst of all was the persecution of prophets and the faithful worshippers of Jehovah. Isaiah himself probably was among those who perished by cruel deaths. Manasseh is said to have "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood from one end to another."

The Assyrians attacked and defeated Manasseh and carried him away as a prisoner to Babylon. Here he repented, and when he was restored to his throne he made some amends by cleansing Jerusalem from idols, and repairing the altar of Jehovah.

His son Amon who succeeded him is said to have "trespassed more and more." His idolatries **Amon.** were ended after two years' reign, by his assassination by his own servants.

Josiah the youthful son of Amon was placed on the

throne by the general consent of the people. His reign, though cut short in a tragic manner, is the one bright page in the gloomy story of the decline of the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings xxii.-xxiii.; 2 Chron. xxxiv.-xxxv.). Later times classed Josiah with David and Hezekiah. In the twelfth year of his reign, when he was only twenty, he began to attack idolatry.

But the great turning-point was in the eighteenth year, when a remarkable event took place. A copy of the Book of the Law was found in the Temple by Hilkiah the high priest. Evidently the written Law had been lost, and its precepts were only known by tradition, or ignored altogether. But what Hilkiah found was probably not the Pentateuch as we have it now. Hilkiah's book is generally thought to have been the Book of Deuteronomy, as the quotations from it seem to agree with certain passages in that book. Hilkiah announced his discovery to Shaphan, the royal scribe, who was able to read it, and found it to contain terrible curses upon those who forsook the worship of Jehovah. The king hearing this was much distressed and sent to consult Huldah a prophetess, the wife of Shallum, keeper of the wardrobe (of the priest's vestments). She emphatically confirmed the words of the book. The curses would be fulfilled upon Jerusalem and its people. But God would show some forbearance to Josiah himself, because he had already "humbled himself before Jehovah." He would not see himself the evil that was coming; but would die in peace before it came.

Josiah now set himself to carry out the most thorough reformation of the national religion that had yet taken place. The newly-found book was read to a national assembly; and a national covenant

was made that henceforth all would be faithful to Jehovah. Then the Temple was thoroughly purified of all the relics of idolatry. All the idols and their belongings were burnt, including the great Asherah of the Temple, and a chariot which had been used in processions in honour of the Sun-god.

Next came the purification of the environs of Jerusalem ; all the remains of idolatry in the valley of Tophet, where Moloch's horrible worship had been carried on, were destroyed: so too were the remnants of the idolatries of Solomon's wives on the Mount of Olives.

The cities of Judah were next visited, the "high places" destroyed, and the idolatrous priests deposed. The reforming wave then passed to the **General** desolated regions of the northern tribes (now **reformation.** carried into captivity). Bethel, the great seat of the idolatry of the kings of Israel, had its idols burnt; its altar was broken down, and desecrated by burning upon it the bones of former worshippers who had been buried near the shrine. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet from Judah, who had prophesied against Jeroboam (p. 191). The king noticed the tomb of this man, and being told of the prophecy, ordered that this grave should be left undisturbed.

Lastly, the king held a great Passover, supplying himself the 30,000 lambs required for the worshippers. No such Passover had been held, it is said, since the days of the judges.

This reformation was probably encouraged by the influence of the prophet Zephaniah, whose book belongs to this time. In it he denounces the idolatries of Jerusalem, and foretells a great coming judgment, "a day of wrath, a day of trouble

**Prophecies of
Zephaniah
and Nahum.**

and distress." Dark clouds were, indeed, gathering in the distance. The Scythians, wandering hordes of fierce Tartars, were threatening to overrun Palestine. The great Assyrian empire itself was tottering to its fall. In 607 the Babylonians took the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, as the prophet Nahum had foretold.

The Egyptians thought the moment had come to seize the districts west of the Euphrates which Assyria had held. Pharaoh-Necho with an army advanced **The Egyptian advance.** along the coast-road of Palestine northwards. Josiah, with strange foolhardiness, determined to try to stop him. Pharaoh-Necho warned him not to do so, asserting that he was fulfilling the commands of God, and that he had no quarrel with Josiah. The king persisted, and the two armies met on the great battlefield of Palestine, at Megiddo. Josiah had disguised himself, but he was fatally wounded by the Egyptian archers. He was carried back in a chariot to Jerusalem, and there died in his thirty-ninth year. The prophet Jeremiah composed an elegy, and his death was long remembered in the sorrowful songs of Israel. The Egyptian advance reached as far as the Orontes; but after four years the new empire of Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, was strong enough to drive out the Egyptians entirely from the lands they had coveted.

About this time also, another prophet, Habakkuk, probably one of the Temple singers, wrote his book, **Habakkuk.** which contains a sad complaint of the oppressions of the Chaldean or Babylonian armies; who, though the ministers of Divine judgment on sinful Jerusalem, are, the prophet says, worse sinners than those they punish. Habakkuk's message of hope is that "the just shall live by his faith." A terrible time was at

hand, but the promises of Jehovah were certain for those who trusted in Him.

17. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls :

18. Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Hab. iii. 17, 18.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE PROPHETS JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL

JEREMIAH, one of the greatest of the prophets, and one of the most pathetic figures in history, was a priest of Anathoth. He received a special call from God in the thirteenth year of Josiah, and was told that his office would be to declare both the ruin and the restoration of his country; he was "to root out and pull down and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant." He denounced the sins of his time, and especially the hypocrisy which thought that the mere possession of the Temple was a proof of Divine favour, and made it an excuse for the worshippers stealing, murdering, and committing adultery; swearing falsely, and worshipping other gods. He boldly proclaimed that the end of the Temple would be like that of the ancient sanctuary at Shiloh, and that the people of Judah would be cast out into captivity just the same as the northern tribes had been (Jer. vii.).

Such prophecies were not palatable. Jeremiah went in peril of his life, and Pashur, the deputy high priest, scoured and put him in the stocks. Through his sufferings. out his career Jeremiah was misunderstood and persecuted; he suffered great mental agonies, and was in constant danger, and indeed is a remarkable type of our Lord Himself.

THE PROPHETS JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL 247

Josiah was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz or Shallum. But after two months' reign the new king was deposed by Pharaoh-Necho, and carried to Egypt, whence he never returned. Necho exacted an indemnity from Jerusalem, and placed on the throne another son of Josiah's, Eliakim, changing his name to Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim reigned eleven years, a luxurious, careless ruler, an oppressor of the poor, and heedless of religious warnings. The Egyptian masters of Palestine were defeated utterly at Carchemish on the Euphrates in 605 by Nebuchadnezzar, and Jehoiakim had to transfer his allegiance to the new power of Babylon. At this point Jeremiah made a special appeal to the king by presenting his prophecies, which had been written in a roll by his scribe, Baruch. But the king, while the roll was being read, seized it and cut it in pieces with a knife, and contemptuously threw it into the fire. The prophecies were re-written by Jeremiah, who pronounced the Divine sentence against the profane king that he would have no one to mourn his death, nor son to succeed him, "and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost" (Jer. xxxvi.).

For three years Jehoiakim continued to be the vassal of Babylon; he then rebelled, trusting as usual in the help of Egypt. He was attacked by various irregular armies of the Babylonians and their allies, and in some unknown and apparently ignominious manner met his death.

The next king was Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah or Coniah. He was a son of Jehoiakim, but only reigned three months. Nebuchadnezzar himself invaded Palestine, besieged Jerusalem, and compelled it to surrender.

The king was deported to Babylon, along with his mother, the chief officers and princes, and 10,000 others, including 7000 warriors and 1000 craftsmen and smiths. The Temple also was stripped of its treasures, including the gold vessels of King Solomon. This event is the beginning of the Captivity, which is usually reckoned from the year 598 (2 Kings xxiv.). Among the captives was a young priest, Ezekiel, afterwards famous as a prophet. Jehoiachin was kept in prison at Babylon for many years; he was released and honourably treated by Nebuchadnezzar's successor; but never returned from Babylon.

Jeremiah pronounced this event to be the real end of the monarchy, and that those who had been taken to Babylon were henceforth the true Israel with whom lay all future hope. He wrote a letter to the captives, urging them not to rebel against Babylon, nor listen to false prophets, but to accept the will of God, and settle down quietly in Babylon until their return, which would be granted them in seventy years.

Nebuchadnezzar placed on the throne of Jerusalem the brother of the exiled king, Mattaniah, changing his name to Zedekiah. He appears as a weak monarch, who stood in some awe of Jeremiah, but on the other hand was too much afraid of the strong party that were plotting against Babylon to obey his words. His reign lasted eleven years, and the old idolatries seem to have flourished, even in the precincts of the Temple (Ezek. viii.).

Jeremiah continued to declare his unpopular warnings. He warned against the hope of foreign alliances; he asserted that Nebuchadnezzar's empire was for the present the will of God, and no good would come from

rebelling against him. As a visible sign of this the prophet wore on his neck a yoke of wood. One of the false prophets, Hananiah, predicted the return from Babylon in two years, and broke Jeremiah's yoke. The true prophet now substituted a yoke of iron, and predicted Hananiah's own death within a year, which actually took place.

In these ways Jeremiah was fulfilling the first part of his prophetic commission, "to root out and pull down." He was also "building and planting." For one section of his prophecies (chaps. xxx.-xxxiii.) foretells a restored Israel

Prophecy of
the New
Covenant.

in the future, under a king of the line of David, whom he calls "a righteous branch." And he also speaks of a "new covenant" which will take the place of the old covenant at the coming out of Egypt. Under this all will "know the LORD," for His law will be written in their hearts; and sins and iniquities will be forgiven, remembered no more (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). (This is the Christian covenant which Christ Himself instituted, when He said at the last supper, "This is my blood of the new covenant".) As a sign of this new covenant Jeremiah also foretells the total disappearance of "the Ark of the Covenant"; and the gathering of "all the nations to the name of the Lord." Then, like Isaiah, he predicts that Israel, purified by chastisement, will become the Catholic Church, not for one nation merely, but for the whole world (Jer. iii.).

Meanwhile similar lessons were being taught to the exiles in Babylon by the priest-prophet, Ezekiel. He was called to his work in the fifth year of the Captivity by a mysterious vision of the glory of Jehovah, which came to him by the river Chebar, a

Ezekiel.

tributary of the Euphrates. He proclaimed to the exiles that the fall of Jerusalem was inevitable; its idolatries necessitated a terrible Divine judgment. He sought to impress on them that the future of the nation lay with them; that, instead of complaining, or rebelling against Babylon, repentance and submission to the judgments of God were their only hope. But he found them "most rebellious," laying the blame of their misfortunes on their ancestors, saying "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." They were ready to listen to the prophet out of curiosity, and as a new excitement, but they paid no real heed to his words. Nothing would convince them but the actual fall of Jerusalem, and so, till that event took place, Ezekiel was bidden by God to become "dumb," and prophesy no more.

CHAPTER XLV

THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY

KING ZEDEKIAH, untaught by the fate of his predecessor, broke his oath and rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself appeared before the walls of Jerusalem, erected forts and battering-rams, and other siege engines. The king, in despair, sent two of the priests to Jeremiah, to inquire whether there was any hope of a miracle happening, like those of old time. The reply was decisive. Jehovah was determined to destroy the city. Only those who surrendered to the King of Babylon would save their lives; all that refused and remained in the city would die by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence.

The Egyptians made an attempt to draw off the besieging army. This was for the moment successful; but the prophet warned that the Babylonians would return and burn Jerusalem. His unpopularity became so great that he tried now to leave the city. But he was stopped at the gate on the charge of being a deserter, brought back, scourged, and imprisoned. The king dared not release him, but allowed him a daily ration of bread, and even sent to ask him whether there was any further word from Jehovah. "There is," was the reply: "thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the King of Babylon."

Nebuchadnezzar seems soon to have beaten back the invading Egyptians, and now returned in full force to complete the reduction of the city. The rage of the zealots, who really governed Jerusalem, fell more severely on the prophet. They demanded his execution, "he weakeneth the hands of the men of war—for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt." The reply of Zedekiah was characteristic. "Behold he is in your hand, for the king is not he that can do anything against you." Still apparently they were afraid to take the final step of killing the prophet, but cast him into a foul underground cistern, where he "sank in the mire," and would soon have perished. He was rescued, however, by the kindness and courage of Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, one of the palace eunuchs, who obtained permission from Zedekiah to take a guard of soldiers and draw out the prophet with ropes (Jer. xxxviii.).

The prophet still received from God messages of hope for the far-off future. As a sign that the land would once again come to its old inheritors, Jeremiah was Divinely instructed to buy for its full price a piece of land in Anathoth, though it was at the time actually occupied by the besiegers. He did so, and deposited the deed of purchase with Baruch as a sign for the time to come (Jer. xxxii.).

The siege went on amidst the horrors of famine and pestilence. At last, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, the besiegers made a breach in the wall, Jerusalem taken. the army entered, led by Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard. The king and his chief warriors endeavoured to escape by night to the Jordan valley, but were seized near Jericho, and carried to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. Here the king's sons and his nobles were

slain in his sight, and then his eyes were put out, and he was carried in chains of brass to Babylon, where he died in prison. Jerusalem was sacked, the Temple and other buildings burnt, and the walls broken down. All the treasures left were carried to Babylon, including the two great pillars of brass, Jachin and Boaz (p. 184), which were broken up, and all the other brass work made by Hiram for King Solomon. The chief men of Jerusalem were taken to Riblah and executed. Almost the whole population was deported to Babylon; only "the poor of the land" being left to be "vinedressers and husbandmen."

Jeremiah was treated with respect by the conquerors, and might, had he chosen, have preserved his own life by going to Babylon. He elected, however, to stay with the remnant that was left. These showed themselves still rebellious and unteachable. A friend of Jeremiah, Gedaliah, was placed over them by Nebuchadnezzar at Mizpah. But after two months, at the instigation of the King of Ammon, Gedaliah was treacherously assassinated by Ishmael, one of the royal family. The murderer himself with a few others, after other deeds of bloodshed described in Jer. xli., succeeded in making his escape beyond Jordan to the Ammonites. Johanan, the head of the Jews who still remained, disregarded the urgent counsel of Jeremiah to remain in the land and submit to the conqueror. A large number, led by Johanan, took refuge at Tahpanhes in Egypt, dragging Jeremiah with them. He appears for the last time in history again raising his fruitless protest against the obstinate idolatries of his countrymen, and especially against the worship paid by the women to "the queen of heaven," *i.e.* the planet Venus, to which they burnt incense and poured libations.

Jeremiah's
exile and
death.

Tradition says that finally, at Tahpanhes, the prophet was stoned to death, after he had predicted the destruction both of Egypt and of those of his countrymen who had taken refuge there. He had already foretold the fall of Babylon, and the ultimate return of the exiles. To one of these, Seraiah, he had entrusted a roll in which the doom of Babylon was written, and bade him when he arrived in Babylon to tie a stone to it, and sink it in the Euphrates, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her."

The news of the fall of the city reached Ezekiel some six months afterwards. He broke his silence and again prophesied. He gave no hope of the restoration of the royal line. Indeed, he had already foretold that the crown would be lost, and the kingdom overthrown. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. xxi. 27). The words seem to contain a reference to Jacob's prophecy of Shiloh, and are certainly a prophecy of Christ. He foretold a spiritual restoration under "David," and a return of Israel to the land of Canaan. God would "sprinkle clean water" upon them, and give them "a new heart and a new spirit," so that in the future they would no longer worship idols, but keep God's statutes.

The most remarkable of all Ezekiel's visions is one in which he sees exiled Israel under the figure of a valley full of dry bones of dead men. But the Spirit of God blew upon them, flesh grew upon the bones again, the breath came from the four winds, and gave them life, and they "stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (Ezek. xxxvii.).

The last part of his prophecies draws an ideal picture of a rebuilt Jerusalem and Temple, with prince, and priest, and sacrifices.

Finally, he beheld a vision of waters flowing out from the Temple, which ran eastward, and grew from a brook into a great river. This river made the desert ^(c) of the fertile, and healed the bitter water of the River of Life. Dead Sea. By its banks grew trees of unfading leaves and fruit which every month renewed, "the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." "And everything shall live whither the river cometh" (Ezek. xlvii.). This vision appears to mean that Jerusalem and its people had still a great future before them, to carry the message of the knowledge of God over all the earth; and to bring life and healing everywhere; a prophecy which was not really fulfilled until the Catholic Church began from Jerusalem to carry the Gospel of Christ to all the world.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE CAPTIVITY

VERY little is known of the condition of the Jews in their exile in Babylon. But it must have been a period which changed them much, and taught them many lessons. They disappear in Babylon, a nation with an obstinate leaning to idolatry, with ideas of their national God, Jehovah, but little better than those of the surrounding heathen, and very indifferent to the moral teaching of the Law of Moses. They reappear at the end of the dark tunnel, hating idolatry, deeply conscious that Jehovah had called them to be a nation holy and separate from the heathen, and devoted to the Law. Thus what seemed to be their ruin led, as Ezekiel had foretold, to a spiritual resurrection.

The sufferings of the exiles must at first have been great. Though not actually reduced to slavery, it must have been hard for them to find a livelihood. But the Babylonians were a people of education and ability, and the Jews no doubt learned much from them, especially in the way of trade and the use of money, for their masters were great bankers and money-lenders. In fact, when the time came for the return to Jerusalem, very many of the Jews preferred to remain in the country where they had settled and become prosperous.

Effect of
the Exile.

Condition
of the Jews
in Babylon.

One of the first results of the exile was to create a deeper respect for prophecy. The words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel had so obviously come true that the exiles began to pay greater heed to religion, and to feel sorrow for the past.

Two new institutions sprang up as a result of this change of mind. The order or profession of the Scribes became established. These were men of learning, who devoted themselves to writing **The Scribes.** out, guarding, explaining and teaching the Law. And, secondly, the "synagogues" were established. As there was no temple, no sacrifices could be offered; **The** but the more religious-minded exiles gathered **Synagogues.** together on the Sabbaths for prayer and reading the Scriptures, and mutual encouragement. This led to the erection of buildings for this purpose; when the Jews returned to Palestine, they built synagogues in every town and village; and in later days we find, wherever there is a colony of Jews, there is a synagogue.

Again the experience of idolatry in Babylon, combined with the sad memories of their own punishment, made them forsake all such practices, and **The end of Jewish** accept the truth that Moses had taught of one **idolatry.** God, who was a spirit, and must not be worshipped in the form of an idol. So they gave increased study to the Mosaic rules for worshipping Jehovah, and priests and people were ready when they returned to follow these rules. But they did not resist the idolatries of Babylon without struggles and sufferings. For example, the Book of Daniel records how three of the exiles, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, refused to worship a golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and were thrown into a furnace, from which they were miraculously

delivered by a heavenly Being, whom the king himself saw by their side in the midst of the fire, and whom he thought to be like "a son of God" (Dan. iii.). At a later time, under the Persian king Darius, the prophet Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, to punish him for disobeying a royal edict, and continuing to pray three times daily to Jehovah, with his face towards Jerusalem. But he too was miraculously preserved by the Angel of God, who, he said, "shut the lions' mouths" (Dan. vi.).

This Daniel is a remarkable figure. He was one of a number of youths of high rank who were carried to Babylon in the early part of the reign of **Daniel.** Jehoiakim. Here he preserved his faith, and reached a high position at the king's court, being known for his great gift of prophecy and his power of interpreting visions and dreams. He foretold to Nebuchadnezzar himself a period of insanity, when, as a punishment for his pride, the king dwelt with the beasts of the field, and "did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like birds' claws" (Dan. iv.). He also prophesied to the king about the empires which were to succeed his own—the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman; and, finally, a kingdom which was to stand for ever (*i.e.* the Church, the Kingdom of Christ) (Dan. ii. 44).

Daniel had visions in which he saw Jerusalem rebuilt, and the coming of "Messiah the prince": but his most important vision is one where he saw the Son of man and the Resurrection. dominion, everlasting and universal, given by God in the councils of heaven to one whom he describes as "a Son of man" who "came with the clouds of heaven" (Dan. vii.). These prophecies reappear in the Gospels, and especially in the title "Son

of man" which our Lord applied to Himself. Also Daniel was assured by God of the preservation of the Jews, of their protection by the great angel Michael, and of the resurrection of the dead, which now for the first time was definitely revealed to man.

2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Dan. xii. 2, 3.

These things are contained in the Book of Daniel, which was probably compiled in its present form much later, *i.e.* in the second century B.C., in the time of the great struggle of the Maccabees (p. 277). Daniel is clearly a historical person, as he is alluded to for his sanctity and his great wisdom by the prophet Ezekiel (xiv. 14; xxviii. 3).

Another prophet (or perhaps more than one) whose writings are contained in Isaiah xl.-lxvi. arose in Babylon during the later years of the Cap- The second
Isaiah. tivity. His writing marks the very highest level of Hebrew prophecy, in his teaching about God, about the purpose for which Israel was being preserved, and about the future Saviour. It was this unknown prophet who announced to the exiles the near approach of their deliverer. This was Cyrus, who had gained the kingdom of Media and Lydia, and was building up rapidly a great empire east of Babylonia, which was soon to gain a world supremacy as the Persian Empire. The prophet speaks of him as Jehovah's "anointed," whom He had called for the express purpose of restoring Israel.

The most remarkable part of this prophet's message to his own people is his teaching respecting "the Servant of the Lord." By this he means, in the first place, Israel, as a nation which God had called to be His witness to the heathen world. But Israel has failed in this, and another servant is promised, a Person, who will be a light to the Gentiles, as well as the restorer of Israel. He will not be a great prince, but a "man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief," who will bear the punishment of human sin. He will be put to death and rise again. This is described in the greatest chapter in the Old Testament, Isaiah liii., which all Christians recognize as the portrait of Jesus Christ Himself.

Thus the Captivity is in the highest sense the period of God's education of His people, in which they were taught not only their own past sins, but the true nature and work of the Messiah to whom they had so long looked forward.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE RETURN

THE Babylonian Empire fell swiftly and suddenly before the advance of Cyrus. In 538 Gobryas, one of his generals (called in Dan. v. 31, "Darius the ^{Fall of} Median") gained possession of Babylon, by a ^{Babylon.} night attack, almost without striking a blow; and shortly afterwards Cyrus himself entered the city.

Belshazzar, the son of the King Nabonidus, and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was in charge of Babylon at the time of its capture: and a weird story is told ^{The writing} in Dan. v. of the night in which the doom fell ^{on the wall.} on the city. Belshazzar was holding high revel in his palace, and he and his princes were actually drinking out of the golden and silver vessels taken from the Temple at Jerusalem. Suddenly he saw a mysterious hand tracing unknown words on the wall. Terror seized him, and he called in all the professional magicians to interpret the words. They could not do so, and on the queen's suggestion the aged Daniel was sent for. He reminded the prince of how, unlike Nebuchadnezzar who had humbled himself before God, he had forgotten God and given himself up to pride and idolatry. Then he read the words on the wall, which were Mene, Mene ("numbered"), Tekel ("weighed"), Upharsin ("divisions"), and explained them to mean that God had "numbered" the kingdom and

ended it; Belshazzar was "weighed" in the balances and found wanting; the kingdom was "divided" and given to the Medes and Persians. Gobryas was already at the gates or within them. That same night Belshazzar was killed, the city taken and the Empire overthrown.

Cyrus showed at once his interest in the Jewish exiles, and not only issued a decree which authorized them to return, but gave them back the sacred vessels of the Temple.

Over 42,000, chiefly from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, at once took advantage of this permission. They were led by Zerubbabel or Shesh-bazzar, the grandson of King Jehoiachin. With him was associated Joshua (or Jeshua) the high priest. After a four months' journey the pilgrims, many of whom were very old and had actually seen Solomon's Temple standing, arrived in Judæa. They set up the altar of burnt-offering on the ancient spot, the Temple-rock, and reinstated the daily sacrifices. The feast of tabernacles was held. Next, in the second month of the year after the return, at a great national gathering, amidst sacred music and the sound of mingled joy and weeping, the foundations of a new Temple were laid.

The Samaritans (p. 218) now asked to be allowed to take part in this work, as they said that they too worshipped Jehovah. But the request was refused, and the Samaritans became the bitter enemies of the Jews henceforward. They proceeded to intrigue against the Jews by sending charges of rebellion and disloyalty to the Persian court. Consequently the work of building the Temple was stopped for sixteen years.

Two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, roused the people to new enthusiasm. Haggai reproved them for dwelling in fine houses themselves and leaving the house of God to lie waste. He exhorted them to work, telling them that God's presence was still with them, and foretold that this second Temple when built would be more glorious than the first one. The "desire," or "desirable things," of all nations would come to it. By this was meant either Christ whom all nations really "desired," though they did not know of Him; or the coming of all nations with their rich offerings into the Church.

Zechariah had the same vision of the future. "Many nations," he said, "shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people—yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD" (Zech. viii. 22). To Zerubbabel the prophet promised that as his hands had begun the work, his hands also would finish it; and that he must not think merely of his own strength; "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

For Joshua, the high priest, Zechariah had a still more significant message (Zech. vi.). Making crowns of gold and silver he set them upon Joshua's head in the presence of witnesses, and addressed him by the name (already used by Isaiah) of "the Branch." By this he signified that Joshua was a type of the future Messiah, who would be both king and priest, and would build the true "temple of the LORD," *i.e.* the Catholic Church. "He shall be a priest upon his throne." The Messiah had already been foreshadowed as a prophet in Moses, and as a king in David and his descendants.

This new period of Jewish history was to show that he would be also a priest.

The renewed work of building did not escape the notice of the Persian officials. Ezra v. preserves a letter written **The Temple re-built.** to Darius by Tatnai, "governor on this side the river" (Euphrates), describing the preparations, and inquiring whether the decree of Cyrus really existed, sanctioning such a work. The decree was discovered in "the house of the rolls," and Darius's reply (Ezra vi.) was explicit. Not only were the builders to be unmolested; they were to have assistance of money from the royal taxes and materials for sacrifice; and whoever hindered them was to be hanged on timber taken from his own house. The Temple was completed, and in the sixth year of Darius (516) a solemn service of dedication was held, and a joyful Passover celebrated, "for the LORD had made them joyful."

The next fifty or sixty years are almost a blank in Jewish history. It does not appear to have been a time of advance or prosperity. The jealousies of the surrounding peoples, especially the Samaritans, were still active, and letters sent to Xerxes and his successor Artaxerxes aroused suspicion again at the Persian court, and prevented attempts to fortify Jerusalem.

During this period probably arose the prophet Malachi. He especially reproves the priests for neglecting to teach, **The Prophet Malachi.** and for insincerity and unfaithfulness in the discharge of their duties. And he prophesies in remarkable words the passing away of the priesthood and the sacrificial system, the calling of the Gentiles, and the institution of a new form of worship—the "pure offering" (cp. the *minchah*, see p. 81), which has always been regarded as a prediction of the Holy Eucharist.

10. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name, and a pure offering : for my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. Mal. i. 10, 11.

Malachi also reproves the people generally for marrying heathen wives and practising divorce, and for their despondency and faithlessness. But he speaks of a few faithful ones who were written in God's "book of remembrance." He concludes by foretelling the coming of Jehovah Himself to the Temple, who will bring a "swift judgment" against sinners, but to the faithful will rise as "the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings." He also speaks of a "messenger" who will appear before this coming of the Lord, and describes him as "Elijah the prophet." This was fulfilled in the coming of St. John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ.

CHAPTER XLVIII

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

THE period which followed the completion of the second Temple was marked by religious slackness and general lack of energy. Enthusiasm had died down and there was need again of a restorer. Help came from the Jews in Babylon. First came the mission of Ezra in 458. He was an influential priest and scribe, a descendant of Eleazar, the son of Aaron. He was accompanied by a number of other Jews, including priests, Levites, and singers, and he brought with him an offering of gold and silver and sacred vessels, presented both by the Jews of Babylon and the king Artaxerxes himself.

But Ezra also brought with him a complete copy of the Law of Moses, which probably by this time had been fully compiled and arranged as we have it now in the Pentateuch. His purpose, which the king directly sanctioned, was to teach the Law, and to endeavour to enforce obedience to it. On arriving at Jerusalem he was overcome with grief at the disregard of the Law, and especially at the number of marriages with heathen wives which had taken place. He appointed officers to look into the matter, and persuaded all those who had offended to put away their foreign wives; among those were seventeen even of the priesthood. But

here his work stopped for the present. It needed a man of stronger personality and fuller authority to go further. Such a man appeared, twelve years latter, in 445, in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah, son of Hachaliah, was a Jew who had risen to the high position of "cup-bearer" at the Persian court. He was a man of great practical ability, courage, and piety. News was brought ^{Nehemiah.} him of the sad condition of things in Judæa and Jerusalem,—the general poverty and distress, and the ruinous state of the city itself. He was so affected by this, that even in the presence of King Artaxerxes, his sadness was noticed. The king inquired its cause, and then asked what petition his cup-bearer had to make. After a moment's silent prayer, Nehemiah asked permission to go himself to Jerusalem, with authority to rebuild the city. The king granted it in the fullest and most generous way. Nehemiah was appointed "Tirshatha," or governor, with full powers.

It was not an easy task, for there were malicious enemies among the Samaritans, notably Sanballat, Tobiah "the servant," and Geshem, "the Arabian." ^{Building the walls of Jerusalem.} There was also a party at Jerusalem, headed by the high-priest Eliashib, who favoured a policy of union with their Gentile neighbours. But Nehemiah's enthusiasm swept all before him. Arriving at Jerusalem, he was able to persuade all the people to begin at once to rebuild the city walls. But the Samaritans threatened an armed attack, and those who built the wall, by Nehemiah's orders had their swords girded by their sides; only half of the number at a time built the wall, while the other half held a reserve of weapons—spears, shields, bows, and

coats of mail. As Nehemiah himself graphically puts it, "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

In spite of all this, the city-walls were rebuilt in fifty-two days. Meanwhile the Samaritan conspirators used all their craft to remove Nehemiah, either by frightening him, or by assassination. Four times they proposed a private conference in some village at a distance from Jerusalem. But he only replied, "I am doing a great work, so I cannot come down." Next, Sanballat tried to awaken Nehemiah's fears by sending an "open letter" to him, in which it was suggested that the Jews intended to rebel against Persia, and that Nehemiah proposed to make himself king. He suggested a conference, in mock friendship, to discuss this rumour. "There are no such things done as thou sayest," was the reply, "but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." Again, the intriguers bribed a "prophet," Shemaiah, to urge the governor to take refuge in the Temple, as his life was in danger. To have done this would have effectually injured Nehemiah's influence; he saw through the plot, and gave a dignified reply—"Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in" (Neh. vi. 11).

Now that the city was made safe against attack, Nehemiah combined with Ezra to work a great restoration of religion. On the first day of the seventh month, at a national assembly, Ezra, standing on a pulpit of wood, read from morning to mid-day the roll of the Law of Moses, which was interpreted by the Levites. This reading was received with the greatest reverence, with cries of *Amez*, Amen, bowing the head,

The plots
of the
Samaritans.

The Law
restored.

and even prostration. There were also signs of great sorrow over the previous neglect of the Law. But Nehemiah and Ezra ordered the rest of the day to be kept, not with mourning, but with feasting and rejoicing—"the joy of the Lord is your strength." The feast of tabernacles was now kept for the full eight days, during which Ezra continued to read extracts from the Law. Then, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, a day of solemn fasting and confession of sin was observed. Nehemiah, the priests, and the representatives of the people signed a solemn promise to observe the Law; especially it was promised that the Sabbath and the Sabbatical year should be kept, that foreign marriages should cease, and that every Israelite should contribute one-third of a shekel to the upkeep of the Temple and the sacrifices, and that henceforward the tithes and first-fruits should be fully paid for the maintenance of priests and Levites.

Steps were taken also to maintain and defend Jerusalem in the future. One-tenth of the whole people were chosen by lot to dwell in the city. Hitherto it had had few inhabitants owing to its ruinous and unprotected state.

One important social reform was also effected by Nehemiah. A complaint was made to him by the poorer inhabitants, that they had been compelled to ^{usury} mortgage their lands to pay the Persian ^{abolished} tribute, and were practically in the condition of "bondmen" to their richer countrymen. Nehemiah indignantly appealed to the nobles to be generous, to leave off their "usury," and restore the lands and houses of their poor brethren. They agreed to do this. Nehemiah himself had set a splendid example by refusing to exact the usual

levy of provisions and money, which former governors had claimed, and by himself exercising a lavish hospitality (Neh. v.).

Nehemiah then returned to the Persian court, leaving his brother Hanani in charge of the city. In 432, he **second visit of Nehemiah.** paid a second visit. He found that some of the old abuses had broken out again, and he reformed them in a very vigorous style. Eliashib the high priest had made friends with Tobiah, and given him a large room in the temple for a lodging. Tobiah was forcibly ejected and all his furniture thrown out. The Sabbath was being profaned not only by men working in the fields, but by hawkers of dried-fish and other commodities, selling in Jerusalem on that day. This was forbidden for the future. Certain Jews had married wives "of Ashdod, of Ammon and of Moab." These were reprimanded, beaten, and their hair pulled off, and they were made to swear not to disobey the law in the future. A grandson of the high-priest had even married a daughter of Sanballat. "Therefore," says Nehemiah, "I chased him from me." This man was probably the Manasseh who established on Mount Gerizim an opposition temple for the Samaritans.

Nehemiah has left an account of his doings written by his own hand in the book which bears his name. It shows him a man of splendid earnestness and sincerity and also a man of prayer. He constantly refers to God's guidance—"the good hand of my God upon me," and the last words of his book are a prayer, "Remember me, O my God, for good."

CHAPTER XLIX

THE JEWS UNDER FOREIGN RULE

DURING the period following the return from Babylon, the Jews of Palestine were for the most part under foreign rule, and paid tribute to one master or another. Those who preferred to remain ^{Esther.} in Babylon of course continued under the direct rule of their adopted country. The Book of Esther relates an extraordinary story of how under the reign of Ahasuerus or Xerxes (486-465) they came into peril of being massacred, and were saved by the courage of one Jewish woman. This was Hadassah or Esther, who had been brought up at Shushan (Susa), the royal city, by her cousin Mordecai, who was a descendant of the original exiles under Jehoiachin. Xerxes had deposed his queen, Vashti, for refusing to appear at a royal banquet, and the choice of a successor fell upon the beautiful Esther.

But at the court of Xerxes was one Haman, an "Agagite" (a descendant of the Amalekites), an hereditary enemy of the Jews. He persuaded Xerxes, ^{Haman the} who did not know the nationality of Esther, ^{Jews' enemy.} to issue a decree signed with the royal signet for the complete extermination of the Jews throughout the Persian empire, on the ground that their laws were different from the king's laws. Haman had cast lots for a "lucky day" on which this should be done, and the lot had fallen on

the last month of the year. This gave time for thought, and Mordecai urged upon Esther that at the risk of her life she should enter the king's presence, even without invitation, and crave the life of her people. She agreed, saying, "If I perish, I perish," and approached the king, who received her graciously, holding out the golden sceptre to her (had he not done this, her life would have been forfeited), and asked what was her request. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet.

Haman was delighted and prepared a gallows to hang Mordecai, against whom he had a special grudge. But **Humiliation of Haman** when he went to the king to ask permission for this, an unpleasant surprise awaited him. He was asked what ought to be done to the man "whom the king delighteth to honour." He thought it was himself, and suggested that the man should be arrayed in the royal crown and robes, and be led on the royal charger through the streets of Susa. He was then told to do all this to Mordecai! The king had in fact discovered that Mordecai, some time before, had revealed a plot in the royal household to murder the king, and so far had received no honour or reward. So Haman had to lead his enemy in state through the city and proclaim him as the man "whom the king delighteth to honour."

Haman's downfall was complete when Esther at a second banquet appealed to the king against him, and **Haman's fall** showed that his intended massacre of the Jews would be greatly to the king's own damage. Haman was promptly hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. The royal decree could not be altered; but a second decree was issued, commanding the Jews to defend themselves, and thus their doom was averted. The memory of this deliverance was preserved

in the favourite Jewish festival of Purim, or "Lots" (14th and 15th of Adar—March) in allusion to Haman's supposed "lucky day," which he had cast his lots to find.

The Persian empire collapsed in 333 before the triumphant progress of Alexander the Great. The Jews passed from Persian to Greek rule, and a period of new influences and new perils began. The conquests of Alexander resulted in the spread of Greek language and literature and the more subtle influence of Greek thought and life over all the nearer East. Hellenism tended to become a religious danger, and to attract a party; like Samaritanism after, and the Canaanite and Syrian customs and worships before, the Captivity. The Jews seem to have found special favour with Alexander, and a large colony of them were established by him in his new and cosmopolitan city of Alexandria. Here they formed a centre of Jewish thought and religion second only to Jerusalem itself.

After Alexander's death in 323, his empire was divided among his generals, the Diadochi ("successors"). Palestine, as was natural from its position, was a debatable province between the Greek kings of Antioch and the Greek Pharaohs of Egypt. At first it belonged to the former, but in 320 it passed into the hands of the Ptolemies of Egypt, who with some vicissitudes retained it till 204. This was a period apparently of comparative peace and happiness for the Jews, both in Palestine and Egypt.

An important change in the language of the people took place gradually during the Persian period. Aramaic, or Syrian, was substituted for Hebrew. The more ancient tongue continued to be the language of literature, but the influence of their Syrian

surroundings and the necessities of trade caused the alteration in the common speech. At a later time the characters of the written language were also changed, the old Hebrew alphabet giving way to the modern square Hebrew letters (except on monuments and coins, which retained the older script).

The period which followed Nehemiah's reforms, was one in which the Scribes took the place formerly occupied by the prophets. Prophecy did not entirely disappear, for probably Joel, and the last part of Zechariah (ix.-xv.) were written during this period, but it certainly declined in power and frequency. Nevertheless a good deal of literature was produced. Of chief importance are the Psalter and the Wisdom-books. The Psalms must have been compiled into their present form during the fourth and third centuries B.C. They are largely the hymns of the second Temple, but a good deal of pre-Captivity poetry, dating from David onwards, was combined with the newer productions of Jewish piety.

The Wisdom-books are Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. They are the philosophical books of the later Jews, in which great problems of human life are discussed. Job deals with the mystery of suffering, especially the sufferings of the righteous. Ecclesiastes discusses the apparent "vanity" of human life and endeavour. The Book of Proverbs is a compilation of several dates, from the time of Solomon onwards. Its most striking feature is the description in chapters viii.-ix. of Wisdom as a person, who is closely associated with God in all His works. This is a step towards the revealing of the truth of the Trinity, "Wisdom" being really the second Person whom St. John calls "the Word," who was incarnate as Jesus Christ.

One of the most important literary events of this period was the production of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures. **The** This was produced at Alexandria in the third **Septuagint.** and second centuries by a number of learned Jews. It contains several books which the scribes of Palestine did not recognize, and which are now known as the Apocrypha. Some of these are history, others legend, others philosophy. The most important are Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus which belong to the same class as the Wisdom-books. The former carries on the idea of the personal Wisdom which is found in Proverbs; and it clearly teaches the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the righteous to eternal life.

Speaking generally this last period of Jewish history is somewhat deficient in the hope of the Messiah, though if Joel and the last part of Zechariah belong **Messianic** to it, these make some striking contributions. **prophecy.** Joel foretells the "pouring out of the spirit upon all flesh," which St. Peter (Acts ii.) showed to be a prophecy of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Zechariah (ix. 9) describes the Messiah as the King who will be "lowly and riding upon an ass," which was fulfilled in our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, before His Passion.

CHAPTER L

THE CONFLICT OF FAITH

AT the beginning of the second century B.C. the Jews of Palestine became subject to the Greek dynasty of the Seleucidæ, who ruled at Antioch, the capital of Syria. Antioch, like Alexandria, became a great centre of the Jews of the Dispersion, and everywhere a party sprang up who disliked the separation of Judaism and were eager to adopt Greek customs and be as like the Greeks as possible. In opposition to this party rose that of the *Chasidim* (the godly), who were strictly patriotic and loyal to the Law.

This conflict of ideals came to a head with the accession in 175 of Antiochus Epiphanes, who hated Judaism. The Hellenizing party was favoured by the high-priest Jason, and they now openly renounced their religion and imitated the Greeks. In 168 Antiochus sent a large army to Jerusalem and ordered the entire suppression of the Jewish religion. Greek idols were set up, copies of the Law were burnt, circumcision forbidden, the eating of swine's flesh made compulsory, and even the Temple itself was desecrated and given to the worship of Olympian Zeus. The party of the faithful refused any compliance with these things, and endured the greatest sufferings, outlawry, torture and

The rule
of Antioch.

The great
attack on
Judaism.

martyrdom. It is to them especially that the Epistle to the Hebrews refers (xi. 36-38):—

36. And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38. (Of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

A national champion appeared in the person of the aged priest Mattathias. He with his five heroic sons refused to sacrifice to the Greek gods at **The** Modin, fled to the hills and summoned all the **Maccabees**. faithful to his banner. His son Judas, surnamed **Mac-**cabæus ("the hammer"), thrice defeated the Syrian armies, and in 165 he got possession of Jerusalem, restoring the Temple and the daily sacrifices after three years' cessation. This event was celebrated afterwards by a new festival, the Feast of Dedication, beginning on the 25th of the ninth month, Chisleu, and lasting eight days (see St. John x. 22). Judas continued his war against the oppressors until his own death in battle in 161. He died like a hero, fighting with a very small force against a huge army at Elasa, and refusing to run away or surrender. "If our time be come," he said, "let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our honour." The Syrians were tired of the conflict. Antiochus Epiphanes had died in 164, and it was only the intrigues of the Hellenist party that had prolonged the strife. The Jews were once more allowed to practise their religion;

Mattathias and Judas had been the saviours of their nation.

Judas's brother Jonathan obtained the high-priesthood, and for more than a century this family of the Maccabees or Hasmonæans were the rulers of Judæa, priest-kings, under whom the Jews enjoyed some considerable independence. The greatest of the family was Simon, who reigned from 142 to 135, and was acknowledged practically as king by the rulers of Antioch, allowed to wear purple and gold and coin money bearing his own name, the first Jewish coinage in their history. Simon's reign is described as one of great prosperity and peace, "every man sat under his vine and his fig tree." He was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus, who ruled for thirty years, defeated the Samaritans, destroying their temple on Mount Gerizim, and crushed the Edomites.

After his time the rule of the Hasmonæans began to decline, and civil strife was frequent. A new influence appeared in Antipater, a man of Edomite race, who founded the dynasty of the Herods. He made use of the quarrels of the Jews to play into the hands of Rome. In 64 Syria was reduced to a Roman province, and in the next year Pompey the Great besieged and took Jerusalem, and entered the Holy of Holies. He imposed tribute on the Jews, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and left Hyrcanus II., the heir of the Hasmonæans, as nominal ruler. Antipater was really the great power, and in 48 he was given by the Romans the title of "Procurator of Judæa."

The next few years are the history of the intrigues of Herod, the second son of Antipater, to gain the favour of Rome, and the crown of Judæa. In 40, he obtained

the title of "king of the Jews" from Mark Antony and Octavian, and in 37 he stormed and took Jerusalem, putting to death the last of the Hasmonæan dynasty, Antigonus, and establishing himself as the sovereign ruler. **Herod.** Half-Jew and half-heathen, blood-thirsty and cruel, but a man of great ability and largeness of ambition, Herod, usually called "the great," reigned till 4 B.C., dying shortly after the birth of our Lord. He was supported by a party which appears in the Gospel as "the Herodians," but the stricter Jews never acquiesced in the rule of a hated Edomite, who ruled by favour of Rome. His pandering to Rome, and his use of heathen sacrifices and emblems, were not atoned for in their eyes by his splendid public works, the foundation of the city of Cæsarea, his new buildings at Jerusalem and Samaria, nor even by his greatest work—the rebuilding of the Temple.

On the old foundations he commenced to build a new and magnificent sanctuary, practically completed in 9 B.C., but constantly receiving additions, and not even finished in the time of our Lord's ministry (St. John ii. 20).

The hopes of the Messiah received fresh impetus during the struggle of the Maccabees, when the Book of Daniel first exercised a great influence. In later years other books, such as "the Book of Enoch," not included in the Bible, appeared, which attempted to carry on the same teaching, foretelling a future ruler, "the Son of man," who would be worshipped by all the world. But the mass of the Jewish people took a narrow and worldly view of this coming Messiah, as one who would overthrow the Roman Empire, and reduce all the heathen to the position of slaves to the Jews. This accounts for the way in which Scribes and Pharisees misunderstood and persecuted the true Messiah

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when He appeared, and for His rejection by the nation at large.

A few faithful ones, however, had studied the prophets more deeply and were ready to recognize and welcome the Christ. And the last of the Old Testament prophets **st. John the Baptist.** appeared and began to teach in 26 A.D., in the person of St. John the Baptist, who preached repentance as the true preparation for the Messianic Kingdom, and pointed his disciples to Jesus as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

It is impossible to fix any dates for the events of Gen i.-xi., and many later dates are doubtful.

	B.C.
Abraham about	2000
The Exodus „	1300
David „	1030
Division of the Kingdom „	950
End of Northern Kingdom.	721
Sennacherib's invasion	701
End of the Kingdom of Judah	586
Decree of Cyrus	537
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