

HISTORY

OF

THE PATRIARCHS.

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PREFACE.

ALL reasonable men agree in believing that the human race had a beginning; but of their origin we find no satisfactory account, any where but in the Bible. The earliest heathen writers seem to have had nothing more than obscure traditions, in which truth and error were mingled so thoroughly that it was impossible to separate the one from the other. Indeed, when we speak of ancient heathen writers, we can only be understood to mean a comparative antiquity; for the oldest writings of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Greeks, which have come down to us, were not written until after the books of the Old Testament were completed. And the accounts given by the earliest of the Pagan writers, are deserving of very little credit, when they undertake to give the history of people who lived more than a thousand years before their times. Without any satisfactory evidence of what they relate, these historians pretend that their respective nations commenced their existence at a period long before the world was created, according to the history in Genesis. But the

claims of the Egyptians and Chaldeans shrink to nothing, when compared with the pretensions of the Hindoos and Chinese. According to these, the age of the human family, instead of being only five or six thousand years, is not less than many millions of years. These extravagant pretensions to antiquity furnished much occasion of seeming triumph to the enemies of divine revelation, for a while; but as soon as an opportunity was afforded of instituting an accurate scrutiny into these high claims, it was found, that they rested on no solid ground of historical evidence. Neither of these nations is in possession of regular annals which reach as far back as to be within many hundred years of the deluge, according to the Mosaic account. The only thing which created any perplexity was, that the Hindoos had regular tables of eclipses of the sun and moon, reaching back some hundreds of thousands of years: but a very slight knowledge of astronomy is sufficient to teach us, that eclipses occur at regular periods; and that any one, who is acquainted with these periods, can readily calculate the time when eclipses must have occurred, not only up to the beginning of the world, but as long before as he may choose to extend his calculation. Not that there could be an actual eclipse before the world existed; but the proper time for an

eclipse, supposing the solar system to have been in existence, may be exactly ascertained; just as we can calculate the periods of these occurrences, to a time long after the present system shall have come to an end. Men of sober minds have, therefore, relinquished all confidence in these extravagant claims, and have come back to the Bible, as the only authentic source of information respecting the origin and early history of the human race. And in this point of view, the books of Moses, as containing the only credible account of the origin and early history of the nations of the earth, are of inestimable value.

The design of this little work is to furnish Sunday-schools and Bible classes with a compendious history of the facts recorded in the book of Genesis. Genealogical tables, and some transactions not suited to the minds of youth, are omitted; but nothing is added except an observation now and then, to obviate some apparent objection to the history.

It would have been easy to introduce by the aid of imagination, many not improbable conjectures; so as to have given an air of novelty to the narrative; but the writer is of opinion that this method of mingling conjecture and fiction with divine truth cannot be too strongly reprobated, as calculated to adulterate the pure words of revelation, and to

produce in the minds of youth irremediable confusion, by an early association of fiction with the truth. Whatever judgment may be formed of the lawfulness and utility of fictitious writings, yet, the line of separation between this and divine truth should ever be kept clear and distinct. Our recollections of Scripture facts should not be encumbered and debased with ideas which have no higher origin than the imagination of men. If poets may be indulged in a license of this sort, let the privilege be restricted to them. But it may well be doubted whether the simplicity of divine truth has not suffered, and its efficacy been prevented, even by such noble productions as those of Milton and Tasso. Let every thing be done to explain and illustrate the divine word; but let us beware of adding any thing to it: let us hold the inspired truth of God in such reverence, that we shall not dare to mingle our own fancies with it.

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When God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, it pleased him not to bring the work to perfection in a moment, but gradually, through a period of six days. At first, "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." To reduce this confused mass to order, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, let there be light, and there was light." The expanse or atmosphere was next produced, in which the clouds and vapours were suspended. The great body of the waters were gathered unto one place, and thus the dry land arose to view. The name **EARTH** was given to the dry land, and **SEAS** to the collection of waters.

The vegetable world, in all its freshness, beauty, variety, and fruitfulness, now sprung into existence, at the command of the Creator. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth, and it was so."

From the beginning, there was an alternation of darkness and light, causing evening and morning; but it was not until the fourth day of creation that,

the luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, were placed in the heavens; or, became visible in the heavens. "The waters now brought forth abundantly the moving creature, that hath life;" and winged fowls of every kind were formed "to fly above the earth, in the open firmament of heaven." And a command was given that these inhabitants of the water and of the air should be fruitful and multiply.

The sea and air being thus stocked with inhabitants, possessing natures suited to their respective elements, God proceeded to create the animals adapted to the earth. "And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind; and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind." When the world was thus furnished and prepared, "God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

In the creation of other things, nothing was necessary, but a simple expression of the divine will; but when the lord of this lower world was to be brought into existence, a council is called, and it is said, "Come, let us make man." But with whom did the great Creator take counsel on this memorable occasion, but with his Son

and Spirit? both of whom we know were efficient agents in the work of creation.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 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 on the earth. And God said, Behold I have given every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat.”

In this grant of food to man there is no mention of the flesh of animals: it has therefore been generally believed, that animal food was not in use before the flood.

We have yet a more particular account of the formation of man. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, (lives) and man became a living soul.”

“And the Lord God planted a garden, eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord

God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. The tree of life (lives) also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

This garden was watered by a river which went out of Eden, and was divided into four heads. Two of these, it is thought, were the Euphrates, and the Tigris, called by Moses Hiddekel, but nothing satisfactory has been ascertained respecting the other two. Indeed, although the situation of Paradise seems to have been well known when Moses wrote, yet now, great obscurity rests upon the whole subject; and the conjectures of commentators have served rather to darken than to elucidate this obscurity. The most judicious, however, for a long time, supposed, that the terrestrial Paradise must have been situated not very far from the mouth of the two rivers, before mentioned; and they conjectured, that the other two rivers were streams passing from one of these to the other, as it is known that a communication of this kind did exist between them in after ages. But the more modern cultivators of sacred geography, seem more generally inclined to look for the site of this famous garden, at the source of these rivers; and allege, that two other rivers running to the north-east and to the north-west, have their source in the same region.

Man, when created, was taken and put into the

garden of Eden "to dress it and keep it." Even in Paradise idleness was not tolerated. Activity and occupation are among the essential ingredients of human happiness.

The permission to eat freely of all the trees of the garden was explicitly granted, with one only exception. "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But why this prohibition? Was the fruit of a poisonous nature? So some have supposed. But no; it was "good for food," and beautiful in its aspect. Why, then, was man interdicted its use? Simply as a test of his obedience to his Creator. That all creatures should make it their first and highest object to glorify Him, from whom they received their being, and on whom they depend, is one of the plainest dictates of reason and conscience. It was therefore reasonable and proper, that the Lawgiver should require some test or proof of obedience, before man should be confirmed in a state of blessedness. And God selected this thing, in itself of an indifferent nature, as furnishing a fair probation of man's obedience.

It has already been mentioned, that God made man male and female; but the woman was not created as early as the man. For awhile he was alone. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make an help meet for him." "And the Lord God caused a deep

sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs (sides) and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib (side) which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

That man, from the moment of his creation, must have been endued with all necessary knowledge, cannot reasonably be doubted; for without an original stock of ideas he would have been inferior to all the other animals, for to them instinct is a sufficient guide: but man has no such guide; and if he had been turned loose upon the wide world, without any knowledge until he could acquire it by the slow process of experience, his life could not have been preserved for a single day. Even the danger arising from the common elements of fire and water, which are known to children as soon as they can learn any thing, would have been unknown to him.

Moreover, if man was placed under a law, and required to love and serve his Creator, his new created mind must have been furnished with ideas of the character of God, and of the obligations of a creature to his Creator.

It is also reasonable to think, and indeed may be inferred from the sacred record, that man when created was gifted with the faculty and use of articulate speech. To suppose that Adam and Eve were at first mutes, and incapable of conversing together, except by dumb signs, is neither probable in itself, nor honourable to the wisdom and goodness of their Maker. Indeed, without such a gift, it may well be doubted whether man ever could have invented a language. But we need not argue this point; for we find, that from the beginning of man's existence, God addressed him in words. And as a striking evidence, both of Adam's knowledge and use of speech, the Creator brought to him every beast of the field and fowl of the air, to see what he would call them; "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature; that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field."

This work must have required much time; and if it is true that Adam was able to designate some leading quality of each species by the name given, as seems probable, his knowledge of natural history must have been more accurate and extensive than that of any of his posterity.

But the crowning excellence of the character of this first man, as he came from the hands of his Creator, was **HOLINESS**, or moral integrity. All his affections were in just proportion to their ob-

jects, and his passions so happily balanced and harmonized, that in all the exercises of the various constituent principles of human nature, there was no jar, nor the least irregularity. Objects were loved and pursued according to their value. The higher and nobler powers of the mind governed, and the inferior and animal principles were in complete subordination. This happy state of moral purity seems to have been the chief thing intended by the **IMAGE OF GOD**, in which man is said to have been created.

The perfect purity of their hearts, and the bland serenity of the atmosphere may be judged of, from a single circumstance mentioned in the narrative. "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Satan, by some means, found his way into Paradise, and with much subtilty laid his plan for the seduction and ruin of the innocent pair, whose happiness this fiend envied. Assuming the body of one of the most sagacious and noble of the animal tribes, he accosted the woman, as being the weaker vessel, when she was a little separated from her husband. He had become acquainted with the prohibition of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; and watching his opportunity, when Eve was near to this tree, he said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" This insidious question

was intended to suggest a doubt of the reasonableness of the commandment of God. The woman promptly and properly answered, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." It may, indeed, seem strange that she was not filled with astonishment at hearing the serpent speak; but let it be recollected, that, in the beginning of the world, when there had not been time to observe the regular course of the laws of nature, all events were equally new and strange. She might not know but that some of the animal tribes had received the gift of reason and speech. The tempter, finding that the woman was willing to enter into conversation with him, assumed more boldness, and ventured to utter a direct contradiction of the declaration of God. "And the serpent said, Ye shall not surely die." This was the first lie which ever polluted the air of this world; and therefore, he who set this example, which has been followed by so many, is called a LIAR, and the FATHER OF LIES. But not contented with simply uttering a falsehood in direct opposition to the word of God, he went on to confirm his assertion, by saying, "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."

“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.”

The temptation entered first by the ear. She listened to an insidious speech, which conveyed a poison to her heart, by suggesting a doubt of the divine veracity. It next entered by the eye, for the fruit, which was beautiful in its aspect, hung clustering within her reach. Her appetite was whetted, probably by seeing the serpent eating it with great apparent gratification. She believed it to be good for food. But probably the desire of an increase of knowledge, and a curiosity to be as God, knowing good and evil, was the prevailing motive. The desire of knowledge is innocent when restrained within proper bounds; but when our curiosity leads us to pry into the secret things of God, or to use any unlawful means to increase our knowledge, it becomes sinful.

“And she gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.” Whether Adam was deceived by the same artful suggestions of Satan as the woman; or was influenced by his fondness for the society of Eve to connect his destiny with hers even in death, is not easily determined, since the sacred historian is silent respecting the motive by which he was determined. Paul says, “Adam was

not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression." But he probably means no more, than that Eve led the way in sinning.

The first sin is marked with peculiar guilt. Our first parents were supplied with every blessing which the heart of man ought to desire. They were pressed by no painful necessity to eat this fruit; the whole garden, with all its variety of delicious fruits, was before them; and they enjoyed unrestrained liberty in regard to every tree, but this one. Ignorance and inadvertence cannot be pleaded in palliation of their crime. The law of God, prohibiting this fruit, was brought clearly before the woman by the very words of the tempter. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree." Upon which she distinctly repeats the prohibition with a circumstance no where else mentioned, namely, that they were not only forbidden to eat the fruit, but "*to touch it.*" It was then not only a voluntary but a deliberate transgression. And in the case of Adam, the opportunity for deliberation was even greater. He saw his wife in the very act of disobedience. He saw the forbidden fruit in her hand, and in her mouth; and yet when she offered it to him he did not refuse it; but took it and did eat, conscious, no doubt, at the moment, that he was disobeying the positive command of his Maker.



The constitution of the human mind is such, that some principles or passions are not developed until certain circumstances occur which call them forth. For example, fear would never be experienced, if we never apprehended any danger. Anger would remain latent, if we never were exposed to any injury: and so shame was a feeling to which our first parents were strangers, until conscious guilt took possession of their minds. When any new thoughts or feelings arise in the mind, it is agreeable to the Hebrew method of speaking, to say that *the eyes are opened*; so now, Adam and Eve experienced an entirely new state of mind. The clear light of truth was obscured; serenity was exchanged for perturbation; peace for remorse, and confidence for fear. O what desolations hath sin produced!

The intercourse which man enjoyed with his Maker was not only profitable, but delightful in a high degree. But now how sad the reverse! When the well known voice of the Lord was heard in the garden at the cool of the day, guilty man, instead of running to hail the presence of his Creator, flees to the thickest part of the trees of the garden. Guilty shame of nakedness, not experienced before, impelled them to make themselves aprons (girdles) of fig leaves; guilty fear now drives them into a hiding place; as though any covert would conceal from the eye

of Omniscience. But no sinner can flee so far, or hide himself so securely, as to escape the justice of God. How terrible now was the sound of that voice which said, "Adam, where art thou?" When God calls unto judgment, man must obey. The trembling culprits are now forced to come forth from their concealment, and to confess their crime. But the man endeavours to palliate his guilt by laying the principal blame on the woman; and the woman excuses herself, by pleading, that she had been beguiled by the serpent.

In pronouncing sentence upon the partakers of the crime, the righteous Judge began with the serpent, and said, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above every beast of the field, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. 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."

From what is here said, it would seem, that originally the serpent possessed a noble form and erect attitude, but was now degraded. It is not necessary to understand the sacred historian as saying that the serpent race are nourished by dust, but only, that in their grovelling condition on the ground, dust would necessarily enter their mouths with their food.

That Satan was really the prime agent in this

transaction, is evident from this, that in the book of Revelation, he is called "the old serpent," and from the words of our Saviour, who calls him a "liar" and a "murderer," in manifest allusion to this event.

Here we have the first intimation of the Messiah.

As the woman was first in the transgression, there was denounced upon her a peculiar curse, which has descended upon her sex in all generations. "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." But this did not exempt her from her full share of the punishment denounced upon our whole race.

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake : in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken; FOR DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN."

That Adam acted in this transaction as a public

person, and not as a private individual, is evident from the undeniable fact, that the whole of this denunciation, as it relates to the curse upon the ground, the necessity of labour, and the death of the body, fall as fully upon his posterity, as they did upon himself. Well then might Paul say, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

The loss sustained by the human race, in consequence of the fall of our first parents, is immense. The image of God was defaced, immortality was forfeited, and happiness was blighted.

Concerning the use which was to be made of the "tree of life," which stood also in the midst of the garden, the Scriptures are silent; and, as is common in such cases, the conjectures of men are abundant. Some ascribe to it the power of conferring immortality; others are more moderate in their opinions of the virtues of this tree, and suppose that the fruit was highly invigorating and medicinal, and would have preserved in health our first parents, as long as it was intended they should continue upon earth; but a third and more probable opinion is, that the tree of life possessed a sacramental character; and was merely a sign and seal of that immortal life which God had promised on condition of obedience. The words of God in the following passage, are very extraordinary,

and very difficult of explanation. "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword, (or a flame turning on itself) which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." It would detain us too long, even to notice the various interpretations of this difficult passage. Leaving this, therefore, to expositors, I would only remark, that we here learn that agriculture was the first occupation of man, after his expulsion from Paradise. He was sent "to till the ground." The only provision made for his comfort, of which a record was made, was, "That unto Adam, and unto his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

It has been remarked by many, that probably the rite of sacrificing was at this time instituted, and that these skins were taken from the bodies of those animals, which were offered on the altar.

Of the particulars of their history, afterwards very little is known. The sacred historian passes at once from the birth of Cain and Abel, to an interesting narrative respecting their characters,

occupations, and destiny. Cain was a cultivator of the ground, but Abel was a keeper of sheep. Both of them were professedly religious; for we find them engaged in the worship of God; each presenting as an offering, a portion of the fruits of his labour. No doubt, the rite of sacrificing is of divine institution, else Abel could not have offered of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, in faith; and it is altogether probable, that the productions of the earth had also been appointed to be offered, as an acknowledgment of the goodness of God in granting rain and fruitful seasons from heaven; as we know, that after this time such offerings were made by divine appointment. There does not, therefore, appear to be any certain ground for the opinion advocated by some learned men, that Cain failed in his sacrifice, not only by a want of faith, but by an external disobedience to the command of God;—refusing to bring a bloody sacrifice, and preferring to follow the suggestions of his own reason, in the business of religion, rather than the revealed will of God. This may have been the fact, but no intimation of any such thing is given by Moses; at least as his meaning is given in our version. There is, indeed, a translation of the original, which contains a distinct reproof of Cain, because he had not offered a *sin-offering*, or bloody sacrifice, when the animals

requisite for such an offering were in his possession, and then couching at his door. Leaving it to the critics to settle the true meaning of the passage, I go on to remark, that by some visible manifestation, God expressed his approbation of the worship of Abel, while he gave no sign of approbation to the offering of Cain. How the mind of God was signified, on this occasion, we are not informed ; but the conjecture has much probability, that Abel's sacrifice when laid upon the altar, was consumed by fire from heaven. This evident preference of Abel and his offering filled the mind of Cain with thoughts the most gloomy and desperate. His cheerfulness forsook him, and his inward anguish appeared in the dejection of his countenance. It would seem from the history here given, that God was accustomed to speak familiarly to the first men. Whether this intercourse was held merely by articulate sounds ; or whether he appeared, as often afterwards, in the form of an angel or a man, it would be rash for us to decide. On this occasion, God inquired of Cain, why his countenance was fallen ? and intimated to him the method proper to be pursued by him in order to find acceptance ; but this expostulation from his Creator had no salutary effect on the malignant feelings of this first-born of men. He not only remained dissatisfied, but actually

began to feel a hatred to his pious and unoffending brother, which would be satisfied with nothing short of his death. Abel seems to have remained unsuspecting of the bloody designs of his brother; and, therefore, took no pains to shun his presence. Cain having determined to murder him, invites him to accompany him to the field or forest; far, we may presume, from the eye of all human witnesses. Here the first murder was committed. Of the two first-born among men, children of the same parents, the one is slain by the other. Cain had avoided the presence of human witnesses, but the eye of God was fixed on the murderer, and he was soon astonished by the question—"Where is Abel thy brother?" Irritated, as well as confounded, he answers, "I know not," and subjoins, "am I my brother's keeper?"

The Almighty soon let him understand that his guilt was fully known, and that his brother's blood which he had wickedly shed, had cried unto him from the ground. That is, the crime of which he had been guilty, in murdering his brother, was so great, that it was as if his blood sent forth a cry for vengeance against him. It is well for us that all blood does not cry for vengeance. There is blood, the cry of which, before the throne of God, is for mercy and peace; and, therefore, this is said to "speak better things than the blood of Abel."

Immediately, now, a curse is denounced against the murderer. As yet there was no civil government instituted, and no human laws or human officers to apprehend and punish this criminal. God takes the matter into his own hands; and though he did not inflict immediate death upon the murderer; yet he may be said to have subjected him to many deaths, until it seemed good to him to cut him off from the face of the earth. The curse upon Cain was in the following words: "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be on the earth." Cain expostulated with his Maker in regard to the intolerable burden of his guilt and misery; and seemed now to fear the face of man, dreading lest every one who found him should slay him. To satisfy him that this should not be the fact, God gave a sign to Cain; or, as it was commonly understood, impressed a mark upon him; concerning the nature of which it would be trifling even to conjecture. The miserable wretch is now driven away from the altar and house of God—and is separated from his parents, and from all his brothers and sisters except his own wife, who followed her worthless husband

into the land of Nod. Thus verifying the declaration made at the institution of marriage: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they shall be one flesh." The same is true in regard to the woman. How many children had, during more than a century, been born unto our first parents, we have no means of knowing. It is pretty clear, however, that Abel died childless; and we may infer from what is said about appointing Seth as a seed in the place of Abel, that his parents were not easily comforted, on account of the premature and unnatural death of such a son. And if there were, besides those mentioned in the record, many other children of the original pair, it would seem that none of them were like Abel; otherwise, it would not have been necessary to raise up a child to take his place. Cain seems to have been the father of a numerous posterity; and among them were found ingenious men, who became distinguished through all ages, as the inventors or improvers of the useful, and even of some of the fine arts. We learn from this, that God may grant worldly prosperity to man, while under his curse. Probably a large portion of the inhabitants of the earth before the flood were the descendants of Cain. Their skill in the arts, so necessary to the refined comforts of human society, would give them a great influence

among men. With these, the practice of having more than one wife seems first to have made its appearance. Lamech is the person to whom belongs this bad distinction; and the names of his wives were, Adah and Zillah.

No transactions of any of the children of Adam are mentioned in the brief history of Moses, except the sacrifice of Cain and Abel, and the cruel murder of the latter by his envious brother. To Seth, who was the successor of Abel, there was born a son in the hundred and fifth year of his age. The name of this son, from whom all the inhabitants of the earth since the deluge have descended, was Enos. Adam was one hundred and thirty years old when Seth was born. It is therefore probable, that Cain and Abel were more than a hundred years of age when the latter was murdered, but no mention is made of the age of Adam at the birth of his first born. The plan of the writer is to give the age of the father at the birth of those sons only, through whom the genealogy is reckoned. Commonly, it is presumable, that these were the first-born of their respective fathers; but of this there is no certainty. Indeed, in the case of Cain, we know that the contrary was the fact. At the birth of his grandson Enos then, Adam and Eve were two hundred and thirty-five years of age. Enos was ninety years old at the birth of his son Cainan,

at which time Adam had reached the age of three hundred and twenty-five years. To Cainan a son was born in the seventieth year of his age, which was in the three hundred and ninety-fifth year of Adam's life. The son of Cainan was named Mahalaleel, to whom there was born a son by the name of Jared, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, which occurred in the four hundred and sixtieth year of the life of Adam.

Jared was one hundred and sixty-two years of age when Enoch was born, one of the most excellent and remarkable men who ever lived. He was a prophet, and a man so distinguished for piety, that at the age of three hundred and sixty-five years, he was taken to heaven without dying. This remarkable event occurred in the eight hundred and fifteenth year of Adam's life. But this holy man was married, and at the age of sixty-five had born to him Methuselah, who is the oldest man mentioned in Scripture. It was three hundred years after the birth of this son, before God took Enoch to himself. At the age of one hundred and eighty-seven years, a son was born to Methuselah called Lamech. And in the hundred and eighty-second year of Lamech's life, another very remarkable person was born, namely, Noah. From an inspection of this genealogical table, it will appear that Adam was living at the

same time with Methuselah for two hundred and forty three years, and died only sixty-five years before the birth of Noah. It is also evident, that Adam lived a number of years after the translation of Enoch, and was living during the whole time of his continuance upon earth. On account of the ages to which these early patriarchs lived, many generations inhabited the world at the same time. Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech, eight successive generations were alive together. Among these Adam would of course hold the chief authority. He was not only the father of the whole race, but the source of information to them all. Adam had been created in a state of perfection of all his faculties of mind and body; had conversed with his Maker, before sin had perverted his powers; and had received upon his entrance on the world, such a stock of knowledge, as was absolutely necessary in his condition. It has sometimes been inquired, whether the Antediluvians had any form of civil government; to which it may be answered, with certainty, that in the beginning, the patriarchal form existed and no other; that is, the oldest person governed when there was any necessity for authority. Adam, by his care and government of his children, would acquire such an authority over them as would constitute him their natural ruler;

and his superiority to all others in knowledge, would serve to render his influence still greater. For nearly a thousand years, this first man ruled his numerous and increasing posterity; except that Cain and his descendants appear to have formed, for a long time, a separate society, and had no connexion with the children of Seth.

But when the population of the earth was much increased, an intercourse by marriage took place between these two portions of mankind. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose." It is not said that these daughters of men were the descendants of Cain; but the supposition is by no means improbable. Cain was driven out from the face of God, that is, from the place where God made himself known. He and his family were, therefore, in a manner expelled from the primitive church. But they had probably increased in wealth, luxury, and the arts, above the other posterity of Adam. For a long time, we may presume, that it would have been deemed impious to hold any intercourse with the murderer: but at length, this distance was diminished; visits were paid from one party to the other. And the young men who belonged to the line of Seth, seeing the daughters of Cain that they were very beautiful, soon formed marriages

with them. This connexion seems to have been the source of a grievous corruption of manners. God, however, continued to warn and reprove the people by his Holy Spirit, either immediately by striving with their consciences, or by raising up prophets, who were inspired of God to instruct and preach. He was, however, now almost prepared to abandon them, and to say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," yet he determined, in his mercy, that he would wait with them for a further period of one hundred and twenty years.

That the marriages above mentioned had an intimate connexion with the corruption of manners which ensued, is expressly asserted. Of their children it is said, "the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown." Their renown, doubtless, was not for good actions, but for high-handed violence, injustice, and oppression. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually."

The Almighty now resolved that he would destroy man whom he had created, from the face of the earth, "for," speaking after the manner of men, "it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth." In surveying the millions who now peopled the globe, there was only one,

man who found favour in the eyes of the Lord. This was Noah, the son of Lamech. As was mentioned, he was born about sixty-five years after the demise of Adam, was a preacher of righteousness, and was directed to prepare an ark for the salvation of himself and family, which consisted of no more than eight souls. Accordingly, Noah set to work to cut down and prepare gopher wood, or wood of a light and resinous quality, of different kinds. This is the first specimen of a vessel for the water, of which we have any account. The dimensions of the building and its interior arrangements were divinely directed. It had a door on the side, and a window or sky-light, which was probably on the top. How much derision and mocking the pious patriarch underwent, while engaged in erecting this edifice, may be left to conjecture. The probable size was about five hundred feet in length, eighty feet in breadth, and about fifty feet in height, which was abundantly large enough for all the purposes for which it was intended.

The ark being completed, and the season of grace and forbearance, already mentioned, having come to an end; and Noah and his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japhet, and their wives, having received a command to enter into the ark, took "of clean beasts by sevens, the male and the female,"

that is, probably, seven of each sex, "and of beasts that were not clean, two, the male and the female." If we have rightly interpreted the former passage, four of each species of unclean animals were taken in. Within seven days after Noah had entered the ark, the flood commenced. This was in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the seventeenth day of the second month of the year. If the original year commenced about the autumnal equinox, as is commonly supposed, then the deluge began, according to the dates here given, about the first week in our November. It is not the business of the historian to account for events, but to state them accurately. This event was probably produced by a miraculous interposition; but if otherwise, no reason of man can ever do more than form conjectures, which, however plausible, can give no satisfaction to the mind in pursuit of truth. "The fountains of the great deep" are said, "to have been broken up; and the windows, or cataracts of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights." After this continual rain of forty days, the water was so increased, that the ark began to float; and soon the increase of the water was so exceedingly great, "that all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered;" consequently, all

the animals that breathed, upon the earth and air, except such as could live in the water, died. And there was a general and total destruction, not only of life, but of all the buildings, which man had erected. Their cities, however populous, were swept away. The wealth of the world was buried beneath the deep. The cattle of a thousand hills were seen no more. "Noah alone remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." "And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days." If we reckon these days from the commencement of the rain, their end would be about the 20th of February: but if, which is the most probable, they begin with the time when the waters completely covered the earth, and began to raise up the ark, they will bring us to the close of April. The latter reckoning is most probable, because they mark the period in which the waters "prevailed upon the earth," by which I understand, the entire covering or overwhelming of the earth.

"The fountains of the deep, and the windows of heaven were now stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained, and the waters returned from off the earth, continually; and after the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month,

on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased until the tenth month : in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen." From this account it appears, that for ten weeks after the ark rested on Mount Ararat, nothing but water was visible; but at the end of this time, the lonely inhabitants of the ark began to spy land. If the first sight of land excites an indescribable emotion of pleasure in the common sailor, after a long and perilous voyage, what shall we say of the feelings of Noah and his family, when, after being tossed upon the bosom of the mighty deep, for many months, they at length saw the summits of some lofty mountain left bare by the retiring waters? Some have conjectured that the ark remained near the place where it was built, all the time, and was merely raised up by the rising flood; and when this retired, rested on the mountain where it was built; but this is very improbable. During such a convulsion of nature, the air as well as the water must have been agitated by one perpetual storm, and the ark, consequently, must have been exceedingly tossed upon the water; and there is no intimation in the sacred history, that Mount Ararat was situated any where near the place of the erection of this vessel. The mountains of Ararat

are in Armenia, and tradition still points out one of the highest peaks as the spot where the ark rested.

Forty days after the tops of the mountains first began to be visible, Noah ventured to open the window of the ark, and sent forth a raven to ascertain whether the waters had withdrawn from the earth. This bird found means to subsist by resting on the summits of the mountains, or on articles floating on the water, so that it did not return again to Noah, but, "went forth to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth."

Noah also sent out a dove for the same purpose; but the dove finding no rest for her foot, returned unto him, into the ark; and he put forth his hand and received her into the ark. After seven days he again sent forth the dove, which returned in the evening, bearing in her mouth an olive leaf, which she had plucked from this evergreen. By this Noah ascertained that the waters were abated from off the earth. And after the interval of another week, he sent out the dove for the third time, which finding the earth free from water, returned no more to the ark.

Noah now received express directions to disembark, and bring out with him all the animals which had been preserved in this immense fabric.

This remarkable event occurred in the six hun-

dred and first year of Noah's life, and on the first day of the first month. And as he entered the ark in the sixth hundredth year of his life, it follows that he remained shut up in the ark exactly one year.

The first act of Noah, after leaving the ark, was worthy of the patriarch. "He builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Hence we may learn, that altars and burnt-offerings were before in common use, by divine appointment; for we have no account of their institution on this occasion; but the history speaks of them as things well known and understood.

We have also in the narrative of this transaction information that worship of the right kind is exceedingly pleasing to God, and powerfully efficacious to obtain rich blessings for man. The Divine acceptance of Noah's offering is figuratively but beautifully expressed in the following words: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor, 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 any more smite every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and gave them two precepts, which are incorporated in the history, though the tradition of the Jews is, that he now repeated the six which he had originally given to Adam, to which he added a seventh. The two on record are, 1. To be fruitful and multiply. 2. To eat no flesh "with the life thereof;" that is, the blood. Some suppose that this is simply a prohibition of eating blood; but others think that it respects the eating of the flesh of living animals;—a cruel custom greatly practised in Abyssinia.

A solemn admonition is also given respecting taking away the life of man; and a terrible threatening of the murderer: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

God also made a covenant with Noah and all living things, that is, he entered into a solemn engagement, which was confirmed by establishing the beautiful bow in the clouds, after rain. The thing promised was suspended on no condition whatever. It was that the human race should not again be cut off with all living creatures by the waters of a flood. It seems probable, that it never had rained upon the antediluvian world, before the windows of heaven were miraculously opened, at the commencement of the deluge; or, that par-

tial showers, which left one part of the heavens clear, did not occur then; for I cannot persuade myself that when it is said, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant," &c., that it had before existed, and was already set in the clouds. If it be inquired how the earth was watered, when there was no rain, the answer is, "There went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground." I am aware, however, that many judicious commentators are of opinion, that the bow in the clouds was no new thing, but was now applied to a new purpose; that is, God selected the rainbow as an appropriate sign of that covenant in which he promised that the world should never again be deluged with water.

After Noah came from the ark, he followed agriculture, the original and most necessary occupation of man. For this work he had brought with him a vast stock of knowledge and experience: and we may be sure, that in his solicitude to preserve animal life, he would not neglect to bring with him into the ark, a large supply of vegetables; especially of the species most useful to man. Among other things he had preserved the roots or shoots of the vine, the fruit of which is among the richest of the productions

of the earth, and from which the well-known liquor called wine is expressed.

When we consider that Noah was a prophet, a righteous man, and perfect in his generation; and that he had been, for more than a century, a preacher to the old world, and a reprovcr of the vices of the people, we are perplexed and astonished to find him drinking wine to such excess, as to become an object of derision to the irreligious part of his family, and a source of grief and shame to the pious. Such a crime is so unexpected and unaccountable, that it may even lead us to suspect, either that wine was not in use before the flood, or that the juice of the grape did not then possess an intoxicating quality. But there is no need of these suppositions. The fall of Noah is sufficiently accounted for, when it is recollected that he was but a man. If Adam, who was made in the image of God, could fall, there is no difficulty in believing that Noah, in whom that image was but imperfectly renewed, might also be overcome by temptation, when left to himself.

Another thing which may be inferred from this history is, that slavery, or the subjection of one to the will of another, probably existed and was common before the flood; because it is threatened here as an evil well understood; but if the prac-

stice had never existed, the meaning of the prediction would scarcely have been understood.

Why the curse fell so heavily on Canaan has led to many critical conjectures. It has been observed, that parents are never more severely punished than in the disasters of their favourite children. To others, it has seemed probable that Canaan participated in his father's crime; or, that he was the principal actor in the irreverent scene.

Noah reached the great age of nine hundred and fifty years, which did not fall short of the average age of the patriachs who lived before the flood. Indeed, six hundred years of his life were spent before the flood. The cause of the great age of men before the flood has never been satisfactorily ascertained. If my conjecture is right, that some of the laws and conditions of the atmosphere, and of the surface of the earth, underwent an alteration, it will serve for a general reason: but the special reason why man's life was then so much longer than at present, probably never can be discovered.

The moral reasons for shortening human life are obvious enough. Such length of years furnished both temptation and opportunity to enormous iniquity. It was needful to cut off the perpetrators of violence, that wickedness might cease.—There may be some reason to doubt whether they were solar or lunar years; but the probability is, that

they were years of twelve months each, and each month of thirty days.

From the three sons of Noah, the whole earth was peopled. The children of Japhet, the elder, spread themselves through Asia Minor, along the eastern borders of the Mediterranean sea, and the islands thereof, and extended themselves towards the Black, and the Caspian sea; and thus became the founders of all the nations of Greece, and of the nations in Europe and Asia north of the 40th degree of latitude. The most powerful and polished nations now on earth are the descendants of Japhet. The Russians, Prussians, Poles, Finns, Danes, Swedes, Germans, Swiss, Belgians, Dutch, Grecians, Italians, French, Scotch, English, Irish, are, for the most part, the posterity of Noah's oldest son.

The descendants of Shem were very numerous, and migrated eastward; and to this day have retained their original habitations. Among them we must reckon the Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Persians, Hindoos, Burmese, Chinese, and Japanese, and most of the islanders in the Southern and Western Ocean.

The descendants of Ham seem to have settled at first in various places, as in Philistia, or Canaan; in Mesopotamia, and southern Arabia. But Egypt seems to have attracted most of the children of Ham. It is therefore called "the land of Ham."

And one of his sons had the honour of giving name to the country; for it was called in the Hebrew **MIZRAIM**, which it appears was the name of one of the sons of Ham. The other Africans were probably descended from his other sons.

During this period of history, no mention is made of any very distinguished person except Nimrod. "He began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter." The commencement of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Arad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. In the English version, it is said, "Out of that land went forth Ashur and builded Nineveh, Rehoboth, and Calah." But most interpreters, by Ashur, understand a country, and they render the passage, "He, (that is Nimrod) went into Ashur, or Assyria, and built Nineveh." And according to the tradition and testimony of all antiquity, Nimrod had Nineveh as the seat of his empire. There is no one fact in which ancient historians are more agreed; we conclude therefore, that this is the true rendering of the passage. By his being a mighty hunter, it is commonly understood that he was a great warrior and tyrant. By a careful attention to the names in the tenth of Genesis, some learned men have proceeded far in tracing the nations of the earth to their respective stocks.

This is a curious subject; and certainly there is not upon earth a document comparable to that contained in the tenth chapter of Genesis, both as it respects its antiquity and authority. The learned Bochart has found matter enough here to fill a large folio volume, and yet the mine is far from being exhausted.

The only remarkable event in the history of the human race for many hundreds of years after the flood, was the confounding the language of the people, and thus putting an end to an impious attempt to build a tower whose top should reach to heaven. The professed end of this tower was "to make to themselves a name, lest they should be scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth." Some have supposed that the people were so stupid that they thought they could build a tower so high, that running up to its top, they would be able to escape a second deluge, if it should come. Others have, with more probability, supposed, that the people being of one language, and all united in one body, they wished to erect a building so high, that it might be the wonder of all posterity. A third opinion, entitled to fully as much regard as either of the former, was, that it was intended to be a temple for the worship of the heavens; and this accords with the undoubted historic fact, that, in after times, there was at

Babylon, the temple of Belus, an immense structure, said to have been a mile in perpendicular height. From the description of this temple by Herodotus and others, it could be no other than the tower of Babel. A fourth opinion is, that this high tower was erected as a sort of landmark, which was raised so high as to be visible through the extensive plain of Shinar, that the people might not be scattered abroad, nor separated too far from each other.

Whatever might have been the real design of this structure, it was viewed as a rebellious act by the King of heaven, therefore a stop was put to the work by a miracle. The account of Moses is the following. "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language, [lip:] and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, [lip,] that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel, [Confusion,] because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth.

This event must have occurred long after the flood, because the population of the earth was now great. No date, or era, is connected with this history; but it has been supposed that its time could be fixed by the birth of Peleg, the sixth in descent from Noah, concerning whom it is said, "For in his days was the earth divided." Now if it was certain that the division here referred to, was the scattering of the people from Babel, the date of the event can be exactly ascertained; but this word [peleg] is never used in the history of the confusion of tongues, and in the whole Bible it always means a *physical rupture* or division. It has to some appeared probable, therefore, that the event here referred to, was the rupture of the solid part of the globe, by which a vast chasm was made between lands before united. The effects of the flood upon the shell of the earth were not all terminated in a few years, but large continents which had by that convulsion been undermined and shaken, might, about this time have fallen in, by which the different branches of the human family would be separated. For example, suppose that America was at first united to Africa, but was now divided by the water covering the land which once spread across the Atlantic ocean. That such an event has once happened is rendered

probable by many appearances. And this would remove all difficulty as to the manner in which human beings and animals found their way to the western continent, concerning which there has been so much conjecture.

But however plausible this interpretation may appear, it ought not to be received without the most urgent necessity, for it utterly confounds the chronology of the Bible, by taking away one of the essential links from the chain, and renders it impossible to ascertain the age of the world. And of such a convulsion of nature, by which continents once joined were severed, history is totally silent. It seems best, therefore, to adhere to the common understanding of this passage.

There has also been much diversity of opinion respecting the precise nature of the effect wrought in the confusion of tongues, at Babel. Many eminent critics, are of opinion, that the confusion had no relation to words but only to counsels. That, for awhile, the people proceeded harmoniously in their work, but at length, providentially, a dissension arose either as to the object of the work, or the proper mode of carrying it on. And so the simple interpretation is, they quarrelled and separated from one another. And in confirmation of this opinion they remark, that the word translated *language*, in this chapter, is not the one

usually employed, but literally signifies *lip*, the meaning of which, in the Hebrew language, is more properly, *counsel*, or *confession*; often, *worship*. This opinion may be said to be the most prevalent among the critics in the Hebrew tongue. And they plausibly allege, that for many hundreds of years after this event, we never read of any diversity of language; but, wherever the patriarchs travelled, they seem to have experienced no difficulty on this score. We do indeed, read of an interpreter between Joseph and his brethren; but they allege that he was merely a mediator, who conveyed the words of princes, and other exalted personages to their inferiors; an office which is known to have had an existence in ancient times. The affinity of many ancient languages to the Hebrew is also considered as hostile to the common interpretation.

Others are of opinion, that while the words remained, by a miraculous influence upon the minds of the builders, they fell into a great diversity in their mode of pronounciation; and this, they observe, would answer the end designed, just as effectually, as a real diversity of tongues.

A third and more plausible opinion is, that the original language of men was at this time divided into a number of dialects; so that one company used one of these, and a second, another; so that

they were unable to hold intercourse in carrying on the work any longer, and were obliged to abandon it, and were scattered abroad.

But the common opinion, and which is favoured by our translation, and also by the Greek translators of the Bible is, that God produced miraculously on this occasion, a number of languages radically different; from which have proceeded the various tongues spoken by the different nations of the earth. And this opinion is favoured by the fact, that several of the languages of men seem not to have the smallest resemblance to each other; but to be so different, that it is not conceivable that they all proceeded from one root. And it must be confessed, if the object was to scatter men over the face of the earth, by interrupting their intercourse with one another, this would be the most effectual of all. It is also in accordance with the tradition of the Jews, who have an opinion among them, that the number of languages produced on this occasion, was just seventy-two; and that this precise number still remains unaltered. It would seem, therefore, that the common opinion is not only safest, but best supported by probable arguments.

It would seem, at first view, that all the inhabitants of the earth were engaged in the enterprize at Babel. Noah was probably still alive, and cer-

tainly Shem ; but it does not seem probable that these patriarchs had any hand in this work. It is more likely, that this daring scheme was confined to the inhabitants of the neighbouring region. Noah and Shem probably, never removed from the country where the ark rested. It is, however, useless to inquire what branch of the family of Noah were concerned in this transaction, as there is no history to cast any light on the subject.

Moses gives us no more than a table of the posterity of Shem, in that particular line from which the Hebrew nation sprung, and from which the Messiah was to descend. According to this table, Arphaxad the son of Shem, was born two years after the flood. The period of Shem's life after the birth of this son was no less than five hundred years ; so that if he was a hundred years old when the flood began, continued one whole year in the ark, and lived five hundred and two years after the flood, at the time of his death he must have been just six hundred and three years old ; and hence, it may be ascertained, that he lived after his father one hundred and fifty-two years ; and was living during the greater part of the life of Abraham. It seems, that the length of human life was not shortened at once, but by degrees ; for Arphaxad, though his son Salah was born in the thirty-fifth year of his age, arrived at

the age of four hundred and thirty-eight years. And Salah, though Eber was born in the thirtieth year of his age, lived to the age of four hundred and thirty-three years. And Eber did not attain a less age, for his son Peleg being born in the thirty-fourth year of his age, he lived afterwards four hundred and thirty years, which makes his age four hundred and sixty-four. But Peleg, the next in succession, did not reach the age of his progenitors; for after the birth of Reu, which occurred in the thirtieth year of his age, he lived no more than two hundred and nine years, so that the length of his life was only two hundred and thirty-nine years. And his son, just mentioned, reached precisely to the same age as his father. For, at the age of two and thirty his son Serug was born, and lived afterwards two hundred and seven years, which makes his whole age two hundred and thirty nine years. Serug did not fall much short of the age of his immediate ancestors; for at the age of thirty his son Nahor was born, after which he lived two hundred years, so that his age when he died, was two hundred and thirty. Nahor, in his nine and thirtieth year was the father of Terah, and lived afterwards a hundred and nineteen years, making his whole age no more than one hundred and forty-eight years.

Terah, at the age of seventy years is said to have

been the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; not in the same year; but the oldest of them was born this year. As Abram is first named, it might seem that he was the oldest of the three, but from facts afterwards related, it appears highly probable that he was the youngest; and that he was first named, not on account of age, but of dignity; and because the whole subsequent history is connected with his family.

This branch of the family of Shem had settled on the eastern side of the Euphrates; and from the testimony of Joshua we learn, that the immediate progenitors of Abram were all idolaters. In giving his last solemn charge to the tribes of Israel, he called upon them, "Choose ye this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood." And it is remarkable that this is the earliest instance of idolatry which we find recorded in the history, by Moses.

The oldest son of Terah seems to have been Haran, who died early, in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees; but left a son by the name of Lot, who was taken by his grandfather, and brought up with his own family. Sarai the wife of Abram was probably the sister of Lot; though she is here called the daughter-in-law of Terah.

Terah, with Abram, Sarai and Lot, removed

from Ur of the Chaldees, and dwelt at Haran. This movement seems to have been in consequence of some direction from God to Abram; for we find that when they left home they meant to go to Canaan; but for some reason or other, they stopped on the borders of their native country, and dwelt here as long as Terah lived. His whole age was two hundred and five years.

Now commences the history of Abram, who, at the call of God, left Haran after he had remained with his father for some time; and accompanied by Lot his nephew and Sarai his wife, went to the land of Canaan, which God had told him was to be his future residence and possession. At the time of this removal Abram was seventy-five years of age. When he arrived at Canaan, he removed from place to place, according to the unsettled kind of life which he and his sons pursued. The Canaanites were, however, still in the land; and though God again promised this land to Abram and his posterity, the full possession was reserved for a future day. Several times, during his stay in Canaan, he was forced to leave the country on account of famine.

Lot, the nephew of Abram, increased rapidly in wealth, as well as his uncle, and as they lived together, their herdsmen, with their respective flocks, were mingled together, which gave rise to

frequent quarrels between them. Whereupon, Abram saw that to preserve peace, it was necessary for them to separate from each other. Therefore, with a noble generosity, although he was the oldest man, and Lot owed all his wealth to his kindness, yet he offered his nephew the choice of the country. Lot accordingly selected the plains of Jordan, near its entrance into the sea; that is, the country in which stood the cities of Sodom, Gomorrha, Admah, and Zeboim. This was not only a fertile country, but well watered. Lot continued to pitch his tent from place to place, until he was induced, notwithstanding the wickedness of the place, to take up his residence in Sodom, and his family became associated in marriage with the inhabitants of that corrupt city. Abram continued his residence in the more elevated country of Canaan, where he had before pitched his tent. His usual residence, however, was in the plain of Mamre, near the ancient city of Hebron.

In these early ages, almost all people were governed by kings, but their jurisdiction seldom reached farther than a single city with its suburbs and neighbouring villages: yet sometimes ambitious men, as Nimrod, extended their dominions by war, to a considerable distance. Battles, of course, were frequent, and every man

was required to be a soldier, when his king demanded his services.

While Lot resided in Sodom, a war occurred in which the five kings who ruled over the cities of the plain, were joined, against four kings whose dominions lay near the mouth of the Euphrates. The principal of these was Chedorlaomer king of Elam, to whom these cities of the plain had been subject for twelve years; but in the thirteenth, they rebelled; whereupon, the king of Elam, calling to his assistance several other kings, marched against these rebellious kings. The two armies met and fought in the vale of Siddim, in which battle the king of Elam was victorious. Marching to Sodom, they took the spoil, and among the rest took Lot and his family prisoners, and carried away all his goods. Upon hearing this, Abram calling to his aid his servants, and some of his neighbours, pursued the enemy, and overtook and defeated them, near Damascus; and rescued Lot, and recovered all the property which had been taken away, which he restored to the owners,—refusing to take any part for himself.

While God repeated to Abram the promise that he would give to him and his posterity the whole extent of the land of Palestine, from the river of Egypt—a small stream at the entrance into the wilderness—to the great river, the river Eu-

phrates, and confirmed the same by a solemn covenant or oath; yet he distinctly foretold to him, that his descendants should be strangers in a strange land, where they would be reduced to slavery, and would be afflicted four hundred years. As to the beginning of this period, there is still much difference of opinion; but that it should be calculated from the time of Abraham seems to be the most probable; and certainly was the opinion of the ancients, as in the Greek version of the book of Genesis, and in the Samaritan copy, there is an addition to the text, in which this idea is distinctly expressed. At the same time, Jehovah predicted, that the nation by whom they should be oppressed would be punished, and that the people should come out with "great substance." And to Abram it was promised, that he should be buried in a good old age: and that in the fourth generation, his posterity should gain possession of the promised land. The reason for the fulfilment of the promise being deferred is very remarkable: "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." This short sentence contains much weighty meaning, deserving the solemn attention of every nation. It teaches them, that though God's justice is slow in visiting with deserved punishment, guilty nations, yet his judgments are sure; and that there is a certain fulness of iniquity, which, when it is

reached by any people, will certainly be followed by punishment. Then the iniquities of many generations are visited upon the last and most guilty generation. Thus does God visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children after the lapse of many centuries. And this he does, without interfering with justice in regard to individuals.

The wicked nations who now dwelt in this land, and who are sometimes called Amorites, or Canaanites, were the following, namely, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaims, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites. Ten nations: three of which were destroyed or mixed with the others, before the Israelites under Joshua took possession of the land; for at that time, no more than seven nations are mentioned.

Notwithstanding the repeated promises to Abram of a numerous posterity, he had as yet no child. And the mother of his first child was not Sarai, but her maid Hagar, who, according to an ancient usage was given to him by Sarai, as a secondary wife. All the examples recorded in Scripture, of men who had more than one wife, are not intended for examples for our imitation, but may be used for our warning. They all serve to teach us, that every departure from the original institution of marriage is attended with vexation, and evils in-

numerable. And as to the practice of the pious patriarchs, *that* apology may be made for them, which the pious in every age need, namely, that through the imperfection of human knowledge and virtue, particular errors and vices obtained the sanction of public opinion, and their evil was not perceived. Thus it was with the reformers, respecting persecution; and thus it now is, probably, in regard to offensive war, and the military spirit, which is directly hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the practice of the primitive Christians.

The expedient of Sarai, with which Abram complied, was successful. When Hagar, the Egyptian maid, knew that she was to have a son instead of Sarai, she could not conceal her contempt for her mistress, who made a heavy complaint against her to her husband. Abram would not interfere, but left it to Sarai to proceed against her according to her will; upon which she began to treat Hagar with severity, until she was induced to flee from the face of her mistress. But the angel of the Lord directed her to return and submit herself to her mistress, promising that she should have a son, and that his name should be called Ishmael, because the Lord had heard her affliction. The angel, moreover, predicted what sort of man he should be, and what should be the character of the

people who should descend from him. "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Accordingly, Hagar returned, and when her son was born, she called his name Ishmael. It is truly remarkable, how exactly the character of the Bedouin Arabs, to this very day, answers to the description of Ishmael, given by the angel; and their character and mode of life, and place of residence, have never been changed, from the time of Ishmael unto this day.

At the birth of Ishmael, Abram was eighty-six years old. And he seems to have thought that God's promise of a numerous offspring, would be fulfilled in this son, for whom he felt a strong affection.

But when Abram had reached his ninety-ninth year, God appeared to him in a more remarkable manner, than before, under the name of God ALMIGHTY, or GOD THE MUNIFICENT, commanding him "to walk before him and be perfect." On this occasion, God entered anew into covenant with Abram, and as a sign of the certainty of his promise, he changed his name to Abraham, the meaning of which is, "the father of many nations."

At this time, also, he instituted the rite of cir-

cumcision, as a sign and seal of the covenant, and to be a distinctive mark of all who were received into covenant with God. There is no good reason for supposing that this rite was borrowed from the Egyptians or Ethiopians, as some learned men have thought, but every reason for believing that it was original with Abraham; and that other nations derived it from the Hebrews and Ishmaelites. Lest this ceremony should be neglected, the command enjoining it was very strict, and the punishment for omission nothing less than expulsion from the congregation of the Lord. The blessings promised at this time were the same as before, with some enlargement. “And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

The name of Sarai was also changed to Sarah, and a peculiar blessing was pronounced on her also,—“And I will bless her, and give thee a son of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.”

This promise of a son by Sarah almost overwhelmed Abraham; he fell on his face and laughed for joy, and said, “Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear?” But the good old patriarch seems to have been apprehensive, that

Ishmael, on whom his affections were strongly fixed, should be cast off, therefore, he exclaimed, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Upon which, God, in the kindest and most condescending manner, assured him, that his covenant would be established with the son whom Sarah should have, and whose name should be called Isaac. (Laughter.) "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee, at this set time, in the next year."

The descendants of Ishmael, now upon earth, who are generally Mohammedans, have retained the rite of circumcision unto this day, and administer it about the same age as that of Ishmael, when he was circumcised, which was thirteen years.

The next appearance of God to Abraham was very remarkable, as he exhibited himself in visible form, in the shape and appearance of a man; accompanied by two angels, who, in like manner, had the appearance of men.

Abraham was sitting in his tent door at Mamre, in the middle of the day, when they presented themselves; upon which he bowed himself toward

the ground, and addressed one of them by the name, **JEHOVAH**; whence it may be inferred, that this person, though appearing in the form of a man, was in some manner known by Abraham to be truly God. It is also remarkable, that they partook of the hospitality of the patriarch. Whether their eating of the prepared calf was real or only in appearance, it is of no importance to inquire.

The object of this visit was, to confirm the promises already made to Abraham; and, especially, *that* one which related to the speedy birth of a son to Sarah. But the purpose of God to destroy Sodom and the other cities of the plain, for their enormous wickedness, was now communicated to Abraham. The kindness and confidence with which he was treated by Jehovah, on this occasion, are extraordinary. His words were,—“Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do: seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation; and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

Abraham interceded earnestly for Sodom, and did not cease until he obtained a promise, that if only ten righteous persons should be found in that

city, it should not be destroyed: but this number, it appears by the event, were not found, and so a fiery ruin overwhelmed the cities of the plain. But God was not unmindful of his servant Lot; for the two angels who had accompanied Him to Abraham's tent, were now sent to warn and secure him and his family; and, on this occasion, we have an example of the extreme wickedness of the whole population of that abandoned city. Lot and two of his daughters escaped, while his sons and sons-in-law perished in the dreadful overthrow of the place; and his wife was suddenly transformed into a pillar of salt, for looking back to the town, in direct violation of the injunction of the angels. †

The evil consequences of living among a corrupt and licentious people are manifest, in regard to Lot and his family. He himself seems to have continued faithful, for an apostle tells us, that "From day to day he vexed his righteous soul" on account of the wickedness of the people; but the whole of his family appear to have been infected with the prevailing corruption of manners. Of this his daughters, who escaped, gave a humiliating example, when they caused their father to be intoxicated, and became the mothers of two children to him. From this sinful connexion sprung the nations of the Moabites and Ammonites, who had their residence on the east of the Dead Sea; and

were perpetual sources of trouble and injury to the Israelites.

The account of Abraham's sojourning in Gerar, on account of famine, is so much the same as what is related of Isaac, that some have supposed that some confusion has occurred in this part of the sacred book; so that what properly belongs to Isaac, is here referred by the mistake of copies, to Abraham; especially, as Sarah being now above ninety years of age, cannot be supposed to have been as handsome as is here supposed. But as the kind of life pursued by these patriarchs was similar, there is no improbability in supposing that the disaster of famine might happen during the residence of each of them, and that they might retreat to the same region for relief, which was fertile and near at hand. And as to the names of the kings of Gerar being the same in both cases, it may be observed, that Abimelech seems to have been the common name of their kings, as Pharaoh was of the Egyptian kings. The difficulty about Sarah's age is easily removed; for she seems, by miracle, to have recovered her youth. That in both cases the women should have been seized and taken to the harem of the king shows us the licentious and arbitrary customs of that country and age.

The time had now arrived when Sarah, according to the divine prediction, was to become the

mother of a son. His name, as had been directed, was called Isaac; and on the eighth day he was circumcised, according to the commandment. Of course, there was great joy and exultation with his parents. On the day on which Isaac was weaned, Abraham made a great feast. This event among the ancient Jews is said to have occurred, not before the third year, and frequently was deferred until the fifth.

It seems to have been on this joyous occasion, that Sarah saw Ishmael engaged in mocking; probably Isaac was the object of his mockery, although this is not said. Wherefore Sarah begged her husband to cast out both Hagar and her son, as it was not intended that the son of the bondwoman, that is, their slave, should be heir with, or thought equal to, her son Isaac. As Abraham entertained a tender affection for Ishmael, he was very unwilling to comply with Sarah's demand; but the Lord told him that he ought to do as his wife wished; and to comfort him respecting Ishmael, the promise that he should be the father of a nation of people, was repeated. Abraham therefore sent Hagar and Ishmael from his dwelling, furnished with bread and water for their journey. They travelled on into the wilderness, and continued their journey until their provisions were spent; on which, Hagar, expecting the

lad to die with thirst, laid him down under a bush, and went off to some distance, that she might not see her child die; and here, feeling her desolate and almost hopeless condition, "she lifted up her voice and wept." But God, who heareth the cry of his distressed creatures, had compassion on her, and spoke to her from heaven, and promised not only that the child should live, but that he should become a great nation. At this juncture, the eyes of Hagar were directed to a well of water, and she filled her bottle, and gave drink to the lad.

Ishmael, from this time, seems to have dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, where he became eminent for the use of the bow. His mother appears to have remained with him; for we read, "that she took him a wife of the land of Egypt."

The permanent property of most value to those who led the wandering life pursued by Abraham and his sons, was the possession of wells of water for the refreshment of their numerous flocks. We find, therefore, that wells were the subject of solemn treaties or covenants between the heads of tribes in that country; and their most serious disputes were on account of these; and the most bitter enmity was manifested by their filling up the wells of their enemies.

When Isaac was grown up to the size of a man,

and Ishmael being gone, the affections of the patriarch were fixed on his only and well beloved son. When all causes of trouble seemed to be removed, Abraham received the most extraordinary and heart-rending command from God which was ever given to any parent. "Take now," said God, "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." Never was a more painful duty required, and yet Abraham did not complain or hesitate. He went straight forward in the way of obedience, until his hand was raised to strike the fatal stroke, aimed at the life of his child, who lay meekly bound before him. At this critical and awful moment, his hand was arrested by the call of an angel from heaven. This, perhaps, was the most extraordinary act of faith and obedience ever exhibited by a mere man; but it was no more than a shadow of God's giving up his only begotten and well beloved son, actually to die a painful and disgraceful death for our sins.

At the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years, Sarah the wife of Abraham died. On this mournful occasion, the patriarch felt that he needed for his family, some better title to the land he possessed, than he had yet obtained. In his mode

of life he did not need to buy the land on which he pitched his tent from time to time, and over which his flocks wandered. But when he saw the wife of his youth, and the constant companion of his pilgrimage, lying dead in the tent, the want of a place of burial, which could not be disturbed, pressed itself upon him so strongly, that he entered into a negociation with the sons of Heth, for a piece of ground for that purpose. They, indeed, generously offered him the privilege of burying his dead in the best of their sepulchres: but he would not agree to this proposal, and asked them to sell the cave of Machpelah, with the field in which it was situated. Ephron, who seems to have been a chief among the sons of Heth, offered generously to give Abraham the field which he desired; but the patriarch did not wish to bring himself under any special obligations to the people of the land, therefore he insisted on paying a fair price for the property. Accordingly, the sale took place by mutual agreement, and he weighed to Ephron four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. And thus, "the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre; the field and the cave which was therein; the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a

possession, in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of the city.”

This being the most ancient example of the transfer of real estate, which is on record, it is curious to remark the particularity, with which the property is described, and the several things contained in the purchase; not only the field, but the cave, and also the trees in the field, and on the border. We may observe, also, the publicity of the transaction. It was a bargain made, and an actual conveyance of land, in the presence of all the inhabitants of the city. Thus every thing was made sure. The price was carefully weighed, and consisted of such money as was current with the merchant; that is, it probably had some stamp or mark impressed on the pieces, indicating that it was not spurious but genuine silver. From the whole transaction, it seems evident, that written deeds, or documents signed and sealed by the parties, were not then in use. If writing had been known in Abraham's time, we would almost certainly have had some mention of it here, or when he sent Eliezer to his kindred in Mesopotamia; but in the Bible, there is not a vestige of any thing like writing before Moses, unless you choose to place Job at an earlier period. But what sort of writing was used in the time of Job, we know not. It might have been nothing else

than writing by pictures, or what are called hieroglyphics.

Abraham, having secured the cave of Machpelah, buried Sarah his wife there; and this became the place of burial for the descendants of Abraham for many generations.

Abraham being now advanced in years, was desirous of seeing Isaac, his son and heir, well married and settled, before he died. And as he was on principle opposed to a connexion with the inhabitants of the country, he thought it best to send Eliezer, a trusty servant, and steward of his household, to select a wife for Isaac from among his own kindred. Eliezer, accordingly, set out on his journey, with a caravan of ten camels, not only to give a proof to the people to whom he was sent, of Abraham's wealth—for God had greatly blessed him—but to carry presents for the friends of the person that might agree to accompany him home. This aged and faithful servant had not resided so long in Abraham's family without religious benefit. He appears to have possessed the very spirit of his master, as regarded faith and devotion. For having arrived in the country of his destination, instead of depending on his own wisdom, he commits the whole matter by prayer to the providence of God. The substance of the prayer which he offered up at the well of water to which he had

come, was that it might be so ordered that the woman who should first come down to the well to draw water, according to the custom of the east, and who, upon being requested, should give drink to himself and his camels, might be the one that God had appointed for the wife of Isaac. And before he had finished his prayer, behold Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, who was the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Rebekah was beautiful, and doubtless, Eliezer, as soon as he saw her, believed that his prayer was answered; but his confidence must have been greatly increased, when in compliance with his request, she cheerfully let down her pitcher, and said, "drink, my lord;" and when he saw that before she was requested, of her own accord she offered to draw water for the camels. Indeed, the occurrences were so sudden and remarkable, that the man stood astonished, waiting to observe "whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." This satisfaction, however, must have been full, when upon inquiry he found, that the beautiful and obliging girl was the daughter of Bethuel, and consequently the grand-niece of Abraham his master.

Eliezer having given some costly jewels to Rebekah, she, after inviting him to her father's house, ran home to tell what had passed, to her

friends. Laban, the brother of Rebekah, instantly went out to the well, where Eliezer remained standing, and again most pressingly invited him to the house, saying, "come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house and room for the camels." The man having complied with this invitation, and having ungirded his camels, and received some refreshment, began to mention fully his business; and telling whose servant he was, and giving an account of the abundant riches with which God had blessed Abraham, he proceeded to explain at once the errand on which he had come; and particularly told the remarkable occurrences at the well, since his arrival. "And now," said he, "if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or the left." Then both Laban and Bethuel said "the thing proceedeth from the Lord, we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Rebekah is before thee, take her, go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken." Upon hearing this favourable decision, Eliezer felt constrained, without delay, and in the presence of them all, to prostrate himself on the earth, in a solemn act of worship and praise, to Almighty God, who had so wonderfully prospered his journey. No doubt Rebekah con-

sent to the contract thus made by her father and brother; but in those days the explicit consent of young females was not considered essential; as is the fact in the east, at this day.

Things being thus quickly and happily arranged, Eliezer was anxious to return home immediately; but the friends of Rebekah begged for a little delay; but when they found that he was determined to go, and saw that Rebekah was willing to accompany him, they ceased to object. Accordingly, Eliezer had the pleasure of conveying home to his master, a lovely and virtuous bride for his beloved son. She appears to have lived with him in uninterrupted peace; for Isaac in this differed from all the other patriarchs of those times, that he never married more than one wife.

Abraham, after the death of Sarah, took another wife, Keturah. His sons, by this woman, six in number, were not permitted to divide the inheritance with Isaac; to whom Abraham gave all that he had; but these young men as they grew up, received presents from their father and were sent away into the east country.

Abraham lived to the age of one hundred and seventy-five years, and then was gathered to his fathers; and was buried by his sons Ishmael and Isaac in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, which he purchased from Ephron the

Hittite, and where he buried Sarah. This is the only meeting of the two brothers, Isaac and Ishmael, of which we have any account, after the former was sent away with his mother. We learn, however, that Ishmael's family greatly increased; for he was the father of twelve sons, who were all princes, each being the head of a distinct tribe or nation. Their habitation was in Arabia, where their descendants are found leading the same kind of life unto this day. Ishmael himself lived to be a hundred and thirty seven years of age, and then "died in the presence of all his brethren."

At the time when Isaac was married to Rebekah he was forty years of age. For a considerable time he had no children, but in answer to his prayers, twin sons, Esau and Jacob, were born. The former at his birth was in a remarkable manner, covered all over with hair, but Jacob, his twin brother, was smooth. Esau being the oldest had a right to the privileges of the first born, called the birth-right; but on a certain occasion, when the boys were grown, Esau having returned from hunting; to which he was greatly devoted, was so hungry and fatigued, that he believed himself to be dying; and meeting with his brother, who had ready-made, a certain kind of red porridge or soup, Esau begged him to give it to him. Jacob, seeing his necessity, told him he would give it to him for

his birth-right. Esau believing himself to be at the point of death said, "What profit shall this birth-right do to me?" Whereupon he sold it for a dish of pottage, and confirmed the bargain by an oath. This act of Esau is described in Scripture, as very profane; as it was understood that spiritual as well as temporal blessings were connected with the birth-right, and especially a superiority over all his brethren: and some suppose it had some relation to the line from which the Messiah should descend. But however wicked the act of Esau in despising his birth-right, and selling it for a mess of pottage, the conduct of Jacob, who took advantage of his brother's necessity, cannot be justified. It was certainly an act in which there was a total absence of that brotherly love which we owe to every fellow creature; and more especially to our own brothers, who are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

The only disaster which is recorded in the whole life of Isaac was a famine, which compelled him to go to Gerar, of which Abimelech was king; whither Abraham his father had taken refuge from a calamity of a similar kind, in the time of a former king—probably the father of the present—of the same name. And a similar occurrence to that recorded in the life of Abraham now took place. Rebekah, as soon as her beauty was beheld, was carried off to be reserved for the use of the king; for he had,

to preserve his own life, which he supposed would be sacrificed for the sake of his wife, pretended that she was his sister; for which falsehood he had not the apology which Abraham employed; as indeed *his* wife was in a certain sense his sister. But Abimelech being a well disposed man, no sooner discovered that Rebekah was the wife of Isaac, than he restored her to her husband, with a reproof for his conduct. As this land was very fertile, Isaac remained and cultivated the earth with great success, receiving an increase of an hundred fold of what he sowed; that is, a hundred grains for one; and while resident here, his riches increased exceedingly, until he became an object of envy to the Philistines among whom he dwelt. And they contended with him about wells which his servants had dug; until, at length, Abimelech requested him to depart out of the country. He went next to the Valley of Gerar, and pitched there; but still the contention with the Philistines for the wells which he digged continued; until, at Rehoboth, they ceased to be troublesome. But he continued removing his tent from place to place, until he came to Beersheba, or the well of the oath. Here God appeared unto Isaac, and said, "I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake." And

Isaac, possessing the same devout spirit as his father, "buildd an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord." While he resided at this place, Abimelech and some of his chief men came to him, and proposed entering into a solemn covenant with him. For on account of his increasing greatness they were afraid of him; and thought, as he had been badly treated whilst residing among them, and had been sent out of their land, that he might feel a disposition to be revenged. Abimelech, however, used it as an argument to enter into this covenant, that they had done nothing but good unto him, and had sent him away in peace. Isaac, who seems to have been a lover of peace, received his old friends kindly, and made a feast for their entertainment; and willingly entered into covenant with them, agreeably to their proposal.

Men who are prosperous in the world, often suffer affliction and mortification from their children. Esau was a favourite child with his father, and therefore he would be the more grieved at the imprudent conduct of his first-born, who married one of the daughters of Canaan, Judith the daughter of Beeri. And not content with one he took another wife from the same tribe, Bashemeth the daughter of Elon. "Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah." Esau was forty years of age when he contracted these marriages.

It was customary for the patriarchs when about to die, to call their children and give them their blessing, which, in the case of the inspired patriarchs, was prophetic of their future destiny; and of course the richest blessing was pronounced upon the oldest son, or on him who had received the privilege of the birth-right, which was sometimes transferred from the first-born, to a younger brother.

Isaac being now advanced in years, and his eyesight having so entirely failed, that he could not distinguish one person from another, thought, that probably his days were drawing to a close. He, therefore, called Esau, and sent him out to hunt some venison, and to dress it in that peculiar manner, which he knew to be agreeable to him; that being gratified, and his paternal affection excited, he might be prepared to give him the benediction of the first-born, before he died. Rebekah, overhearing these directions of her husband, immediately devised a plan for securing the chief blessing to her favourite son Jacob. To accomplish her end, she made him bring her a kid which she dressed in a manner which she knew would be agreeable to Isaac's taste; and having persuaded Jacob to put on a suit of his brother's clothes, and to cover his hands and neck with the hairy skin of the kid, she sent him in to his father, pretending to be Esau, who had not yet returned from the

field. The stratagem succeeded. Jacob answered to his father's question, that he was Esau, and accounted for his quick return from the hunt, by referring it all to the favour of Providence. Isaac suspected that the voice was that of Jacob, and therefore called him near to satisfy himself by feeling his hands; but finding that he was hairy, his suspicions, in a great measure, vanished. However, he called upon him again to say whether he was his "very son Esau," and upon receiving an answer that he was, he proceeded to bless him with his best and richest blessing; even that of the first-born: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. 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."

This scene was scarcely finished, before Esau returned from hunting, and quickly presented himself before his father with savoury meat which he had taken. Isaac was greatly surprized, and said, "Who art thou?" "And he said I am thy son, thy first-born Esau." Upon hearing this, Isaac knew at once the deception which had been practised upon him, and "he trembled very exceedingly"—but he would not recall what he had

done; but having blessed Jacob with his richest and best blessing, he now confirmed it, and said "And he shall be blessed." Esau, upon this was seized with grief. "He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry; and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father." Isaac said, "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing." And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob (the supplanter,) for he hath supplanted me these two times; he took away my birth-right, and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" "Isaac answered, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given him for servants; and with corn and wine I have sustained him. And Esau said unto his father, hast thou but one blessing, my father; and Esau lifted up his voice and wept." Isaac then pronounced a benediction, giving him the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above.—Telling him that by his sword he should live; but still repeating the prediction, that his brother should be superior to him; and that he should serve him; only, it was declared, that at those times when he should obtain power, he would break his brother's yoke from off his neck.

The conduct of Rebekah and Jacob on this occa-

sion never can be reconciled with moral rectitude, as long as truth and sincerity shall be reckoned among the virtues; but it is not for us to fix the degree of guilt which attaches to their conduct. In this case, it is probable, that Rebekah made the purpose of God the rule of her conduct, instead of his commandments; for it had been revealed to her, before the children were born, "that the elder should serve the younger;" and Jacob might have thought that as he had purchased his brother's birth-right, he had a claim to the chief blessing. But in this transaction, as in many others recorded in Scripture, we have a clear illustration of the fact, that God accomplishes his own purposes by the free, and even by the sinful actions of his creatures, without being the cause of their sinfulness. But bad conduct and deceitful dealing towards brethren or others, is pretty sure in the providence of God, to be followed by some degree of retribution, even in this world. Rebekah and her favourite son were completely successful in their plan of deception, by which Esau was deprived of the blessing of the first-born; but the malice of the injured brother against his supplanter was so hot, that it became necessary for Jacob to flee to a distant country for safety; and thus a long separation took place between the mother and her favourite son, who, it would seem, had remained

constantly at home until this time. Esau's anger was not a transient passion, but he formed a settled purpose, that after the burial of his father, whose decease he concluded could not be far off, he would take the life of his brother; and this purpose he must have declared, for information of it reached the ears of Rebekah. On which, she advised Jacob to depart immediately from the country, and to go into Mesopotamia, to her brother Laban's, until the heat of Esau's anger should abate, when she promised that she would send and fetch him back. "For" said she, "why should I be deprived of you both in one day?" But as the consent of Isaac must also be obtained, and as he would not be ready to believe a report which attributed so much malice to his favourite son, she had recourse to other arguments to induce the old patriarch to consent to his departure. She complained bitterly of her afflictions, on account of the daughters of Heth, whom Esau had married; and declared that her life would become a burden to her, if Jacob should follow the example of his brother, and take a wife from among the daughters of the land. This consideration had its weight with Isaac, to persuade him to send Jacob away; wherefore, he called him and solemnly charged him not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, but to go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel,

and to take a wife of the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother. And then he pronounced a blessing on him in the following emphatical words. "And God Almighty bless thee and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people: And give the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land, wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. And so Isaac sent away Jacob to go to Padan-aram."

Esau, observing that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away that he might form an alliance with the kindred of his family; and finding that he had vexed and displeased his parents, by taking the daughters of Heth, went and married in addition to the wives which he already had, Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael.

Jacob, having left his father's house, proceeded on his journey towards Haran, until the sun having gone down, he resolved to spend the night at the place where he had arrived; and, finding no house to receive him, he took some of the stones of the place for a pillow, and lay down to sleep. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the

God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” “And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel, (house of God,) but the name before was Laish.” “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”

In this transaction we have the first mention of three different things, which seem, however, to have been established usages. The first is a religious vow ; the second the ceremony of anointing a pillar with oil ; and the third a promise of tithes, or a tenth of all his property to the Lord. There is indeed, a mention of tithes in the history of Abraham : when he was met by Melchizedek, he gave unto him the tenth of all the spoils. It seems then to have been an early custom for the pious to devote one tenth of their gains to the service of the Lord. And the Mosaic law was nothing more than the recognition of a custom which had been long in use ; probably from the beginning of the world. And there is no good reason why all Christians should not follow this example, and consecrate at least one tenth of all their income to the Lord. Besides the annual tithe, the members of the Hebrew commonwealth gave many offerings in the course of the year, in the form of first-fruits and gifts, and free-will offerings.

When Jacob had arrived in the country of his mother's relations, he met with Rachel, the daughter of Laban, who acted as shepherdess of her father's sheep, and informed her that he was the son of Rebekah her father's sister. As soon as Laban understood that his nephew was come, "he ran to meet him and embraced him, and kissed him, and

brought him to his house." After Jacob had remained one month, Laban proposed to allow him wages for his services; but Jacob, who had fixed his affections strongly on Rachel his cousin, offered to serve his uncle seven years, if he would give her to him to wife. To this Laban readily assented; for he said, "It is better that I should give her unto thee, than to another." When the time was fulfilled, Jacob demanded his wife; for he had served seven years for Rachel, "and they appeared unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." Laban, therefore, made a feast, and invited the men of the place; but instead of Rachel, Leah, the elder sister, was given unto Jacob. Laban excused himself by a reference to the customs of his country, according to which he pretended that a younger sister must not be given in marriage before the elder; but of this he should have informed his nephew before, and not have deceived him. Laban, however, offered to give him Rachel also, if he would serve seven years more; to which Jacob agreed. It must not be understood that he served seven years more before Rachel was given, but that he engaged with his uncle for the service of seven other years. To Leah Laban gave Zilpah for a maid; and to Rachel he gave Bilhah. Although Rachel was most tenderly beloved by Jacob; yet Leah was honoured to be the mother of children, while

Rachel had none. This she bore with much impatience; and in imitation of Sarah, she gave Bilhah her maid to Jacob as a kind of secondary wife. Leah had already borne four sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; and now Bilhah bore a son to Jacob, whom he named Dan. Zilpah also had two sons, Gad and Asher. And after Reuben was grown to be of a good size, Leah had a fifth son, and called his name Issachar; and afterwards a sixth, whom she called Zebulun, and a daughter named Dinah. At length God heard the prayers of Rachel and she bore a son whom she called Joseph.

After the birth of Joseph, Jacob began to think of returning to his own country, and mentioned it to Laban. But he having greatly increased in wealth since Jacob had the care of his flocks, was unwilling to part with his nephew, and offered to give him any wages he should ask. Accordingly an agreement was made that Jacob should have for his share the cattle which were marked and spotted in a particular manner; but it was so ordered in Providence, that this agreement turned out greatly to the profit of Jacob. This increase of Jacob's property excited the envy of Laban's sons, and they said "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's, and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all his glory." And their

words were reported to Jacob. Besides, Laban himself became dissatisfied, and his countenance was not towards Jacob as before. Wherefore "the Lord said unto Jacob, return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee." He said also, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me; get thee from this land and return unto the land of thy kindred." Jacob having received this divine command, called his wives, and informed them of the directions which he had received from heaven; upon which they readily consented to go. Jacob took the opportunity to prepare for his journey and to leave the country, while Laban was busily engaged in shearing his sheep, lest he should attempt to prevent him from going, or keep back his daughters. And it was not until the third day after Jacob's departure, that the report of the fact reached Laban's ears. And his conduct showed that Jacob's suspicions of his temper were not ill-founded, for immediately, "he took his brethren with him, and pursued after Jacob;" but on account of the three days' start which the latter had, he did not overtake him until the seventh day, when he had reached Mount Gilead. Laban reproved Jacob for taking away his daughters by stealth, and pretended that he would have "sent them away with

mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp ;” and complained that he had not been permitted to kiss his sons and daughters before they departed. He also observed that it was fully in his power to do him hurt, but said he, “The God of your father spake unto me yesterday, saying, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob good or bad.” One thing, however, he urged in the last place, as the ground of the most grievous of all his complaints, that they had stolen his gods. This shows that idolatry still prevailed in Mesopotamia ; and, although Jacob knew it not, had entered his own family ; for Rachel had stolen her father’s gods, when she left his house, but she managed the matter so cunningly, that the theft was not discovered, nor the possession of these idols by his chiefly beloved wife, made known to Jacob. When nothing was discovered after a very particular search, to justify this last accusation of Laban, Jacob began to grow angry at being thus pursued, harassed, and accused, and said to Laban, “What is my trespass ? what is my sin that thou hast so hotly pursued after me ? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff ? Set it here before thy brethren and my brethren, that they may judge between us both. This twenty years have I been with thee, thy ewes and thy

she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it: of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight." After hearing this indignant speech of Jacob, Laban felt disposed to put an end to the dispute; he therefore said, "These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine; and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have borne? Now, therefore, come thou, and let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for a witness between me and thee." To this proposal Jacob very cordially consented, and immediately took a stone and set it up for a pillar, and called upon his brethren to gather stones: and they took stones and made an

heap, and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban called it "Jegar-Sahadutha," but Jacob called it "Galeed." And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between me and thee this day;" therefore was the name of it called Galeed (the heap of testimony;) and also Mispah; for he said, "the Lord watch between thee and me, when we are absent one from another: If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters, no man is with us, see God is witness between me and thee." "And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast between me and thee. This heap be witness and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee; and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me for harm. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us; and Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread; and they did eat bread and tarried all night in the mount. And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and daughters, and blessed them. And Laban departed and returned unto his place."

The country through which Jacob was now passing, afterwards became the inheritance of some of the tribes, the descendants of his sons; and the names of places now given were retained.

After his deliverance from the pursuit of Laban his father-in-law, he proceeded on his journey towards Canaan; and as God had protected him and his family, by sending an angel to meet Laban, and to warn him to do Jacob no harm, now the care of Providence was signally manifested to him, by a vision of angels who met him on the way. This was intended to prepare him for new dangers and difficulties which he must encounter. Upon seeing these angels of God, he said, "This is God's host; and he called the name of the place Mahanaim." It seems from this language, that there was a multitude of the heavenly host who now appeared as an army to the eyes of Jacob. The dangers alluded to, were those to be apprehended from the displeasure of his brother Esau; for, although twenty years had passed, he was not certain that the anger of his brother, which had once induced him to resolve on his death, had entirely subsided. As he drew near to Canaan, therefore, he became anxious to ascertain the temper of Esau's mind towards him. Accordingly, he sent messengers to his brother, respectfully to inform him of his circumstances, and of his approach; but they returned more speedily than was expected, and brought the unwelcome intelligence, that Esau, accompanied by four hundred men, was on his way to meet him. Jacob was exceedingly

alarmed and distressed by this information, and immediately began to make the best arrangements he could, to avoid the wrath of his brother; for as to his hostile intentions he could entertain no doubt, from his being attended with such an army of men. He divided his company and flocks into two bands, so that if the foremost should be smitten, the hindmost might have some chance of making their escape. But his chief hope was wisely placed in God, to whom he addressed himself in the following pathetic prayer. "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and unto thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of the mercies and the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." To be able to plead God's own word of promise in our supplications, is a sure ground of confidence; for the Lord will remember the word in which he hath caused our souls to trust. But Jaecob, while he had recourse

to God by earnest prayer, did not think that this rendered the use of every lawful means unnecessary; and as he had already made arrangements for escaping, at least with part of his company, so now he determined to try what effect kindness might have on the mind of his brother. Men are softened by a present, accompanied by the words of kindness, Jacob, therefore, sent forward a selection from the several kinds of his cattle, in different droves, directing the first, when asked whose property they were, to say, "They are thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my Lord Esau;" and the second and third to say the same words. Jacob having sent forward this valuable present, began to consult in the best manner he could for the safety of his wives and children, and in the night crossed over the brook Jabbok, with all his wives and his children. When he had conveyed his family across the brook, he returned to the camp, where he was alone, "and there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob; and he said, Thy

name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel ; for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name. And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place PENUEL; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day."

Undoubtedly the person with whom Jacob wrestled was God in human form, and therefore called, a man. This event was so remarkable that it occasioned a significant name to be given to the place, and also a new name to Jacob, which became also the principal name of the people, whom God claimed as his own peculiar nation.

Jacob was now prepared to meet with his brother Esau. He could say, If God be for us, who can be against us? Having arranged his property and his family, "he went forward and bowed himself seven times to the earth before Esau his brother ; and Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." God, it seems, had been with Esau, as he was

with Laban, to change his evil purpose, and to revive in his bosom a lively feeling of brotherly affection. God has many ways of preserving his people from their enemies ; but the most effectual, and to them the most pleasing, is when he changes their enmity into kindness. Esau inquired affectionately concerning the women and children whom he saw ; and did not wish to receive Jacob's present, which had gone before him ; but on being pressed by his brother, he consented to accept it. He seemed also disposed to join himself to Jacob's company, but the latter wisely declined the offer, on account of the necessity which he was under of journeying very slowly. Esau, therefore, took a friendly leave of his brother, and returned home ; leaving him to go on his journey at his leisure.

Thus a second time was Jacob delivered from a near relation, who sought his hurt, by the interposition of Divine Providence.

The first place where Jacob rested after his wearisome journey, was Succoth ; so called from the circumstance of his erecting booths there for his flocks and herds. But he soon removed to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan. Here it seems he intended to take up his abode permanently, as he bought a tract of land from the children of Hamor, for a hundred

pieces of silver ; and here also he erected an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel ; that is, *God, the God of Israel*. But how little do the wisest of mortals see of the future. An event soon occurred which rendered the patriarch's longer continuance here altogether inexpedient. Dinah, the only daughter of Jacob, as was very natural, went to visit the daughters of the land ; but she was an inexperienced girl, and she ought not to have ventured among these strangers, whose manners were corrupt, without the protection of her parents, or her brothers, several of whom were now grown up. The event was unhappy. The heedless damsel was seduced by Shechem the son of Hamor, the prince of the country ; but this man immediately proposed to marry her. Shechem was much in earnest to have this matter brought to a friendly settlement, and urged his father Hamor to use his influence for him with Jacob and his sons. This was a new kind of trouble to the pious patriarch. But he remained silent after he heard of the unhappy affair, until his sons, who were absent with the flocks, returned. When the young men, the brothers of Dinah, heard how she had been treated, they were exceedingly grieved, and not only grieved, but enraged ; for having but the one sister, she was no doubt very dear to them. They were, therefore, resolved on a bloody revenge ; but they suffered

the proposal for the marriage to go on, which now was pressed most earnestly, not only by Hamor, but by the young man Shechem himself, who offered to give any dowry which might be asked of him, if he might only obtain Dinah for a wife. Jacob seems to have been an easy tempered man; and in this case he gave up the management of the business to his sons, who pretended to be pleased with the proposed match; but they alleged that there was a difficulty in the way which they could not overcome. It was unlawful for them to give their sister in marriage to a person who was not a Jew; but if the Shechemites would consent to have every male among them introduced into the Jewish nation, every obstacle would be removed out of the way. Hamor and his son did not refuse to comply with these terms, for the attachment of Shechem to Dinah was exceedingly strong. They, therefore, undertook to persuade all the men of their city to agree to this proposal. And they argued with them thus: "These men are peaceable with us; therefore, let them dwell in the land, and trade therein, for the land, behold, it is large enough for them: let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. Only, herein will the men consent to dwell with us, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. Shall not

their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs be ours? Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us." The people hearing this fair representation, were persuaded to consent, and the males of the whole town were admitted by the regular rite of the Jewish law. On the third day, Simeon and Levi, two of the brothers of Dinah, boldly attacked the men with the sword, and slew all the males. They also took the spoil of the city, and seized their sheep, oxen, and asses, and took their wives captives. As soon as Jacob heard of this unlawful and cruel violence of his two sons, he reprov'd them for their wicked conduct, and told them that by such doings they would render him hateful to the inhabitants of Canaan; and that as his force was small, they would combine against him, and destroy him and his house. But the young men justified their conduct by referring to the dishonour done to their sister.

Jacob's longer continuance at Shechem being inexpedient, God, who condescended to guide him in all his ways, directed him to go to Bethel, and to dwell there, and to erect an altar to God, who had there appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of Esau. This was the very place where God first appeared unto Jacob, and where was seen by him, in a dream of the night, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, on which the an-

gels were ascending and descending. Here Jacob vowed a vow, and set up a sacred memorial; but he seems to have forgotten his solemn engagements entered into in this place, until God now put him in mind of his duty.

Jacob having fallen into trouble, and having found much iniquity in his own children, thought it necessary to attempt a family reformation; for however pious the head of a family may be, yet wickedness will often creep into his house, and great corruption may exist among the members of his household, of which he is kept in ignorance. Too often, fond mothers connive at the faults of their sons, and conceal their evil deeds from their father, than which there is no more certain means of leading them to perdition. In ancient times, the propensity to idolatry was unaccountably strong; Jacob, therefore, exhorted his household, and all that were with him, to put away the strange gods, that is, the idols, that were among them. He also called upon them, before his going to Bethel, which was holy ground to him, to change their garments and be clean. This, I believe, is the first instance which we have on record, of an outward religious purification; which was doubtless performed by the use of water, the element used all over the world, for cleansing. We are taught by this example, that when we are about to draw

near to God, in his house, and in his ordinances, we should be careful to put away every thing sinful, and approach the service with reverence.

Jacob said, "Let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." The exhortation of Jacob was not in vain, for his family gave up all the strange gods which were in their hand; and their ear-rings,—which probably had some superstitious use,—and Jacob hid them under the oak which was in Shechem.

It is somewhat surprising that the Canaanites were not roused to vengeance by the treacherous and cruel slaughter of the Shechemites. Nothing would have been easier than to overwhelm Jacob and his family, by joining the forces of only a few neighbouring cities. The reason why this was not done, is given by the sacred historian: "The terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."

Having arrived at Bethel, Jacob proceeded to erect an altar, which he called "EL-BETHEL, because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

Here Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried beneath an oak, at Bethel. She must have

been very far advanced in years, as Rebekah herself, if now alive, was a very aged woman. On what occasion Deborah came into Jacob's family, we know not. Perhaps she was on a visit, as the residence of Isaac, who was still living, was at no great distance. We are not informed that Jacob visited his father immediately after his return, but we may take it for granted, that so pious a man would not be inattentive to the duty which he owed such an excellent parent.

After Jacob had fixed his residence at Bethel, God appeared to him again, and confirmed the change of his name from Jacob to Israel, and renewed his promises to him, saying, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply: a nation, and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins. And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." As a memorial of this renewed proof of God's faithfulness and mercy, the patriarch set up a pillar and anointed it with oil, and poured upon it a drink-offering. These sacred ceremonies were mentioned in a former part of the history, except the *drink-offering*, which was probably wine, as under the law, this liquid was constantly used for this purpose. No doubt, all these various methods of honouring and worshipping God, had been di-

vinely appointed. The old name of Bethel, which Jacob had given to this place, instead of Luz the original name, he now renewed. But after remaining for some time at this place, Jacob journeyed still further to the south, and came to Ephrath. And here occurred one of the most distressing events of the patriarch's life. Rachel his first and best beloved wife, died while they stopped here. When her soul was about departing, Rachel named her child which had just been born, *BENONI, the son of my sorrow*; but his father called him *BENJAMIN, the son of my right hand*. And thus Rachel died in the road to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem; and there she was buried, and Jacob placed a pillar over her grave, which was remaining, and known as the pillar of Rachel's grave, in the time of Moses.

The wandering life led by Jacob and his ancestors, often required a change of residence, on account of the failure of pasture and water, in particular districts. We find Jacob, therefore, continually removing his tent from place to place. From Ephrath or Bethlehem, he journeyed and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar, the exact situation of which place is unknown.

About this time, another grievous domestic trouble arose. In consequence of a great and unnatural crime committed by Reuben, he was cut off

from all the privileges of the birth-right, which naturally belonged to him, as he was the oldest son.

Jacob now visited Isaac his father, who seems to have continued his residence all the time of his son's absence, at Mamre, the old dwelling place of his father Abraham. The life of Isaac was protracted far beyond his own expectations, and that of his friends; for before Jacob left him, he thought that his end was near; and Esau, when supplanted by Jacob, seemed to think that his father's decease would occur very soon; for he deferred the execution of his malicious purpose against the life of his brother, until the funeral of his father should occur; but, after more than twenty years, Isaac is still alive. But, during this long period, the patriarch was blind, and could have but little enjoyment of this life. But soon after Jacob's visit he died, having lived a hundred and eighty years. "And he was gathered to his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him;"—doubtless in the cave of Machpelah, which was near at hand, and where his father and mother were buried.

Jacob had become the husband of four women, only one of whom, it is probable, was really beloved by him; and she was now dead, but had left two infant children, who became the darlings of the aged patriarch. Especially Joseph, the

oldest of the two, was beloved above all the sons of Jacob. Two of Jacob's wives were of an inferior order, having been the maids of Leah and Rachel, and were by way of distinction called concubines. Concerning one of these a fact is stated, which places her character in a very unfavourable light: of the other we have no particular information. To each of these were born two sons; those of Bilhah, Rachel's maid, were named Dan and Naphtali: and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid, were called, Gad and Asher. It is more than probable, that these boys would be lightly esteemed, in comparison of the sons of Leah and Rachel; and they would be likely to feel their degradation, and resent it. These suppositions, to say the least, are not improbable; but we are distinctly informed respecting them, that their conduct was such as to give ground for an evil report, which Joseph was careful to convey to the ears of his father. This would naturally provoke the displeasure of these youth, for among offenders, no cause produces more fierce indignation than to have their misdeeds reported to a superior: and with such young men as are guilty of secret crimes, an *informér* is the most odious character in the world. But Jacob appears to have acted imprudently, in showing so plainly his partiality for Joseph. Perhaps he could not help feeling a

peculiar affection for this child, both on account of his deceased mother, and for the sake of his own amiableness of character, but it is always improper for a parent to show an evident partiality for one child above the rest, since the certain effect will be to excite envy. Jacob distinguished Joseph, by making him a coat of great splendour and beauty, in which many colours were curiously interwoven. The envy of his brothers began to be manifested, but Joseph was not careful to lessen it, but pursued a course calculated to raise it to the highest pitch; for he related to them dreams, the plain interpretation of which was, that he was not only destined to be superior to them all, but they were to bow down before him, and serve him. The dreams, however, were from above, as the event proved. These things, coming one after another, produced great dislike and hatred in the feelings of the other sons of Jacob towards Joseph. Some of them only wanted opportunity to proceed to the most fatal acts of violence: and it was not long before the desired opportunity was afforded. For, having driven their flocks to Shechem, where Jacob had property, and where he had lived on his return from the east, they had the opportunity of talking with one another freely, in regard to the partiality shown to Joseph by their father; and concerning the insolence—as it seem-

ed to them—of this petted youth. Grievings of this kind are always increased by mutual communication. The sons of Jacob having been absent for some time, and no tidings having been received from them, the old patriarch began to be uneasy respecting their welfare. He determined therefore, to despatch Joseph, who was now seventeen years of age, to see how his brothers were doing, and to bring him word. Joseph, suspecting no evil, left the vale of Hebron, where Jacob now dwelt, to go to Shechem, to see his brothers. The lad being alone, lost his way and was found wandering in the wilderness by a stranger, who also informed him that his brothers had left Shechem, and had driven their flocks to Dothan. Joseph, therefore, receiving from the friendly stranger the proper directions, proceeded to Dothan; no doubt expecting to be received kindly by his brothers, who had been absent from their father's house for some time. But as soon as the youth appeared in sight, wearing the hated garment of many colours, these men began to plot against his life. "And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh, come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But Reuben, the oldest of Jacob's sons, though under his father's

displeasure for his crime, before hinted at, yet was not of so revengeful a temper as the rest; and not only refused to join in their design of murdering their brother, but had influence to prevent them from killing him at once. He said to them, "Let us not kill him—shed no blood; but cast him into this pit in the wilderness, and lay no hand on him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again." The first thing which they did when Joseph came up was to strip off his coat, which had been the occasion of so much envy in them, and perhaps of some degree of vanity in him. Next, they cast him into a pit in which there was no water; intending, doubtless, to leave him to perish with hunger in this dark and dreary abode. Having satisfied their vengeance, they sat down to eat, as though nothing uncommon had happened. But Providence so ordered it, that at this moment, a trading caravan, partly of Midianites and partly of Ishmaelites, were seen approaching. They had come from Mount Gilead, and their camels were loaded with spices and myrrh, which they were carrying down to Egypt. The thought now occurred to Judah, who seems to have experienced some relentings about the course which they were pursuing, that it would be better to sell the lad to these merchants, than to destroy his life. And he said, "What profit is

there if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood ? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, and our flesh." To this proposal they all assented who were present, for Reuben had withdrawn from the company, probably thinking on the most safe and effectual plan of rescuing the lad from the hands of his brothers. The bargain was soon made. Money was not the object, and therefore they were satisfied with a small price. Twenty pieces of silver was all that was demanded ; and immediately the helpless boy was a slave in the hands of merchants who did not regard his cries and tears : and this we need not be surprised at, when his own brothers had no pity, when they beheld the anguish of his soul. But the scene left an impression on their conscience, which was felt long afterwards, when they were in painful circumstances. Reuben, returning after Joseph had been sold, and on going to the pit not finding him there, was filled with grief. He went to his brothers, saying, "The child is not ; and I, whither shall I go?"

The only difficulty which now remained was to conceal the crime from their father. This, however, was not impossible, provided they could all keep the secret. The greatest danger was from Reuben, who had taken no part in the cruel act ;

but they might prevent his betraying them by threats, or by the knowledge which they might possess of crimes with which he was chargeable. The guilty are often faithful in concealing each other's crimes, through fear of having their own evil deeds brought to light. The device adopted to deceive old Jacob, and which seems to have been completely successful, was, to dip the coat of Joseph in the blood of a kid, and to send it to their father to know "whether it was his son's coat or no." The old patriarch instantly recognised the garment, and exclaimed, "an evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." And Jacob clothed himself in sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons, and all his daughters (son's wives) rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning." The mourning of Jacob for his darling son was, no doubt, of the most bitter kind; and his anguish would be increased by the reflection that he was devoured by wild beasts, and that he probably was the occasion of his death, by sending the child without a guide or protector on so long a journey. He also had not the comfort of depositing the body decently in the grave, with his deceased relatives; a privilege highly valued by the members of this family.

When the Midianites arrived in Egypt, Joseph was bought by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And the Lord was with Joseph; and all that was under his hand, in the house of his master, was made to prosper; so that Potiphar could not but observe that his young servant was favoured of the Lord. This induced him to entrust all his property in the house and in the field, to the care and management of Joseph: and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had. But the time of prosperity is commonly the season of temptation. Joseph had the favour and confidence of his master in an unlimited degree, so that he took no account of any of his affairs, "save the bread which he did eat." The wife of Potiphar, however, wished to tempt Joseph to the commission of a great sin. But his resolution was firm; and he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God. And when she lay hold of him, he fled from the house, leaving his garment in her hand." Vice is seldom solitary in the human breast. The person who is capable of perpetrating one great crime, will seldom hesitate to commit another, if the temptation is sufficiently strong. This bad woman, finding herself disappointed, and her pride mortified, began immediately to meditate vengeance against the innocent youth. She call-

ed to the men of the house, and held up Joseph's garment, and accused him of having attempted to degrade and dishonour her, of which daring impudence, his garment left in her hand was witness. The wife of Potiphar having already committed herself, by falsely accusing Joseph to the other domestics, could not draw back without confessing her own crime, but must go on with her slanderous charges against the innocent and unprotected youth. She, therefore, laid up Joseph's garment, which had been left in her hand when he escaped from her, that she might show it to her lord, as proof positive of the crime which she charged against him. Joseph, though perfectly innocent, was not in a situation to contend with a slander coming from the wife of his lord. It seemed to be of little consequence whether he protested that he was innocent, or remained entirely silent. There are circumstances in which a man's declaration of his innocence will avail him nothing, and will gain no belief from others. The purest virtue may for a season, be covered with a dark cloud. The only resource of the righteous, in such cases, is the providence of God. Let them take refuge under his omniscience, and trust in his protection. Let them also look forward to that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and when injured innocence shall be vindicated from every

charge. The result of the accusation was, that Joseph's master caused him to be cast into the public prison. It is rather surprizing, that he had not put him to death. Perhaps his high confidence in his integrity and virtue, in time past, and his knowledge of his wife's disposition, might have left a suspicion on his mind, that the whole truth had not been told to him; and this especially, if Joseph was permitted to relate the circumstances, as they really occurred. But whatever he might suspect, he could do no less than expel him from his house, and cast him into prison. It does not appear that he ever troubled himself any farther about the young man. In tyrannical governments, it is no uncommon thing for persons to be thrown into prison, and to be entirely forgotten. Thus it might have been with Joseph; for he had no friend in Egypt to inquire after him, or to care for him. But God, by his providence, takes care of the stranger and the orphan. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not forget this sorely injured and grossly slandered youth; for he gave him favour in the eyes of the keeper of the prison. "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the

Lord was with him ; that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."

It so happened while Joseph was here confined, that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, had offended their master, and were put into the same prison. And the captain of the guard, or keeper of the prison, gave these persons in charge to Joseph, and he attended on them. And they both dreamed a dream, in the same night ; and when Joseph came in to them in the morning, he observed that they were sad ; and he said, "Wherefore look ye so sad to-day ? And they said, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said, Do not interpretations belong unto God. Tell them to me, I pray you." And the chief butler told his dream : " Behold a vine was before me, and in the vine three branches, which budded, and her blossoms shot forth ; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes. And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand ; and I took the grapes and pressed them in Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand." And Joseph said, " This is the interpretation of it. The three branches are three days : yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place, and then thou shalt deliver his cup into his hand." But said Joseph, " Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I

pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house; for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." The chief baker, hearing that the interpretation of the butler's dream was favourable, was encouraged to tell his own, which, in some respects, resembled it. He said, "Behold, in my dream, I had three white baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket was all manner of bake-meats for Pharaoh, and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head." And Joseph said, "The three baskets are three days. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head from thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee." And accordingly, on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birth-day, he restored the chief butler to his place, and hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted unto them. But in his joy and prosperity the butler did not "remember Joseph, but forgot him."

It is well for God's children that He does not forget them; but whether they are in prison, in poverty, or sickness, his compassionate eye is ever upon them, and his faithful care will never leave them. Joseph's prospects of release seemed to have entirely passed away. He no doubt

waited anxiously for some time, to see whether his friend the butler would use his good offices with the king, in his behalf; but two whole years having elapsed, and no relief obtained, nor any intimation that any effort had been made for his discharge, he must have felt something of that sickness of heart which is produced by "hope deferred." But God, who can control the hearts of kings as well as others, sent a dream to Pharaoh, which answered the purpose of bringing to the recollection of the butler, his own dream, and the interpretation of Joseph, and his sin in forgetting his benefactor. Pharaoh's dream was double, but both parts had the same signification. The magicians and wise men of Egypt were utterly unable to give any satisfactory interpretation; upon which the chief butler related the circumstances of his own dream, and the interpretation of Joseph. Pharaoh immediately sent to the prison, and ordered the young Hebrew to be brought before him. Joseph therefore shaved himself, and changed his clothes, and then presented himself before the king. Pharaoh said, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." Joseph's reply was pious and modest. He said, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer

of peace." Then Pharaoh related his dreams, as follows: "In my dream I stood upon the bank of the river, and behold there came up out of the river, seven kine, fat fleshed, and well favoured, and they fed in a meadow. And behold seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favoured, and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness. And the lean and ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine; and when they had eaten them, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill-favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I saw in my dream, and behold seven ears came up on one stalk, full and good. And behold seven ears, withered and thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprang up after them; and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. And I told this unto the magicians, and there was none that could declare it unto me." Joseph, upon hearing these dreams, did not hesitate, nor ask time for consideration, but immediately interpreted them as follows: "The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine, and the seven good ears are seven years, and the dream is one. And the seven ill-favoured kine, and the seven blasted ears shall be seven years of famine."—"Behold there come seven years of great plenty, through-

out all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise after them seven years of famine, and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land. And the plenty shall not be known in the land, by reason of the famine following; for it shall be very grievous." And as to the repetition of the dream, Joseph informed the king, that this was intended to give the greater assurance of the thing, that God had established it, and would shortly bring it to pass. Joseph then proceeded to advise what ought to be done. "Let Pharaoh," said he, "look out for a man, discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt; and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part [of the produce] of the land of Egypt, in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the fruit of these good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land, against the seven years of famine, which shall be in all the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through famine." This advice of Joseph seemed to Pharaoh and all his servants, as wise and reasonable. And the king was persuaded, that no better man could possibly be found to set over this business, than the one who had given the advice. He, therefore, said to his servants, "Can

we find such a man as this, in whom the spirit of God is." And to Joseph he said, "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou." And Pharaoh said, "See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 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; 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." And he said unto Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." And Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH, which means, *the revealer of secrets*. And he gave him for a wife ASENATH, the daughter of *Poti-pherah*, priest, or prince, of On.

When Joseph stood before Pharaoh, he was thirty years old. Being now placed in the highest authority by the king, he went forth to the execution of his important office. That he might better understand the condition of the country, he passed through the whole land of Egypt. And as the years of plenty immediately commenced,

he began to lay up food in store-houses, throughout the cities; and the quantity was so great that it could not be numbered. And this he did, until the seven years of plenty were ended.

During this period, his wife Asenath had two sons: the elder he named Manasseh, *forgetting*; because, said he, "God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." The second he named Ephraim, *fruitful*; because, said he, "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

As soon as the seven years of plenty were ended, the years of famine commenced. This dearth was not confined to Egypt, but extended to all the surrounding countries. And when under the pressure of the famine, the people of Egypt cried unto Pharaoh, he referred them to Joseph. And now was seen the wisdom of erecting public store-houses, and filling them with provision; for the people took no care to lay up corn for the approaching scarcity. The famine, therefore, was very grievous; and the people must have perished through want, had it not been for the public granaries which Joseph now caused to be opened, and from which corn was sold to the Egyptians. This distressing famine reached the land of Canaan, where Jacob and his sons dwelt; and he having learned that corn could be had in

Egypt, directed his sons, instead of standing and looking on one another, to go down thither and buy, that their lives might be preserved. It is not improbable, that it was unpleasant for these men to think of going to Egypt, when they recollected that they had sold their brother to be a slave there; but in necessity there is no choice. Therefore, all Joseph's brothers, except Benjamin, set off to Egypt, to buy corn. Jacob's affections, since the loss of Joseph, seem to have been fixed chiefly on Benjamin, the only other child of his beloved Rachel. He refused, therefore, to permit him to accompany his brethren, lest some accident should befall him. When Joseph's brethren arrived, it was necessary to present themselves before him; for he being governor of all the land, no corn could be sold without his permission. When these foreigners, in the garb of shepherds of Canaan, were introduced, they bowed themselves before him, with their faces to the earth—thus fulfilling the dreams which had so provoked their envy. Joseph instantly knew his brothers, although he had been absent from them for twenty-three or twenty-four years; but they had not the least idea that the great man in whose presence they were, was their injured brother Joseph. Although his heart was full of kindness, yet he determined to make them reflect on the guilt of the enormous crime,

which they had committed. He, therefore, spoke roughly to them, and said, "Whence come ye?" And he said, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come." They protested, that it was not so, but that they had come to buy food. "We are," said they, "all one man's sons: we are true men, thy servants are no spies." But Joseph affected not to believe them, and still insisted that they were spies. On which, they, conscious that they were speaking truth, began to be more particular in their narrative. They said, "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." The feelings of both parties must have been very strong at the mention of this last circumstance, but of a very different kind. They were now in distress in the country to which they had sold their brother, and the remorse of conscience, which at other times they might find means to quiet, now filled them with anguish. Joseph could not help recollecting all their hatred; and especially their cruelty, when, turning a deaf ear to his piteous cries and earnest supplications, they sold him for a paltry sum of money, to travelling merchants, who, it was known, would carry him to a distant country to be a slave for life. In such a transaction, though all may consent, there are various degrees of guilt.

Reuben, we know, did not join in the crime of his brothers. But there is no evidence that Joseph knew any thing of his favourable disposition and designs. Judah had prevented them from imbruing their hands in his blood, and prevailed upon them rather to sell him than put him to death. Probably, Simeon was foremost in proposing and seeking the death of Joseph, as he is known to have been both cruel and treacherous, in his disposition; and doubtless, Joseph, in selecting one to be bound in prison while the others went home, would fix on the one, who appeared to him to be the most guilty. However this may be, he continued to accuse them as spies; and at first proposed that all of them should remain except one, who should be despatched to bring their younger brother; and accordingly, he shut them all up in prison for three days. How wretched must have been the feelings of these men, when thus overtaken with misfortune in a strange land. But at the expiration of three days, Joseph changed his plan; reflecting, no doubt, that their families must suffer greatly, if not perish with want, if they did not return with provisions. He now, therefore, told them, that one of them must be left bound in the prison, while the rest returned with corn for their houses. And one thing which he said would have been consoling to them, if they had been pious; that is,

that he was a worshipper of the true God. He charged them to bring their youngest brother; and by this proof it should be known that they were true men, as their words would be verified, and they should not die. In thus demanding Benjamin to be brought to Egypt, Joseph seems rather to have consulted his own feelings, than the peace of his father's mind, of which he should have been more tender: but it does not behoove us to judge with severity the conduct of a man placed in circumstances so peculiar. He had no evidence yet, that these men had ever repented of the crime of which they had been guilty; or, that their feelings towards him were at all changed; and he deemed it necessary to subject all concerned to some uneasiness, well knowing that it would be fully compensated by the kindness which he meant to show them.

They now began not only to reflect on the wickedness of their conduct in their cruel treatment of their brother, but also to speak to one another on the subject; and their conversation was in the hearing of Joseph, but they supposed he did not understand them, as he had uniformly spoken to them by an interpreter. "And they said one to another, 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." And Reuben said,

“Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear; therefore, behold, also his blood is required.” Upon hearing these confessions and upbraidings of his brethren, the heart of Joseph was affected, and he withdrew from them that they might not see him weep, and then returned, and conversed with them. And he took Simeon, and bound him before their eyes; and commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man’s money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way.

When they had proceeded some distance on their journey homeward, and had stopped at an inn, one of them, whose sack was opened on the occasion, found his money in the mouth of the sack, of which, when he gave information to his brethren, they were alarmed, and their hearts failed them; and they said one to another, “What is this that God hath done unto us?” And when they arrived at home, they told Jacob all that had happened to them; and when they had emptied their sacks, every man’s bundle of money was in his sack, at the sight of which both they and their father were afraid. But when Jacob heard of their engagement to take Benjamin with them when they returned again for corn, and to redeem their brother who was left bound in prison, he was greatly disturbed, and said, in the language of bitter com-

plaint, "Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." From these words of Jacob, it would seem, that he had received some information, or entertained some suspicion, respecting the true fate of Joseph: and that the first account was not true; for, he charges his bereavement of him in particular, on his sons. And it is scarcely possible, that a secret lodged with so many persons, would not in time leak out; especially, as one of them had not consented to the wicked deed of the others, and had fully resolved to rescue him out of their hands. Reuben was now the only one who seems to have had confidence to reply to the cutting reproaches of his father. And he said, "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again." But it would not do. Jacob absolutely refused to let Benjamin go, saying, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." But the famine continuing to rage without mitigation, as soon as the provision was spent, which they had brought from Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Go again, buy us a little food." Judah replied, "The man did solemnly protest unto us,

saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us we will go down and buy thee food. But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? And we told him according to the tenour of these words. Could we know that he would say, Bring your brother down? And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever. For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time." Judah, who was truly eloquent, prevailed at length; though probably want had more influence in gaining the old man's consent, than the persuasive speech of his son. And Israel said, "If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and al-

monds. And take double money in your hand: the money that was found in your sacks carry back; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." Accordingly, they went, and came and stood before Joseph. When he saw that Benjamin was with them, he invited them all to dine with him that day. But these plain shepherds were abashed when they were introduced into the house of the governor, and thought that some accusation would be brought against them, for the money that they had found in their sacks. They, therefore, addressed themselves to the steward of the house, and informed him of the discovery made of the money in their sacks; and told him that they had brought it back, and other money to buy corn. But he quieted them, assuring them that he had received their money; and told them that the God of their fathers had given them the money which they found in their sacks. And he brought out their brother Simeon, and gave them water for their feet, and feed for their asses. On their part, they got ready the present, which they had brought for the governor, against his coming at noon. When he arrived, they all bowed themselves be-

fore him to the earth. He inquired of their welfare, and said, "Is your father well? the old man of whom ye spake, is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive: and they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance." And when he saw his brother Benjamin, he said, "Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son." But Joseph was unable to command his feelings any longer; "and he went out, and sought a place to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there." And when he had composed himself he returned, and gave orders to place the dinner before them. But he and the Egyptians did not eat with them, because the Egyptians thought it wrong to eat bread with the Hebrews. The brethren of Joseph must have been surprised at the order in which he placed them at table; for the first-born was placed first, according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth. From his own table he sent them messes; but five times as much to Benjamin as to any of the rest. By degrees their fears subsided, and they ate and drank, and were merry with him. It seemed to these men, that their difficulties were now ended. But Providence had new trials for them before they left Egypt. Joseph, who began to be impatient of the concealment and constraint

under which he acted, was determined to bring the business to a speedy end. He commanded his steward, in filling the sacks with corn, to put again every man's money in the mouth of his sack, and to put his own silver cup into the sack of the youngest. Next day, as soon as it was light, they were sent away; and when they had got out of the city, Joseph ordered his steward to pursue them, and to charge them with dishonesty and ingratitude. The steward did as he was commanded; and they said unto him, "Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. Behold the money which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again to thee, out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of our lord's house, silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bond-men." The steward was more moderate in his demands. He only required that the person in whose possession the cup might be found, should be made a slave, while the rest should be considered blameless. Honesty was the strong point of character in which these men felt themselves to be upright. They were afraid of no accusation on this ground; and felt so much mutual confidence, that they had no fears for one another. They, therefore, promptly unloaded their asses, and

submitted to a search, which, beginning at the eldest, went on to the youngest. But, what was their grief and astonishment, when the cup was actually found in Benjamin's sack. They rent their clothes, laded their asses, and went back to the city. As soon as they came into the presence of the governor, they fell before him on the ground; and he said, What deed is this that ye have done? did ye not know that such a man as I can certainly divine? Then Judah, whose simple eloquence has already been noticed, came forward, and addressed to him one of the most pathetic speeches, which is on record, in any language. Judah seemed to consider that the liberty of all of them was forfeited; but Joseph, like his steward, did not view any one as implicated, except the person with whom the cup had been found. But how could they bear the thought of returning to their father without Benjamin; and, especially, to Judah, who had urged his father so much to send him and had become security for him, it must have appeared worse than death. He, therefore, drew near, and made the following touching address, "O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant, for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man, and a child of

his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set my eyes on him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know, that my wife [Rachel] bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn to pieces; and I saw him not since. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, (seeing his life is bound up in the lad's life;) it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

There is truly something noble in the conduct of Judah, on this occasion; in offering himself as a substitute for his brother. It was a degree of generosity not often to be witnessed; and the offer rises in our estimation when we take into view, that his governing motive was respect and affection for his aged father.

Joseph's feelings were so affected by this speech of Judah, which referred to himself in a way that must have touched him greatly, that he was unable any longer to conceal his emotions: and he cried, "Cause every man to go out from me."—"And he wept aloud; so that the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard him. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me: and he said, I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt.

Now, therefore; be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall be neither earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Égypt; 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. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. More-

over, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him." A more interesting scene than this is not recorded in any history, and can scarcely be conceived of. The kindness, tenderness, and generosity of Joseph to his brothers, who had so deeply injured him, is worthy of all admiration. When Pharaoh heard what had happened, and that Joseph's brethren were come, the event was pleasing to him and to his servants: and he authorised Joseph to invite his father and brothers with their families, to come and live in Egypt, in the best of the land; and also directed that wagons should be sent to carry their wives and children, and their father. They were directed not to regard their moveable property, as they would enjoy the good of the whole land of Egypt. Joseph gladly executed Pharaoh's orders, and he gave also to each man changes of clothes; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment; and to his father he sent ten asses, laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses, laden with corn, and bread, and meat, for his father by the way. When he sent away his brothers, he exhorted them—"See that ye fall not out by the way." Upon their arrival at home, they told Jacob that Joseph was yet alive, and was governor over all the land of Egypt. The news was too over-

whelming for the mind of Jacob; he fainted and believed them not, at the first: but when he beheld the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of the old man revived. "And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

But Jacob would not take so important a step as removing his whole family into Egypt, without asking counsel of God, who had hitherto directed him in all his ways. He, therefore, journeyed southward, until he came to Beersheba, and there being on the borders of Canaan, he offered sacrifices unto the God of Isaac his father. 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 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 on thine eyes." After this clear revelation of the divine will, Jacob hesitated no longer, but taking his sons, and their wives, and their children, and their flocks and herds, and all that they possessed, they went down into Egypt.

At this time Reuben had two sons; Simeon, six; Levi, three; Judah had had five, but two of them were dead: Issachar had four; Zebulun, three; Gad, seven; Asher, four, and one daughter, and

two grand-children : Joseph was already in Egypt, and had two sons : Benjamin, though the youngest, was the father of ten sons ; Dan had only one, and Naphtali had four. These, exclusive of Jacob himself and Joseph and his two sons, make the number sixty-six ; and with them, the whole number of Jacob's family, exclusive of his sons' wives, was seventy. In this enumeration of Jacob's descendants, there are several things remarkable. The first is, that among so many children and grand-children, the proportion of females should be so small. Only two are mentioned in the sacred history : Dinah, Jacob's daughter, who was either dead, or gone from her father's house ; and Serah, the daughter of Asher. Another thing worthy of remark is, that Benjamin, who is so often called a lad, and sometimes a child, and a little one, should be the father of ten children. On this fact it may be observed, that Benjamin was now thirty-five, or thirty-six years of age ; and, as to his being called a lad, &c., these appellations are rather to express the tender affection of his father towards him, than to signify that he was not a man. The word *little*, is in Hebrew the same, as the word for younger.

When Jacob came near the land of Goshen, he sent Judah before him, to announce his arrival. "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up

to meet Israel his father to Goshen, and presented himself unto him ; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." Joseph, having instructed his brethren how to behave, and what to answer, when introduced to Pharaoh, made haste to inform the king of the arrival of his father. His object was to obtain for them the privilege of dwelling in Goshen, which seems to have been that part of Egypt which was next to the wilderness, towards the land of Canaan, because Jacob and his sons arrived here before they came to the city where Joseph and Pharaoh resided. It is probable, that this region on account of its vicinity to the uncultivated parts of the country, was peculiarly suited to the residence of shepherds. And Joseph directed his brethren, when Pharaoh should question them respecting their manner of life, to confess that their occupation had been to take care of cattle from their youth ; and that their fathers had followed the same ; for by so doing, they would gain the privilege of remaining in Goshen ; since all shepherds being despised by the Egyptians, the people would be unwilling to have them come into the centre of the country, to mingle with the other inhabitants. The business was arranged according to Joseph's

direction, and the result answered his expectations; for Pharaoh, upon hearing that the men were shepherds, and that it was their wish to remain in Goshen, readily gave the permission. He, therefore, told Joseph that the whole land of Egypt was before him, and that he might give to his father and brethren the best of it; but as they had selected Goshen, he directed that this part of the country should be assigned to them; and requested, that if he knew any of them to be men of activity, he would make them rulers over his cattle.

Joseph now introduced his father to the king; and Jacob, when he came into the royal presence, pronounced a benediction upon Pharaoh. It is probable that the patriarch had the appearance of being older than he really was, for he was lame, and had passed a life of trial and trouble: few men ever experienced greater changes or more heart desolating calamities. Pharaoh, therefore, as soon as he saw him, asked him how old he was. To which Jacob answered, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." The particular spot which Joseph selected for the residence of his father and brothers, and their families, was Rameses, the best of

the land ; and there he supplied them with the necessary support, distributing food to every family, according to its numbers. The famine had now risen to its height, and was very sore, both in the land of Egypt, and Canaan. The only resource of the people to preserve them from death, was in the stores which Joseph had collected ; and he, as a faithful servant, considered all this corn as the property of the king, at whose expense it had been obtained and laid up. Instead, therefore, of giving it away, he sold it to the people, as long as they had any money to give in exchange ; and when their money failed, Joseph offered to take their cattle, which, if they had remained in the hands of their owners, must have died speedily. This supply, however, only saved them for one year ; and when this was ended, the people came to him in great distress, declaring that the whole of their money and their cattle were already expended, and nothing now remained but their bodies and their land. "Wherefore," said they, "shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land ? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh." And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh ; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them. So the land became Pharaoh's. And Jo-

seph removed the people, every where into the cities, where provisions were stored. The land of the priests, however, was not sold; for they received from Pharaoh a portion for their support, so that they were under no necessity of selling their lands. Joseph has been much censured by some persons for his course in regard to the people of Egypt; but it would be difficult to show in what the injustice of his conduct consisted. What he ought to have done if the kingdom and stores had been his own is another question. But as the agent and steward to whom this great business was committed, there is every evidence that he acted justly and wisely. And now, having fairly purchased the land, he gave seed to the people to sow the land; and of the increase he required only a fifth part for the king, leaving the rest for their own use. Surely, there was nothing ungenerous or unjust in this regulation, which from this time became perpetual. Joseph might have made all the people Pharaoh's servants, for they repeatedly offered to become such; but he only established it as a law that the king should have a fifth part of the increase of all the land, except that of the priests, for to this Pharaoh obtained no title.

Israel having obtained, as has been related, the land of Goshen, and being there supplied with food in abundance, without toil, they multiplied exceed-

ingly. And Jacob lived after he came down to Egypt seventeen years; so that the whole age of Jacob was a hundred and forty-seven years. When the patriarch found that his end was drawing near, he called for Joseph, and caused him to swear that he would not bury him in Egypt, but carry him to the burying place of his fathers, in the land of Canaan. Soon after this, Jacob being sick, Joseph came to see him, and brought his two sons, that they might receive their grandfather's blessing before he died. And they informed Jacob that his son Joseph was come, on which he "strengthened himself and sat upon the bed." "And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born to thee in the land of Egypt, are mine: as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way, when as yet there was but a little way to come to Ephrath; and I buried her in

the way of Ephrath, the same is Bethlehem." And when Jacob beheld Joseph's sons, whom he had not before observed to be present, he said, "Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, they are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them." But Jacob's eyesight had greatly failed, so that he could see nothing distinctly. Joseph brought forward the lads, and Jacob said, "I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed." And when Joseph presented his sons to his father for his benediction, he bowed himself to the earth. And he held Ephraim in his right hand, opposite to Jacob's left; and Manasseh in his left hand, opposite to his father's right; but Israel stretched out his right hand, and placed it on the head of Ephraim the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh the elder, evidently doing this not by accident, but designedly. And first, he blessed Joseph himself, and then said, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long to this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." "And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon

the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head; and Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father, for this is the first-born; put thy right hand on his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh; and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers. Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorites with my sword, and with my bow."

Jacob now called together all his sons, and being inspired to foretell future events, he went on to prophesy what would befall each of them as a tribe and nation. It is worthy of remark, that the moral character of the father seems to be impressed on his descendants, and their destiny is made to depend in a great measure on the conduct of him from whom they derived their descent.

Reuben was the first-born, but though he was "the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of

power," yet, on account of a base crime already referred to, he is excluded from the chief blessing, and is pronounced to be unstable as water, and that his tribe should not rise to high excellence or great power. The treachery and cruelty of Simeon and Levi comes now into remembrance, in the case of the Shechemites, whom they inhumanly murdered, after deceiving them, when they were unable to defend themselves. "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." This last prediction was most exactly accomplished, in the after history of these two tribes. Simeon having lost a large portion of his numbers in the wilderness, obtained an inheritance, not in a district by himself, but in scattered portions among the other tribes; and it is said that the men of this tribe travelled about as school-masters; so that they were literally scattered abroad, and divided in Israel. And all know that Levi had no inheritance with his brethren; but, having received the priesthood, his people were divided among the other tribes, each of which furnished a certain quota of cities for their habitation. Judah receives a rich blessing, and the future dignity and power of the tribe answered to the patriarch's prediction. "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies:

thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, art thou gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, who shall rouse him up. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk." This is undoubtedly the chief blessing of all; for two peculiar things are promised, superiority over the other tribes, and the possession of a sceptre and lawgiver; and secondly, that the Messiah should arise from this tribe, for thus must we interpret the word Shiloh. The temporal blessings of this tribe were also very rich. Their country abounded in vineyards and flocks; so that wine and milk were the characteristics of Judah. He is compared to a lion, which became, through all ages, the ensign of this tribe, and is believed to have been the figure on its standard. **THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH**, is also one designation of the Messiah. The maritime situation of the tribe of Zebulon, is exactly foretold, and the boundaries of its possessions, on the great sea, are described, even

unto Zidon. As this tribe was on the coast, so it is described as having harbours and shipe.

Issachar is described as having a pleasant land, but an abject spirit; and as a servant of tribute; and accordingly, we scarcely read of a distinguished person from this tribe, nor any distinguished dignity which it possessed. In most of these predictions, there is an evident allusion to the literal import of the names of Jacob's sons; as here, when Dan is introduced in his order, it is said, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel." (The word *Dan* signifies to judge.) But Dan is compared to a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels; so that his rider shall fall backward." We know very little of the character and history of Dan, as a separate tribe; but what is recorded, exactly corresponds with this description.

At this point Jacob seems to have been exhausted, and he paused, and lifted up his soul to God in an earnest ejaculation, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Then he proceeded. "Gad,"—which name signifies a troop—"A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last." "Out of Asher,"—which signifies *riches*, or property—"his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words."

But now the patriarch comes to his beloved Joseph, which as to mere temporal blessings, the benediction may seem to be the richest of all; but does not include the two things before mentioned as peculiar to Judah, namely, government, and the Messiah. It is as follows: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel: even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty who shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

The only difficulty here is to understand who is meant by the shepherd, and stone of Israel, which was to come out of this tribe. These titles apply very exactly to the Messiah, but we have seen that he was to proceed from Judah. It is very probable, however, that these words contributed to produce

in the minds of some of the Jews, a notion of a twofold Messiah, the one to spring from Judah, who should be a ruler, and the other from Joseph, who should be a sufferer. May it not be possible, that through the line of females received by marriage, into the tribe of Judah, or by some other intermingling of the tribes, Messiah may have derived his descent from both these tribes?

Of Benjamin it is said, he "shall raven as a wolf, in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

After Jacob had finished blessing his sons, "he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers, in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite; in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place. (There they buried Abraham, and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac, and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.) The purchase of the field, and of the cave that is therein, was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."

When Joseph perceived that his father had ceas-

ed to breathe, he “fell upon his face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel.” The art of preserving human bodies, by embalming them, was certainly better understood in Egypt, in ancient times, than it ever was in any other country, as is evident by the numerous mummies, which unto this day are found in the caves and subterraneous catacombs, and some of which are probably almost as ancient as the time of Joseph. It was customary to mourn forty days for persons embalmed; but in this case, the Egyptians, by reason of their great regard for Joseph, and their veneration for the aged and pious patriarch, extended the mourning to seventy days. And when the mourning was ended, Joseph informed Pharaoh of the oath which his father had made him swear, in regard to his burial, and Pharaoh readily granted him permission to carry the body of his father to Canaan; and all the servants of Pharaoh accompanied him, and, also, all the elders of Israel, and all the elders of the land of Egypt; and all Joseph’s brethren, and all their households, except that they left their young children, and their flocks and herds in the land of Goshen. “And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company. And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there

they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and they made a mourning for his father seven days." When the people of the land saw this funeral procession, and observed their bitter lamentation, they said, "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians," and on this account the place received the name of *Abel-mizraim*; that is, *the mourning of the Egyptians*. And his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre. "And Joseph returned into Egypt, he and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father."

"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph, peradventure, will hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent messengers unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin, for they did unto thee evil; and now we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him;" and said unto them, "Fear not, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish

you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly to them."

The character of Joseph, as here exhibited, is exceedingly amiable. His brothers, disturbed by their own guilty fears, could not enter into his kind and benevolent feelings. They could not but think, that now their father was out of the way, and all restraint removed, he would be disposed to avenge himself upon them for their cruel treatment. After so long a manifestation of kindness and forgiveness, it cut Joseph to the heart, to find them entertaining such suspicions of his motives and designs; so that he wept, when they presented their supplication before him. From this history we learn how troublesome a thing guilt is. These men were, for a while, successful in covering their transgression from men; but after more than a score of years, their sin found them out, and they were sore afflicted by the lashes of conscience, while suffering under the severe pressure of external affliction.

Joseph lived to see Ephraim's children of the third generation, and the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up on Joseph's knees. And when he perceived that his end was approaching, he said to his brethren, "I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham,

and Isaac, and Jacob." And he caused the children of Israel to swear, that when they removed to that land, they would carry with them his bones. "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

THE END.