

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Israel *in* Egypt – 18-24 June 2022

Christ would have us learn lessons from Israel in Egypt. But first the memory text: “And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly” (Genesis 47:27). Back in Genesis 45, when Joseph had made himself known to his brethren, what did he tell them to do? “Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast; and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty” (Genesis 45:9-11). What liberal offer did Pharaoh make? “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours” (verses 17-20). Pharaoh offered to Israel the best land of Egypt, Goshen.

Sunday: Jacob Goes to Joseph – In Genesis 45, how did Jacob feel when his sons returned with the story of Joseph in Egypt? “And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not” (verses 25-26). What finally induced Jacob to consent to go to Egypt? “And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived; and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die” (verses 27-28).

Monday: Jacob Settles in Egypt – When Jacob started his journey to Egypt, what encouragement did the Lord give him? “And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation; I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes” (Genesis 46:1-4). How many were there who went down into Egypt? “Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls” (Acts 7:14). How long did the Israelites live there in peace? Compare Genesis 41:46; 45:11; and 50:26. How did the children of Israel prosper in Egypt? “And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7).

Tuesday: Jacob Blesses Joseph’s Sons – In Genesis 48, what lessons do we learn in Jacob blessing Joseph’s two sons? The twelve sons of Jacob, who became the heads of great families, called tribes, were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, and Joseph. In Egypt, that number was restructured. In Egypt, when Joseph heard that his father was sick, he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and visited him. Jacob, on his dying bed, adopted the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, to constitute two of the tribes of Israel (Genesis 48:5). This divided the tribe of Joseph, making thirteen tribes in all. Yet in the distribution of the land of Canaan by lot, they numbered but twelve tribes, and made but twelve lots; for the tribe of Levi was left out, being appointed to the service of the tabernacle, and having no inheritance. But in the tribes of the hundred and forty-four thousand in Revelation 7, Ephraim and Dan are omitted, and Levi and Joseph put in their places. The omission of Dan is accounted for on the ground that that tribe was the one chiefly addicted to idolatry (see Judges 18). The tribe of Levi here takes its place with the rest, as in the heavenly Canaan the reasons for their not having an inheritance will not exist, as in the earthly; and Joseph is put for Ephraim, it being a name which appears to have been applied to either the tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh (Numbers 13:11). In blessing Manasseh and Ephraim, Jacob said, “The Angel which redeemed me

from all evil, bless the lads” (Genesis 48:16). The blessing of the Lord was prized by Manasseh and his descendants. When King Asa broke down the idols and renewed the worship of the Lord, they came to him “in abundance” from Manasseh, “when they saw that the Lord his God was with him” (2 Chronicles 15:8-9). When Hezekiah held his great Passover feast, representatives from Manasseh humbled their hearts and came and partook of the Passover (2 Chronicles 30:1, 10-11, 18). They also joined in the work of breaking down the images in their own territory (2 Chronicles 31:1). The work of reform in the days of Josiah was also carried to the land of Manasseh (2 Chronicles 34:1-6). But Ephraim forfeited the Lord’s blessings due to idolatry, and it is said of him: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” (Hosea 4:17). In Revelation 7, the name of Manasseh is immortalised, while that of Ephraim sinks into oblivion. If Dan had not formed a character so near akin to Satan that his name was omitted from the list of the twelve tribes, Manasseh’s name might never have been given to one of the divisions of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. In all this experience are lessons for every child of God. When God says, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11), it is well that we heed the admonition. The pathway of time is strewn with the wrecks of character, – men who were faithful of the Israel of God (Romans 2:28-29), but who allowed Satan to fill their hearts with envy and criticism, until, like Dan, or who got joined to worship of idols, until, like Ephraim, they have lost their hold on heavenly things, and are no longer numbered with the Israel of God. “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11).

Wednesday: Jacob Blesses His Sons – Genesis 49:1-28, why did Jacob bless his sons in such a way that at times pronounced some sort of curse than blessings? What is the spiritual significance of Jacob’s blessing on his sons? We are told: “Jacob had ever been a man of deep and ardent affection; his love for his sons was strong and tender, and his dying testimony to them was not the utterance of partiality or resentment. He had forgiven them all, and he loved them to the last. His paternal tenderness would have found expression only in words of encouragement and hope; but the power of God rested upon him, and under the influence of Inspiration he was constrained to declare the truth, however painful” {PP 237.1}.

Thursday: The Hope of the Promised Land – What is the significance of Jacob and his son Joseph both insisting their remains be buried in the Promised Land? When Jacob came to die, he requested that he might be buried in the cave of Machpelah. “There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah,” were among the last words of Jacob. It would seem that Jacob wished his descendants to be able to say of the noted cave, “There they buried Jacob and Leah his wife” (Genesis 49:31). Canaan was but a symbol of the heavenly Canaan, and they all died in the hope of the resurrection, and at the sound of Jesus, it is from Machpelah’s cave that they will come from were laid away. The faith of the patriarchs in desiring to be buried in the land of Canaan showed that they all had an eye to “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Hebrews 11:16), to which it was the design of this Jesus to lead them. How does Stephen summarise the whole story of the patriarchs and of our Lesson (Israel in Egypt)? It will be remembered that when God made the covenant with Abraham, He told him that he himself should die without having received the inheritance, and that his descendants should be oppressed and afflicted in a strange land, and that afterwards, in the fourth generation, they should come into the promised land. “And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house... Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham had bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose who knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live” (Acts 7:8-19).