

STORIES OF THE BIBLE

The People of the Chosen Land

by
MYLES ENDICOTT

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DORÉ AND OTHER EMINENT ARTISTS

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CREATION OF LIGHT

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CREATION OF THE SUN AND MOON.

STORIES OF THE BIBLE.

THE CREATION.

Many, many years ago there was no earth. There were no plants, nor animals; no sun; no moon; neither were there any people.

All was darkness.

Then God looked into the darkness and said, "Let there be light." And light came. And out of the new light God created the blue [8] sky, the deep sea, the beautiful grass-covered earth, the plants, the trees, and the many-colored flowers.



THE CREATION OF ANIMALS. (*Raphael.*)

And in the blue sky he placed the golden sun, the silver moon, and the stars that shine like jewels in the sky.

Then, in the water he placed the fishes; [9] on the earth, the animals; and in the tree tops the birds sang their praises.

"This shall be for a home for man," the Creator said; and so, one morning, there woke to life in the Garden of Eden a man and woman—beautiful and good and pure.

To the animals God had given strength and speed, and fur for protection from the wind and rain. To the birds he had given plumage, brilliant and warm. To the fishes, fins and scales.

Then man came; and to him was given intelligence, and reason, and power to grow in wisdom; for by these was he to protect himself from the elements and gain dominion over all the earth,—the fishes, the birds, and the animals thereof.

Then God blessed everything he had made; for he loved what he had made, and [10] surrounded it with all that was beautiful and good.

"Of every tree in the garden ye may eat," He had said to Adam and Eve, "except the tree of Knowledge-of-Good-and-of-Evil. Of that eat not lest ye die."

THE CREATION.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled Heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.
[11]
Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whist all the stars around her burn,
And all the planets, in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball!
What though no real voice or sound

Amidst their radiant orbs be found!—
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is Divine."

—*Joseph Addison.*



CREATION OF TERRA FIRMA. (*Raphael.*)

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

When Adam and Eve looked out upon the world round about them; when they saw the flowers and the grasses; when they heard the splashing of the sun-lit waters, and the rustling of the soft branches,—then their hearts were filled with love for each other, for their home, and for the Father who had made all this joy for them.

For a long time they wandered up and down the Garden of Eden, singing songs, and [13] ready always to hear the voice of God when he spoke to them in the soft winds that played among the tree tops.

Now, there was a wicked angel, named Satan. He had been cast out from heaven, down, down from the blue sky. And in his own unhappy home he dwelt now, alone, wretched and revengeful. And when he saw this happy man and woman, so good and pure, their hearts bounding with love to God and joy in right doing, his cruel face grew black.

"Such happiness shall not last," he said. So he crept into the Garden, took on the form of a serpent and spoke to Eve.

"Eat of the fruit of this tree," he said, "and give it to Adam that he may eat too."

"But we are forbidden," Eve said.

"The fruit is like no other. Eat! Ye shall not die," the serpent answered.



THE EXPULSION OF ADAM AND EVE FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN. (Dore.)

Then Eve gathered the fruit and ate of it. It was sweet, even as the serpent had said. Then she gathered more, and Adam, too, ate of it.

Then darkness fell upon the earth. A great wind arose, the thunder rolled, and God drove Adam and Eve out from the Garden of Eden; and at the entrance He placed cherubims and a flaming sword for no one who had sinned could dwell in a land so beautiful and free from sorrow.

But God pitied these children of his; and, although they had sinned against him, he saw that, after long years of suffering, One should be born, who would bring back to earth the joy and peace and happiness that had once been theirs, and which would have been to all their children in all the time to come, had not these parents sinned.

And so Adam and Eve went out into the [16] world to work and struggle and build homes for themselves.



ADAM AND EVE. (*Raphael.*)

By and by two baby boys were born to them,—Cain and Abel. Pure and kind and good these children should have been. But now they were born into a world of sin, and of the nature of sin they too partook.

[17]When these children were grown men, Cain hated his brother. He grew sullen and revengeful towards him. The serpent that had tempted Adam and Eve now tempted him. He listened; and one day, when they were at work together in the field, Cain slew Abel and hid him in the earth.

Then a great storm gathered across the sky; and a voice said, "Cain, where is thy brother?"

Cain trembled with fear; for he knew it was the voice of God. But he raised his wicked face towards the heavens and cried, "Why should I know? Am I my brother's keeper?"

And the voice said, "Thou art thy brother's keeper."

Then God put a brand upon the brow of Cain, and drove him forth into the wilderness, to be a fugitive and a vagabond.



STATUE OF CAIN. (*Giovanni Dupre.*)

THE CURSE OF CAIN.

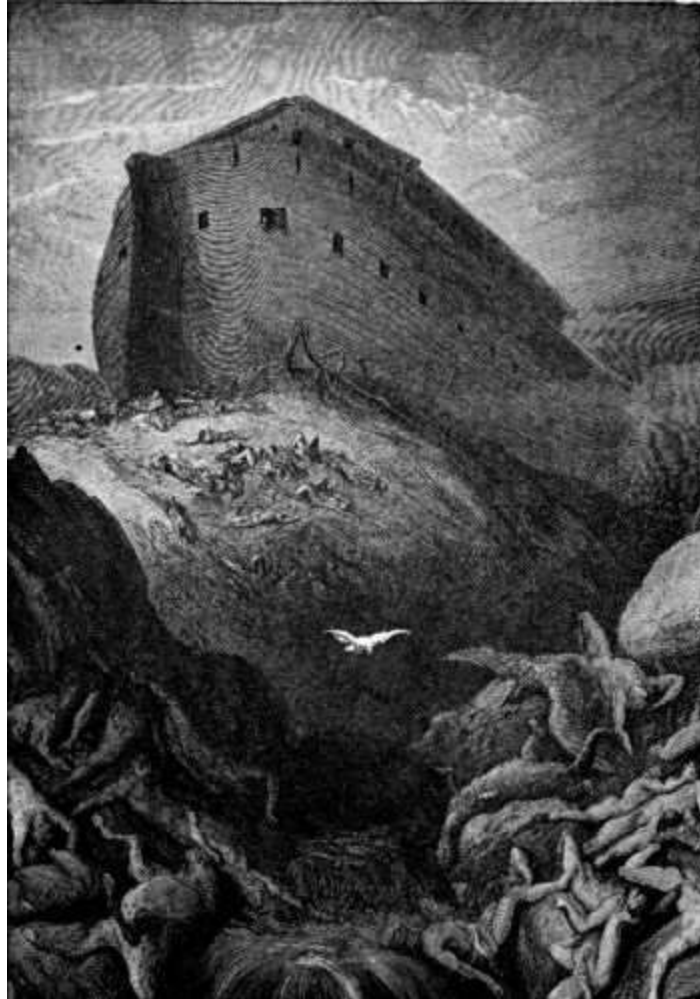
[19] O, the wrath of the Lord is a terrible thing!—
Like the tempest that withers the blossoms of spring,
Like the thunder that bursts on the summer's domain,
It fell on the head of the homicide Cain.

And, lo! like a deer in the fright of the chase,
With a fire in his heart, and a brand on his face,
He speeds him afar to the desert of Nod,—
A vagabond, smote by the vengeance of God!

All nature, to him, has been blasted and banned,
And the blood of a brother yet reeks on his hand;
And no vintage has grown, and no fountain has sprung,
For cheering his heart, or for cooling his tongue.

The groans of a father his slumber shall start,
And the tears of a mother shall pierce to his heart,
And the kiss of his children shall scorch him like flame,
When he thinks of the curse that hangs over his name.

—*Knox.*



THE DOVE SENT FORTH FROM THE ARK.

THE FLOOD.

[21] Earth shall be ocean! and no breath,
Save of the winds be on the unbounded wave!
Angels shall tire their wings, but find no spot:
Not even a rock from out the liquid grave
Shall lift its point to save,
Or show the place where strong despair hath died,
After long looking o'er the ocean wide
For the expected ebb which cometh not;
All shall be void, destroyed.

—*Byron.*

It was many, many years after Adam and Eve were driven out from the Garden of Eden that the flood came.

There were thousands of people in the world now, and they were scattered here and there through the fertile valleys and along the rivers of the country far and wide.

There were rich farms everywhere, and shepherds watched their flocks on the hillsides. There were towns and cities; many of them [22] where people dwelt together and made their laws and appointed their law-givers.

But in all these years the people had been growing more and more away from the simple, honest life that God had first shown Adam and Eve.

They had grown selfish and greedy; they were cruel to each other; they cared nothing for the rights and comforts of the community; and more than all this, they had forsaken the simple faith of their fathers and become worshippers of idols.

There was one good man dwelling among these people, many, many years before, whose name was Enoch. Now, it was not the will of God that Enoch should suffer for the sins of the people; and so, when the flood was about to come upon the earth to destroy them, God came and stood by Enoch and said, "Come with me."

[23] Now there was another good man upon the earth, a great grandson of Enoch's, and a man who had never forgotten God, and who had reared his children always in the simple faith which had been his own.

Although God meant to send a flood that should destroy the cities, and separate the people so that the wickedness of the earth might be destroyed, still it was not his wish that the race should perish wholly. And so again God went down to the earth, and said to this good man, Noah, "Build thou an ark, and into it bring all thy family, and also two of every kind of bird and beast and animal. For a great flood shall come upon the earth, and those in the ark only shall be saved."

Noah was a simple hearted man. It was a strange thing for him to be told to build an ark and place within its shelter his family and [24] two of every living thing upon the face of the earth.



NOAH BUILDING THE ARK. (*Raphael.*)

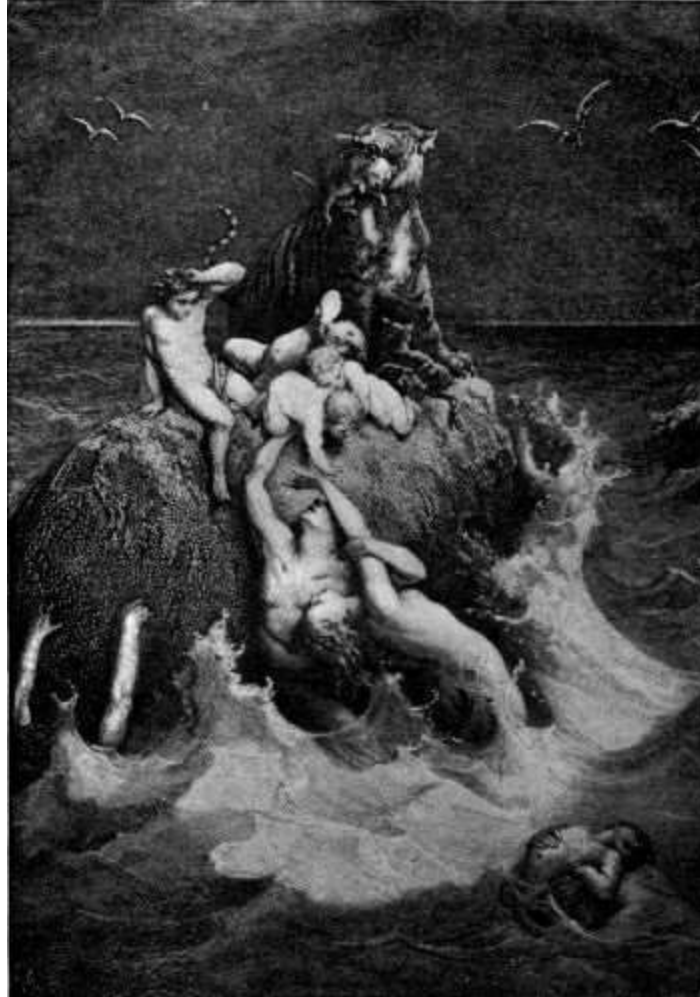
He told the people what God had said to him; and he urged them to do likewise. But the people only laughed at him, and called him a fool.

[25]But Noah doubted not the word of God and set to work at once,—his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth helping him to build an ark, and to gather together the birds and beasts and animals of the earth.

Every morning the four men set out as soon as the sun had risen, and kept at their work until darkness fell at night.

At last the ark was finished, and Noah, with his wife, his three sons and their wives, journeyed to the mountain side. The people in the valley laughed at them and threw stones at them, but the trustful little band kept on their way and entered the ark, taking with them, as they had been told, two of every kind of bird and beast.

Then the clouds began to gather in the south,—great black rolls of cloud. The wind rose, the clouds scattered over the whole sky; [26] and so black and thick were they that the light of the sun was shut out. It was like night.



THE DELUGE.

Then the rain fell. In great sheets, like rivers, it poured upon the valleys. The thunders rolled, the lightnings flashed, the rivers overflowed their banks. The winds howled, and great trees were torn up by the roots.

For forty days this storm continued—forty days and forty nights. Every living thing left upon the face of the earth was drowned. But the ark, with its inmates, was borne up by the waters in safety. At last, one morning when Noah and his people awoke, they could see that the storm had ceased; the clouds were separating, and the sun was sending its rays down through the mist upon the flooded earth below.

Then came the beautiful rainbow, spanning [28] the heavens in the west, and reflecting its wonderful colors in the great sea below.



THE RAINBOW.

Triumphal arch, that fill'st the sky
When storms prepare to part,
I ask not proud philosophy
To teach me what thou art.

Still seem as to my childhood's sight,
A midway station given,
For happy spirits to alight
Betwixt the earth and heaven.

How glorious is thy girdle cast
O'er mountain, tower, and town,
Or mirror'd in the ocean vast,
A thousand fathoms down.

As fresh in yon horizon dark,
As young thy beauties seem,
As when the eagle from the ark
First sported in thy beam.

For faithful to its sacred page,
Heaven still rebuilds thy span,
Nor lets the type grow pale with age,

That first spoke peace to man.

—*T. Campbell.*

[30]Never was rainbow so beautiful! Then the voice of God spoke from out the skies to Noah, "This shall be to you a bow of promise. Never again shall the earth and the people be destroyed by water."



NOAH AND THE DOVE (*Schopin.*)

[31]But nowhere, as far as eye could reach, was there any sign of land; there was only the peak of Ararat with the ark upon it, standing out above the water.

Noah sent out first a raven, and it returned not. Then he sent out from the ark a dove; and the dove came back after a long, long flight across the waters and fell fluttering at Noah's feet.

Seven days went by. Then again Noah sent out a dove; and this time it returned with an olive leaf. Noah knew now that the flood was subsiding, and that he might lift the cover of the ark and step out upon the mountain top.

Then Noah and his family went forth, together with all the creatures that had gone into the Ark with them.

And so thankful was Noah that he built [32] a great altar, and he and his family offered sacrifices to God in gratitude for his loving care of them.



COMING FORTH FROM THE ARK. (*Raphael.*)



THE TOWER OF BABEL.

Children were born to Ham, Shem, and Japheth; and when these children became men and women, children were born to them, until, after many, many years, the valley was again filled with people,—all descendants from Noah and his three sons.

Now, there came a time, long after Noah had died, and so could guide his people no longer into the paths of right, that the people again grew wicked and selfish to one another.

They boasted of their power, and said among themselves, "We will build a tower that shall reach into heaven itself. Then who in heaven or earth shall be greater than we?"



CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

[35]Now, God was angry that these people should have forgotten the God of their fathers, and that the trustful, humble soul of Noah should so have departed from them.

So, while all the people were at work upon the tower, now risen above the trees and hill-tops, God touched them; and behold, from that instant each spoke a language of his own; nor could one of them understand any other.

Confusion followed, the building of the tower was forsaken, the people scattered up and down the valley; and so the tower of Babel was left to crumble into ruins.



ABRAHAM.

In the pleasant valley of Mesopotamia there lived a good man, whom the people loved, and who was called Abram.

Now, the people of this valley were idolaters, and though Abram often pleaded with them to return to the faith in one God, they would not listen to him. "Go thou your way, and we will go ours," they would say.

But God would not permit it to be that Abram's life should be spent upon a people who cared not for the good spirit that Abram shed everywhere about him. So He called to him and said, "Leave this valley. Go thou with thy people to the land of Canaan. There [37] a son shall be born to you, and your descendants shall govern the land of Canaan."

Abram, simple hearted and trustful like Noah, gathered his possessions together, and with his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot, set forth across the country towards the land of Canaan.

Now, Abram was a man of great wealth. He had silver and gold, and camels, and sheep and cattle, and armies of servants.

Lot too had great wealth; and when the two families came into Canaan, Lot declared there was not land enough for them all. So Lot went on towards Jordan, where there were fertile valleys and broad rivers.

"Here," said Lot, "shall I find pasturage for my flocks and food for my servants."

"But God bade us dwell here," said Abram; and he was grieved that so great greed should have fallen upon Lot.

[38]Lot went to live in the city of Sodom, a city so wicked that God finally visited it with fire and destroyed it.

Lot was not happy in Sodom. The people were idolaters, and laughed bitterly at Lot for his religion. For, though Lot had disobeyed God, he still kept the worship of Abram.

By and by a great king besieged the city of Sodom, and stole away its riches. Lot himself was made prisoner, and his wealth was divided among the soldiers of the conquering king.

Abram, living happily in the land of Canaan, heard of the downfall of Sodom, and of Lot's imprisonment. So he gathered together his own great army and marched against the king. He recaptured the wealth of Sodom, returning it to its rightful owners, and freed all the people from prison.

[39]"Wilt thou come now to dwell in Canaan?" Abram asked of Lot. But Lot was stubborn and would not.

Then Melchizedek, the ruler of Salem, came out to meet Abram, bringing bread and wine. For Melchizedek was a priest as well as a ruler; and, as he poured the wine, he said, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hands."

Then Abram gave to Melchizedek one tenth of all his wealth, in token of his love for him; and after that he rode back into his own Land of Canaan.



ABRAHAM AND THE THREE ANGELS.

ABRAHAM'S VISIONS.

[41] Angels of life and death are His;
Without his leave they pass no threshold o'er;
Who, then, would wish or dare, believing this,
Against his messengers to shut the door.

—*Longfellow.*

One night Abram went out beneath the sky and looked up at the stars. Then God's voice spoke and said, "Thy descendants shall be in number like the stars."

Now, Abram had no children, and had his faith been less firm he might have doubted the words he heard. But he had never forgotten the promise that in the Land of Canaan a child should be born to him, and that from him should descend a nation.

And that same night God spoke again to Abram in a vision. He showed him an altar with a burning lamp. And he said to Abram, [42] "For four hundred years your descendants shall journey in a strange land and suffer affliction; but, at the end of that time, they shall again come into Canaan and possess the land."

Then the Lord changed the name of Abram to Abraham, which means Father of a People. And his wife's name he changed to Sarah, which means a Princess. And again God said unto Abraham and Sarah, "A child shall be born to you; and he shall be great among the nations of the earth."

A third time God came to Abraham; and he told him that the destruction of Sodom was near at hand, because of its wickedness.

Then Abraham thought of Lot, and prayed to God to save the city for Lot's sake.

And God answered, "If ten righteous people only be found in the city, I will not destroy it for Lot's sake."

[43]But ten righteous people were not to be found in the city, and so the angels of destruction were sent down upon it.

Lot sat in the gateway of the city and looked out upon the country. And when he saw the angels of destruction, he rose and led them to his house and gave them food.

Then the angels said, "Whatsoever thou hast in this city bring out; for we are come to destroy this place."

Then Lot went and told his people; but none of them would listen to him. In the morning the angels came and woke Lot and his wife and said to them, "Arise, and hasten from the city. Escape for thy life, and look not behind thee."

So Lot and his wife and their two daughters fled from the city; and the shower of fire came down to purify it. But when they were [44] far out on the plain, Lot's wife, still loving her old home, turned back to look upon it. Too late the angels' words came back to her, "Look not behind thee."



THE FLIGHT OF LOT.

Her feet were rooted to the spot; her voice refused to come; sight left her; sound was shut out; and in one instant she was changed to a pillar of salt.

Then Lot and his two daughters hurried on. They reached a great cave, and ran and hid themselves in it. The city was now a blackened ruin. Lot's wealth was destroyed. He had no silver, no gold, no cattle, no home—only the cave, and grateful was he that he had even that.



DEPARTURE OF HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

HAGAR.

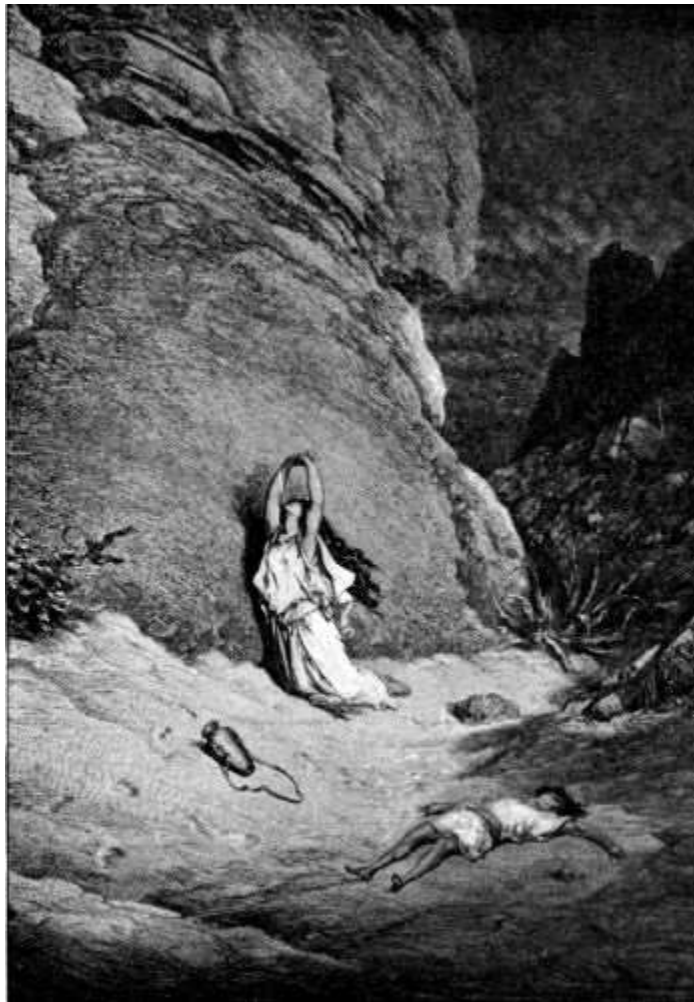
[47] Who can speak a mother's anguish,
Painted in that tearless eye,
Which beholds her darling languish,
Languish, unrelieved, to die!

It was not very long after the destruction of Sodom that there was born into the home of Abraham and Sarah a beautiful little baby boy—even as God had promised.

There was great rejoicing among the people of Abraham's household. Feasts were held, sacrifices were offered up, and Abraham gave the child the name of Isaac.

One of Sarah's maids, whose name was Hagar, had a son, too, called Ishmael. One day this boy mocked at Isaac, and Sarah said he and his mother must be sent away.

So Abraham called Hagar and told her she must go, and he gave her some bread [48] and a bottle of water, and sent her forth into the wilderness.



HAGAR AND ISHMAEL IN THE DESERT.

Poor Hagar and her child sorrowfully set forth in the burning heat; but when all their water was gone, her little one began to droop; he grew weaker and weaker, and she thought he would die. She laid him in the shade and went away to weep. The mother could not bear to see her poor boy die.

She looked above—the heavens shone still
Unclouded, bright and clear;
She listened but not fount nor rill
Poured music on her ear.
Thence once again her child she eyed—
His cheek wore death's pale hue;
"Alas! and is it thus," she cried;
"Doth God forsake me too,
And with my earthly foes combine
To work such ill for me and mine?"

The Angel of God heard her and told her not to fear, but to take up Ishmael and hold him in her arms. Then she saw, all at once, a well near her; she gave the child a drink, and soon he grew strong and well.



THE TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.



ISAAC.

Isaac grew up a fine, healthy, noble boy loved by all his father's people; and to his, father and mother, now old people, he was their joy and life. Never a day passed that Abraham and Sarah did not offer thanks to God for their beautiful child. Most carefully they taught him the religion of his people, and bade him follow it all the days of his life.

"When God speaks, obey, O my son!" the old father would say. And one day there came to Abraham, and Isaac too, a trial of their faith.

A vision came again to Abraham. And in the vision the Lord spoke, saying, "Arise, Abraham, and go and prepare an altar upon [52] the mountain. And when the altar is ready, place thy son Isaac upon the altar; for I would that he be sacrificed—a burnt offering—to me."

Poor old Abraham! There was nothing in all the world so dear to him as this child, Isaac; but although his heart was sore and heavy, the old man rose and did as he was bid. And when the altar was ready, he called Isaac and told him what the vision had said.

For a minute the brave boy's cheek grew pale; his heart beat fast. Then he permitted his father to bind him hand and foot and lay him upon the altar. Abraham lifted the knife to slay the boy; when, lo! his hand was held, and a voice said, "Harm not the lad; for now I do know that thou lovest God more than all else beside."

With trembling hands Abraham unbound [53] the cords that held Isaac, and the boy leaped down from the altar. Then, with tears of gratitude, they knelt and thanked God for his mercy. Then the voice spake again: "Because you have done this thing I will bless thee; and all nations shall be blessed through thy children."

One day Abraham's wife, Sarah, lay down and died, and Abraham bought the field of Machpelah and made for her a burial place.

"Now," said Abraham to Isaac, "it is right that you should find a wife and bring her to dwell in our tent. But take not a wife from the people of Canaan, for they are idolaters. Go rather to Mesopotamia, and there take the wife that God may allot thee."

So a trusty old servant was sent into Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac,—a woman who should be beautiful and good, and whose faith was like that of Abraham.



REBEKAH AT THE WELL. (*Goodall.*)

REBEKAH.

[55] His house she enters, there to be a light,
Shining within, when all without is right.

It was just upon the edge of the village, and just as the sun was sinking, that the servant came to the well from which the village folk drew water. And there, with a pitcher in her hand, stood a maiden, as beautiful as ever maiden could be.

"Whose daughter art thou?" the servant asked.

And the maiden answered, "I am Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, of the house of Abraham."

Then the servant was glad; for he knew now that the maiden was as good, and her religion as pure, as she was beautiful. So he [56] went to the home of Bethuel, and told his errand into Mesopotamia. He told Bethuel of the godly life Abraham had led, and of the noble youth, Isaac. And he asked that he might choose Rebekah for Isaac's wife and carry her back with him to Canaan.

The heart of Bethuel was glad; and Rebekah, too, was glad to go; for already she loved the brave lad, Isaac, so proudly had the old servant told the story of his brave deeds and godly life.

So Rebekah, arrayed in a fine raiment, was placed on a camel, and beside her walked her nurse and maids.

The old servant then hurried on, and reached the home of Isaac while yet the maiden and her companions were not beyond the limits of their own land.

He told Isaac all that had happened, and [57] how beautiful and good the maiden was, and that she was of the noble house of Bethuel.

Then Isaac loved the maiden; and, as she came near to Canaan, he hurried forth to meet her, and to bring her to his home and to his people. Old Abraham was glad when he saw the maiden, for he knew God's blessing would rest upon the union.

Abraham was now one hundred and seventy-five years of age; and when he came to die, Rebekah and Isaac laid him beside Sarah in the field of Machpelar, and Isaac took his father's place in the household.

Isaac and Rebekah lived to an old age. They were good people, and the Lord blessed them; and when they came to die, their two sons, Esau and Jacob, wept over them, and laid them, also, beside Abraham in the field of Machpelar.

JACOB AND ESAU.

We barter life for pottage; sell true bliss
For wealth or power, for pleasure or renown;
Thus, Esau like, our Father's blessing miss,
Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown.

—*Keble.*

Esau was the older son, and to him belonged the honors of the family. It was his duty, too, to offer sacrifices and serve as the high priest in the home; for such was the custom of the times.

But Esau cared little either for honor or religious services. And so, one day when he came home from the hunt, hungry and thirsty, he sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of pottage that Jacob sat eating before the door of his home.

Now, Isaac loved this son better than he loved Jacob, and was grieved and disappointed [59] that he should have sold his birthright so foolishly; for now to Jacob rather than to Esau would fall the blessings of God.

But it could not now be helped, and Jacob took up the office of high priest in the house of Isaac.

As Isaac grew old, to him was given the gift of prophecy; and whomsoever he blessed, honor and prosperity was sure to follow. When Rebekah knew this, her heart was filled with but one desire,—that Isaac's blessing should fall upon Jacob rather than upon Esau; for she knew how unworthy Esau was in spirit, and how little he would strive to honor God when the household became his own.

So, one day when Esau was away upon the hunt, she called Jacob to her and bade him go kneel beside his old father and ask his blessing.>



ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.

[61] But Jacob said, "Behold, Esau, my brother, is a hairy man and I a smooth man. My father, perhaps, will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver."

Rebekah said, "Obey my voice, my son." And Jacob yielded.

Then Rebekah took some clothes belonging to Esau and put them upon Jacob; and she put the skin of the kids that he had brought her upon his hands and upon the smooth of his neck.

Then Jacob knelt before his father, whose eyes were dimmed with old age, and said, "Bless me, my father."

And Isaac said, "Who art thou, my son?"

And Jacob said, "I am Esau, thy first born."

Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

[62]So Jacob went near to his father, and the father felt of him; and he said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

Then Isaac, thinking it was Esau who knelt, blessed him as his first-born, and said, "The Lord bless thee, and give thee plenty of corn and wine. Let the people serve thee; and be thou lord over all thy brethren."

And all this came to pass; for Jacob's children came into possession of the rich land of Canaan.

By and by, Esau entered the tent and knelt beside his father. "Thy blessing, O father Isaac," he said.

The old man stretched out his hands. "Who art thou?" he cried.

"I am Esau, your first-born. Know you not that I am Esau?"

[63]"Who was it then that came just now and received my blessing?" Isaac asked.

Then Esau knew that to him was lost the blessing as an eldest son.

The old man wailed. "Alas! alas! my son," he said, "much wealth can I yet bestow upon thee; still the greater honors are now with Jacob."

Now Esau's heart was filled with rage. He would have slain his brother; but Rebekah, knowing this, sent Jacob away.

When night came on Jacob lay down upon the cold ground and placed a stone beneath his head. And as he slept God sent a beautiful vision to bless him.

He saw a ladder set upon the earth, whose top reached to Heaven. Holy angels were going up and down the ladder, and, above them all, stood God.



JACOB'S DREAM.

[65]And a voice said, "I am the God of Abraham and of Jacob. I will give the land where thou liest to be a possession to thy children. I am with thee and will keep thee in all thy places, and bring thee again into thy land."

Then Jacob awoke. "This is God's place," he said, "and I knew it not. This is the House of God and the Gate of Heaven."

Then he took a stone and poured oil upon it and blessed it. "This place shall be called Bethel," he said; "Bethel, which means the House of God, for here God appeared unto me."

From Bethel Jacob went on to the land of his uncle Laban; and there he dwelt for many years, keeping the sheep.

But the time came when Laban looked with jealousy upon Jacob. The Lord came [66] again to Jacob and bade him take his wife, Rachael, and his children and go back to Canaan. Jacob obeyed, and, driving his great flocks before him, he set out again for his old home.



JACOB WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL.

As he neared the village of Seir, where Esau dwelt, he sent messengers ahead to tell Esau that he was returning, and to beg him to forgive the past that they might meet each other in brotherly love.

The servants came back and told him that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Then Jacob was in great fear, for he thought Esau meant to kill him.

He prayed to God to keep him safe. At night an angel came and wrestled with him till break of day, but could not overcome him. And when morn came, the angel said, "Let me go, for it is break of day." Jacob [68] said, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me." Then the angel blessed him, and he saw him no more. This was a sign from God to Jacob that, as he was a match for an angel, he need not fear men.

He took some of his cattle and sent them as a gift to Esau. He set them in droves, so that when Esau met them, and asked whose they were, the men should say, "They are Jacob's. It is a gift he has sent to my lord Esau." Each man who drove the cattle was to answer in this way, so that Esau might feel that Jacob had come as a friend.

All at once Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming. Then he called his eleven sons and Rachel and Leah to go with him and meet Esau.

When he met Esau he bowed down to [69] the ground seven times. Then Esau ran to him and put his arms round his neck and kissed him, and they both wept.

Esau led Jacob to his home and there feasted him for seven days. And when he was rested Jacob set forth again, driving his herds before him, to make a home for his people in the land of Canaan; for he was an old man now, and wished only to rest in the land of his fathers, and to see his twelve sons comfortably placed in homes of their own, with their wives, their children, and their flocks about them.

JOSEPH.

"Now let us thank the Eternal Power; convinced
That Heaven but tries our virtue by affliction,
That oft the cloud which wraps the present hour
Serves but to brighten all our future days."

Jacob had twelve sons; but the one dearest to the old father's heart was Joseph, a lad of only seventeen years when Jacob came back into the land of Canaan.

The older of these sons were selfish, cruel men; and more than that, they had forsaken the God of Abraham, and were worshipping graven images. Poor old Jacob's heart was heavy!

"Go now to Bethel," said a voice to him one night in a dream. "Make an altar there to thy God."

Jacob obeyed; and when the altar was built, he called his sons together and told [71] them the visions he had had. He told them the stronghold God had always been to him in his life, and begged them to forsake their idols and turn again to the true God.

Then Jacob went on to Hebron, where Abraham had lived, and where Isaac still lived, an old, old man, nearly two hundred years old.

It was a joyous meeting—this meeting between Isaac and Jacob. Esau, too, came, and Isaac blessed them both and bade them love each other. Isaac died very soon after, and Jacob, an old man now himself, sat in the door of the tent of his fathers.

To Joseph, Jacob had given a coat of many colors, as a token of his great love for him. And because of this Joseph's brothers hated him only the more. Jealousy burned in their hearts, and they plotted together to slay the boy.

[72]One night Joseph had a vision. In the dream eleven stars came and stood before him and bowed themselves to the ground. And a voice said, "So shall your brothers one day bow before you."

Joseph told his vision to Jacob and to his brothers. The father observed the sayings, but the brothers were made only the more angry.

Now, his brothers spent their days upon the hillside tending their flocks. And one day Jacob said to Joseph, "Go, my son, and see if any evil has befallen your brothers."

So Joseph set out. It was a long way to the pasture lands, and the boy was tired and footsore. And when he reached the place no sign could he find of his brothers.

"Tell me," asked Joseph of the men upon the plains, "where are my brothers that watch their sheep here upon these hillsides?"

[73]The men answered, saying, "Your brothers have gone to the place called Dothan, which is many miles from here."

Then Joseph, after resting, started on towards Dothan. There his brothers saw him, and recognized him afar off by the bright colors of his coat.

"Here comes our dreamer," sneered one brother.

"He who shall reign over us," sneered another.

Then the face of the oldest brother grew black and bitter. "Let us kill him," he said, "and cast him into some pit."

"No," said Rueben, "we need not stain our hands with his blood. Let us only cast him into the pit, and then tell our father Jacob that a wild beast has slain him."

This plan seemed most pleasing to them; [75] and when Joseph came near, they fell upon him, tore his coat from him, and made ready to throw him into a pit.



JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.

But just then there came along the highway a company of merchants, bound for Egypt. They had a long train of camels, and these were loaded with fruits and spices.

"Let us sell Joseph to these merchants," said one of the brothers. And when the merchants came up, they pushed Joseph towards them and sold him for twenty pieces of silver.

Then they killed a kid, and dipped the coat in the kid's blood, and went back with it to Jacob.

"O father Jacob! This coat have we found by the wayside, and we know not whether it be the coat of Joseph or not!"

The old father looked at the coat. He saw the blood upon it; then he bowed his head [76] and groaned. Too well did he know it to be the coat of his dear son, Joseph.



DESPAIR OF JACOB. (*Schopin.*)

All day long the old man wept, refusing to be comforted. "I will go down into my grave unto my son mourning," he said. But the sons cared not for his grief. It was enough that they were rid of the brother whom they hated.



PHARAOH'S DREAM.

Poor Joseph was carried into Egypt, and there sold again to a rich man, whose name was Potiphar. Potiphar was very proud of his new slave, so tall and strong and beautiful was he; and for a time Joseph dwelt most happily in his new home. But Potiphar's wife was a bad woman. And because he refused, at her desire, to do evil, she had him thrown into prison; and to Potiphar she told such stories about the boy that for a time Potiphar himself was deceived, and so permitted Joseph to be in prison, giving him no opportunity to prove to his master how untrue these stories were.

[78]Now, in prison with Joseph were servants of King Pharaoh. One morning, when Joseph went to them, they were downcast and sad.

"Why look ye so sad?" said Joseph.

"We have dreamed dreams, and we have no one to interpret them," they said.

"It is God who sends dreams," said Joseph. "Tell them to me. It may be I can interpret them for you."

Then one of the servants told his dream. "I saw in my dream a vine; and in the vine were three branches. They budded, the flowers came, the fruit ripened. Then I took Pharaoh's cup, gathered the grapes and pressed them in the cup, and gave it to Pharaoh."

"Take courage, my brother," said Joseph, "for it is a good dream. The three branches are three days. The dream means that in [79] three days Pharaoh will liberate thee, and thou shalt give the cup into his hands.

"And do not forget me when thou art again free. For I have been sold into bondage and stolen away from Canaan. Neither have I deserved to be thrown into this dungeon. Speak then to Pharaoh for me, and beg him to free me from this prison."

Then the other servant told his dream: "I had three baskets of meat upon my head. They were baked meats for Pharaoh. The birds came and ate the meat from the baskets."

"Alas!" said Joseph, "the meaning of thy dream is this: In three days Pharaoh shall hang thee upon a tree; and the birds shall come and eat thee."

Now, as it proved, Joseph had interpreted the dreams aright; for the power of vision had been with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob before him.



JOSEPH INTERPRETING PHARAOH'S DREAM.

[81]But the servant who went back into Pharaoh's home forgot Joseph when once he was free himself; and so for two long years Joseph lay in prison.

Then Pharaoh himself had two strange dreams, and no one in the land could interpret them. Then the old servant, remembering how Joseph interpreted his dream for him so long before, told Pharaoh of him; and Pharaoh at once freed him from prison and bade him come before him to interpret his dreams.

"I dreamed," said Pharaoh, "that I stood beside a river. Seven fat kine came out from it and fed in the meadow. Soon seven more came out, thin and bad. Then the seven lean kine ate up the seven fat kine.

"Then I awoke. But when I slept again, I dreamed that seven good ears of corn came out upon one stem. And soon after, [82] seven more, thin and bad. And the seven bad ears ate up the seven good ears."

"The dreams, great king," said Joseph, "mean this: There shall be seven years of great fruitfulness in the land. Then shall come seven years of famine. And the seven years of famine shall eat up all the fruitfulness of the first seven years.

"Now let Pharaoh take warning. Let him hoard up all the corn that can be spared in these first seven years. Then, when the years of famine come, there will be corn for all who dwell in the land."

Pharaoh was pleased with the wisdom of Joseph. He appointed him at once to have charge over the corn, and commanded the people to obey him in all that he bade them do. Then the king gave him a ring and a chain of gold to wear upon his neck. He^[83] dressed him in fine linen and made him a golden chariot. And the people loved Joseph and obeyed him.

Then followed seven years of fruitfulness, such as even the fertile valley of Egypt had never known before; and the people hoarded their corn until their store houses were full to bursting.

And when every house was full, then began the drought and famine; and no food grew for the people in all the seven years that followed. Great indeed might have been the suffering; for no rain came, no corn grew, and everywhere the people were crying to Joseph for food.

And the famine spread even into the country of Canaan; and Joseph's own people were starving.



JOSEPH MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN.[85]



JOSEPH'S BROTHERS.

The brothers of Joseph heard that in Egypt there was corn stored away in plenty; so they went down into Egypt to beg for it.

They came before Joseph, and bowed low before him, even as in the vision so long ago it had been foretold that they would bow before him.

"Who are you?" said Joseph; for he wished to try his brothers and see if they would speak the truth.

"We are the sons of Jacob," said they; "and we are come from the land of Canaan."

"Have you any other brothers?" asked Joseph.

"We have one younger brother at home," they said.

[86]"How do I know if you speak truly? Go to your homes—I will give you corn—and bring to me your youngest brother. Meanwhile I will hold one of you here as prisoner until you return. Then shall I know if you are honest men."

So the nine brothers went back to Canaan and told Jacob what had happened; but they did not know it was Joseph they had seen.

And when they told Jacob what the man in Egypt had said, and that Simeon had been left a prisoner, the old father lifted up his voice and wept. "Never," said he, "shall ye carry Benjamin into Egypt. Joseph ye have lost to me, and now Simeon! And if mischief befall Benjamin by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave."

But when all the corn was eaten and [87] there was no more food, Jacob was obliged to send Benjamin into Egypt with his brothers; for they dared not go without him.

Joseph saw them coming, and his heart was glad when he saw his brother Benjamin with them.

So he spoke to his servants and bade them make ready a feast for the ten men who had come from Canaan. Simeon he freed from prison, and all were received into his own home.

They came into the banquet hall, and again they all bowed low before Joseph, as in the dream it had been prophesied they should do.

"Is thy father well?" Joseph asked of his brothers.

And the brothers answered, "Jacob is well."

[88]Then the tears came into the eyes of Joseph, and he looked with tenderness upon them all. But they knew him not. And in the morning of the next day they set out again for Canaan, their bags filled with corn.

But when they were departing, Joseph said to his steward, "Put my silver cup into the sack of the youngest; and when they are well out upon the road, overtake them, make a pretence of searching them for it, and bring back him in whose sack you find the cup."

The servant did as he was bid; and Benjamin, in whose sack, of course, the cup was found, was brought back to Joseph. Ashamed, the other brothers too came back and fell at Joseph's feet.

"Weep not," said Joseph. "Do you not know me? I am your brother Joseph, whom, so many years ago, you did sell into bondage."

[89]Then the oldest brother fell upon his face before Joseph; and Benjamin fell upon his neck and wept tears of joy.

"Go back now to Canaan. Take with you wagons and horses. Tell my father that I am rich and happy; that I am governor over the province; and that I send these wagons to bear him to me, that I may look once more upon his face."

Great was the rejoicing in Canaan when the sons brought the good tidings from Joseph. And straightway Jacob and all his family set forth for the land of Egypt.

Eagerly the old father pressed forward to meet his son. And when Joseph saw him afar off, he rode out in his own chariot to meet him. They fell upon each other's necks and kissed each other; and Jacob lifted his face in prayer to God, who had permitted him to see again the son he loved.



JACOB GOETH INTO EGYPT.

[91] Then Joseph led them to his own palace, and a great feast was held.

For seventeen years Jacob dwelt in Egypt with his children, and most happy were they, now all together once more.

But Jacob was now one hundred and forty-seven years old; and when he knew his end was near, he called his twelve sons to him and blessed them all. He told them many wonderful things which sometime would come to them; and when he had finished prophesying, he kissed them all, then lay back upon his bed and died. For seven days they mourned for him; and then they carried him to Canaan and buried him in the field of Macphelar.

Joseph returned to Egypt, where he lived a long and happy life; and when he died, he too, we trust, was carried back and laid in the burial-place of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.



THE FINDING OF MOSES. (*Paul Delaroche.*)

THE STORY OF MOSES.

[93] Gently slumber'd on the wave
The new-born seer of old,
Ordained the chosen tribes to save;
Nor deem'd how darkly roll'd
The waters by his rushy bark,
Perchance e'en now defiled
With infant's blood for Israel's sake,
Blood of some priestly child.

What recks he of his mother's tears,
His sister's boding sigh?
The whispering reeds are all he hears,
And Nile, soft weltering nigh,
Sings him to sleep, but he will wake,
And o'er the haughty flood
Wave his stern rod; and lo! a lake,
A restless sea of blood!

Joseph had been dead now many, many years. Pharaoh too had died, and a new Pharaoh was on the throne.

And all these years the children of the twelve brothers had grown up and passed [94] away. Many children had been born to them; and these too had grown up and passed away, leaving their children now in the land of Egypt.

The children of the twelve brothers had been called Israelites, because to Jacob had been given the name Israel. From out the clouds had God spoken to him and said, "Thou shalt henceforth be called Israel."

Now, the Israelites had always been a people apart from the Egyptians. They had kept the faith of their fathers in the midst of the idolatry of the land in which they lived.

The new Pharaoh hated these Israelites and made slaves of them. He gave them all manner of hard work to do; and at one time ordered them, on penalty of their lives, to make for him bricks without straw.

At another time he sent out his soldiers, [95] and bade them slay every little Israelitish boy in the land, that thus the race might be exterminated.

But this was not to be. For, you remember, it was prophesied away back in the days of Abraham, that, though the Israelites should go out from their land and live for 400 years, yet again the time would come when they should return to Canaan, the land the Lord had blessed to them.

Now, at the time Pharaoh sent out the cruel command, there was among the Israelites one mother, of the family of Levi, who had a beautiful little baby boy.

"My baby shall not be slain," she said. So she took him down to the river, made a little basket, placed him in it, and hid him in the bulrushes.

Every day, and many times a day, she [96] went down to see that he was comfortable and to carry him food.

But one day the daughter of the king came down to the water to bathe. Straight towards the place where the baby was she came, while Miriam, the baby's sister, hid among the bulrushes, trembling with fear.

"See this poor little baby!" said the princess; and the tears came in her eyes. "It is one of the children of the Israelites," she said, "hidden here from the cruel soldiers."

Then the kind woman lifted it from its little basket and held it close to her heart.

Now, Miriam was a wise little girl; and when she saw that the princess was kind, she came out from the bulrushes and said, "Shall I not bring you a good woman to nurse the little baby for you?"

Then the princess bade her go with speed, [97] for already the baby was beginning to cry.

Miriam ran and brought the baby's mother.

"Take this child, good woman," said the princess, "and bring it up as your own. It shall be my child, and I will name it Moses, because I drew him out of the water."

And so the little baby was taken back to its old home, and every day the princess sent to know if it were well; and often she came herself, bringing gold for its nurse and fine linen for the child.

When the baby grew to be a boy the princess sent him to the wisest teachers in the land, that he might himself grow wise and great.

But the true mother of Moses had taught him the religion of his fathers, and had told him the story of Abraham and Isaac and [98] Jacob and Joseph. She had told him, too, of the promise of God, that sometime the Israelites should again possess the land of Canaan.

To Moses this was a wonderful story; and he wished often that he might be the prophet that was to deliver his people.

One day Moses saw an Egyptian cruelly beating an Israelite. His heart burned with indignation, and he fell upon the Egyptian and slew him.

Then Moses fled out into the wilderness; for he knew he had offended against the law.

On through the wilderness he pressed, till he came into the field where a priest named Jethro lived. Jethro gave him food and shelter; and it came about that Moses became one of Jethro's family. For a long time he dwelt among these people, tending their flocks, and thinking about his poor people, suffering in their bondage to the Egyptians.

MOSES' VISION.

Far out across the sandy wild,
Where, like a solitary child
He thoughtless roamed and free,
One towering thorn was wrapped in flame—
Bright without blaze it went and came,
Who would not turn and see?

—*Keble.*

One day, as Moses tended the sheep on Mt. Horeb, there appeared beside him a bright light. And in another instant a bush near by leaped with red flames.

The branches crackled; the tongues of flame streamed up against the sky; but still the bush was not consumed, nor did it wither.

"This is strange," Moses thought; and he went up to the bush.

"Moses! Moses!" called a voice from out the flames.



MOSES COMING DOWN FROM MOUNT SINAI.

[101] Then Moses knew it was the voice of the Lord; and he fell upon his knees before the bush. He was afraid.

"The place where thou standest it is holy-ground!" said the voice again. "I am God, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob."

"I have seen my people's sorrow. I have heard their cry. I am come to send thee to Pharaoh. And thou shalt bring my people out of Egypt."

"Who am I, O Lord," Moses cried, "that I should be chosen to go to Pharaoh?"

"Fear not," said the voice of God again. "I will be with thee. Go, and tell thy people that I sent thee. If Pharaoh disobey my command, then will I send punishment upon him. Plagues will I send upon Egypt, and I will bring out my people safely." [102] Still Moses was afraid. It was a great duty that had been laid upon him. He dared not believe he could do all that the Lord bade him to do. What if the people refused to believe him?

"Throw thy rod upon the ground," God said to Moses. For he knew the fear that was in the heart of the man, and he meant to give him courage.

Moses threw the rod upon the ground, and behold, it was changed into a serpent.

"Take the serpent in thy hand," commanded the voice from the burning bush.

For a moment Moses hesitated; for it was a terrible serpent, with fangs having deadly poison; and even the heart of the bravest man might well quail at such a command.

But Moses knew the Lord would not^[103] allow it to harm him. So he seized it by the tail—when lo! it changed again to a rod.

"Now," said the voice from the bush, "go to the people of Israel. Tell them these signs I have given to you that they may believe that I have sent you."

Still Moses feared. "O Lord," he cried, "I cannot speak well. My tongue is slow; I have no words."

But the Lord said, "Who hath made thy tongue dumb? Have not I, the Lord? Go; obey my command and I will instruct thee what thou shalt say. Take, too, thy brother Aaron with thee; and I will teach both Aaron and thee what to say."

Then Moses obeyed. Timid was he still; but the Lord gave him strength, and he set out from the house of Jethro to deliver the people of Israel. And as he journeyed towards ^[104] the city, the Lord spoke, too, to Aaron, and bade him to go out to meet Moses.

Then Aaron and Moses met; and when they met, they fell upon each other's necks and wept.

Then they told each other what the Lord had said to them, and together they went into the presence of Pharaoh and said, "Behold the Lord hath told us to come to thee, and bid thee set free the people of Israel."

But Pharaoh sneered and said, "I know not the Lord of the Israelites, nor shall I set the people free."

Instead, Pharaoh called together his governors and bade them oppress the Israelites more heavily still; to give them more work and less pay; to punish them; and in every way to do those things to them that would make their yoke still harder to bear.

^[105]The governor obeyed. Then the poor Israelites blamed Moses and Aaron.

Moses went to God with the great burden of care now upon him. He was now eighty years of age, and the care weighed upon him most heavily.

"All this I do know," the Lord said. "But have trust in me. I have heard the groanings of my people. I remember the covenant that I made with Abraham, and I will bring the people out from Egypt into the land of Canaan."



MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

[107] Yet think not thou, amidst thy warlike bands,
They lie beyond redemption in thine hands.
The God in whom they trust may help them still,
They know He *can* deliver, and He *will*:
Whether by life or death afflicts them not;
On His decree, not thine, they rest their lot.

—*Montgomery.*

God gave to Moses and Aaron power to do wonderful things, miraculous things, that through them Pharaoh might know that the power of God was with them.

Aaron went before Pharaoh, and, throwing down his rod before him, it turned to a serpent.

But Pharaoh only laughed. "My wise men can do as much," he said. So he called them. They also did in like manner, but the [108] rod of Aaron swallowed up the rods of Pharaoh's wise men.

Now, it is the river Nile that makes Egypt the fertile, fruitful country that it is. Without it Egypt would be a burning desert. The Egyptians well knew this. One day Moses went down to the waters, and, stretching his rod out over them, turned them to blood. The people were frightened.

The fish died; and no man could drink of the water.

Then Moses stretched out his rod again across the water; and behold thousands upon thousands of frogs came up out of the water. They infested the land. The houses were full of them. They sprang upon the banquet table of the king; and when he went to bed they were there also.

Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and said, [109] "Take away these horrible frogs, and I will set thy people free."

Moses raised his rod again, and the frogs disappeared. There was rest in the land again.

But when they were gone, Pharaoh hardened his heart again. He would not let the Israelites go.

"Stretch forth thy rod again," came the word of God to Moses. He stretched forth his rod, and another plague fell upon the country. The ground was covered with lice, and the lice swarmed upon the animals and upon the people.

Then Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go; but if thou wilt not, I will send flies upon thee and upon thy people; but I will send no flies upon the Israelites."

But Pharaoh would not listen. And the [110] flies came—wasps and biting insects. But none of these came near the Israelites, though about the homes of the Egyptians they swarmed until Pharaoh, beside himself with torment, called upon Moses to deliver him from the plague, promising again to free the people of Israel.

Again this plague was lifted; and again Pharaoh perjured his soul. For no sooner was he free, than again he refused to let the people go.

Then the Lord sent Moses again into the presence of the king. "If thou wilt not let the people go," said Moses to Pharaoh, "then a plague shall fall upon the cattle; and not one shall be left alive to all the Egyptians; but those of the Israelites shall be free from harm."

Pharaoh made no answer; and on the [111] morrow the plague fell, and not only the cattle but the magicians were covered with boils. Besides this, a terrible storm came. The trees were broken down, and the crops in the fields were destroyed.

Pharaoh was terrified. Famine he knew now would follow; for they had neither meat nor corn for food. And again he promised freedom to the Israelites.

But when the storm had ceased, and the crops were again growing, he forgot his terror, and freed not the people.

Then the locusts came, millions upon millions of them. They swarmed upon every bit of green in all the land and devoured it,—the leaves, the grass, and the newly-growing crops. Not a leaf nor a blade was left. And again famine sent terror into the soul of Pharaoh. And again he promised freedom to [112] the Israelites; and again he refused, when the plague was lifted, to keep his promise.



THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS.

[113]

Then came a terrible darkness upon the country,—a darkness that no light could penetrate.

"Go, Moses," said Pharaoh again. "Go out from the land to the land thou lovest. Go; but leave behind thee thy cattle and thy possessions. Those belong to Egypt."

Now, to have set out with the great company of the Israelites without cattle and corn for food would have been worse than useless for starvation would have come upon them.

Therefore Moses answered, "No, Pharaoh, the Israelites go not forth from Egypt without their cattle and corn and all that belongs to them."

Then Pharaoh was angry, and he drove Moses forth from him, saying, "Never more let me look upon thy face!" [114]



THE FIRST BORN SLAIN.

[115] Moses went out from the palace and told all that had happened to the Lord.

The darkness ended in three days. Then God said, "Now will I send another and a greater plague upon Pharaoh; and after this, he will let the people go."

So God sent an angel to smite the first-born of all the Egyptians. This Moses told to his people, and bade them put a mark upon their own doorsteps, that the angel might pass by the homes of the Israelites, and leave their children unharmed.

This the Israelites did; and in the night-time the angel came. Not one house of the Israelites did he enter; but in every house of the Egyptians, when the sun rose, there lay the dead body of the oldest child.

Then a groan went up from the people. There was wailing in the streets. Pharaoh [116] himself could bear no more. He sent for Moses and Aaron in the night time and said to them, "Rise up, you and the Israelites and all their children. Take all that you have and be gone."

Then Moses and Aaron told the people, and bade them make haste lest again Pharaoh repent. But Pharaoh's heart was too heavy. At last his proud spirit was subdued, and Moses and Aaron, with 600,000 Israelites, set out for the land of Canaan.

THE DESTROYING ANGEL.

[117] He stopped at last,
And a mild look of sacred pity cast
Down on the sinful land where he was sent
To inflict the tardy punishment.

"Ah! yet," said he, "yet, stubborn king, repent,
Whilst thus unarm'd I stand,
Ere the keen sword of God fill my commanded hand;
Suffer but yet thyself and thine to live:
Who would, alas! believe
That it for man," said he,
"So hard to be forgiven should be,
And yet for God so easy to forgive!"

Through Egypt's wicked land his march he took,
And as he march'd the sacred first born strook
Of every womb: none did he spare,
None, from the meanest beast to Pharaoh's purple heir.

Whilst health and strength and gladness doth possess
The festal Hebrew cottages;
The blest destroyer comes not there
To interrupt the sacred cheer:
Upon their doors he read, and understood
God's protection writ in blood;
Well was he skill'd i' the character divine;
And though he passed by it in haste,
He bow'd and worshipp'd, as he pass'd,
The mighty mystery through its humble sign.

—*A. Cowley*



THE EGYPTIANS DROWNED IN THE RED SEA.



THE RED SEA.

When the Israelites were gone, peace settled down upon Egypt and all things prospered. This was because Pharaoh had given freedom to the people of Israel, and so had caused the displeasure of God to be removed from the land.

But Pharaoh did not think of it in that way. He began, rather, to think that he had done a most foolish thing in allowing 600,000 faithful workmen and slaves to go out from the land. The Egyptians needed their help in [120] brick making, and in the planting and reaping of the heavy crops.

The more he thought of it, the stronger grew his determination to bring the Israelites back. He had forgotten the suffering that had come to his people; and perhaps he began to think this suffering might more easily have been kept away.

So what do you suppose the foolish, hard-willed, stubborn-hearted Pharaoh did? He gathered together a great army and started out in pursuit of the Israelites.

"If only we can overtake them before they reach the Red Sea," he thought, "we shall easily drive them back into Egypt."

Now, the Lord heard the wicked plotting of Pharaoh, and although he allowed him to set forth, he allowed no harm to come to his chosen people.

[121]A great cloud he had placed behind them and all around them as they traveled by day, so that by it they were shielded from the view of any enemy that might be lurking in the neighborhood of their march.

And by night this cloud became a pillar of fire, that by its light they might be guided through the strange wilderness.

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame.
By day, along the astonished lands
The cloudy pillar glided slow;
By night Arabia's crimson sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.
There rose the choral hymn of praise,
And trump and timbrel answered keen;
And Zion's daughters poured their lays,
With priest's and warrior's voice between.

But when Pharaoh came upon the Israelites, with his great army of horse and men and [122] war chariots, they were resting beside the waters of the Red Sea.

When the Israelites saw the army, they were stricken with fear. They forgot that God had led them thus far, and that he had promised to guide them and bring them at last, safe, into the promised land of Canaan.

They rose in terror; and many of them began to cry out against Moses, who had allowed this danger to come upon them.

"Be not afraid!" said Moses. And just then the pillar of cloud moved around so that it blinded the Egyptians. They could not see the Israelites. They could hardly see each other; for it was like a dense fog fallen upon them.

"Stretch out thy rod across the sea," said the voice of God to Moses. Moses obeyed. The waters parted, and the Israelites passed over to the other side unharmed.

[123]But when they were half across the cloud lifted, and the Egyptians saw the Israelites.

Down into the water-parting they plunged,—men, horses, chariots, all; and on they dashed in quick pursuit.

Foolish Pharaoh! Did he not know that the parting of the water was not for him? Had not he yet learned that God was with the Israelites?

The Israelites were now across the sea. They were climbing the opposite bank. The last man had reached the top. Then Moses raised his rod again, and the waters of the sea came together with a great rushing sound. They foamed and seethed, and the great army of the Egyptians sank beneath the great pillars of water that closed over them on either side. All were drowned; and the Israelites were at last freed from Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

[124] "Fly, Misraim, fly!"—From Edom's coral strand
Again the prophet stretched his dreadful wand:—
With one wild crash the thundering waters sweep,
And all is waves—a dark and lonely deep;
And strange and sad the whispering breezes bore
The groans of Egypt to Arabia's shore.

Then the Israelites halted in their march and held a festival of thanksgiving; for they were now free from their old enemy.

Then they went on into the wilderness. And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women event out after her with timbrels. And Miriam said, "Let us sing to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously."

They offered sacrifices, they prayed and sang, and danced.

MIRIAM'S SONG.

[125] Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed—His people are free!
Sing!—for the pride of the tyrant is broken:
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave,—
How vain was their boasting!—the Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed—His people are free!

Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord!
His word was our arrow, His breath was our sword!
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story
Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride?
For the Lord hath looked out from his pillar of glory,
And all her brave thousands are dashed in the tide.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea:
Jehovah has triumphed—His people are free!

—*Moore.*



MOSES STRIKING THE ROCK IN HOREB.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

[127] So led He them, in desert marches grand,
By toils sublime, with test of long delay,
On, to the borders of that Promised Land,
Wherein their heritage of glory lay.

Wonderfully they were being led. Surely one would suppose they could never doubt God again, nor Moses, the leader God had chosen for them. But alas! there were many among them who seemed little better than the Egyptians, their oppressors.

They had gone only a few miles when they came to the waters of Marah, which were bitter. They were tired, and longed to encamp for the night. Then they began to groan and to cry aloud, "O, why have you brought us into a land where there is no water?"

[128] But Moses, never failing in trust and patience, cast a tree, which the Lord had shown him, into the waters, and lo! they became sweet. The people drank and were satisfied; and there they encamped and rested.

When God gave them the sweet water to drink, he said to Moses, "If thou wilt obey me I will be with thee always. I will keep, and bless, and strengthen thee, thee and all thy people. And there shall come to thee neither disease nor plague."

When the people heard these words, they were comforted and meant never to doubt again. But a few days after this, when they had come into the heart of the wilderness, and there seemed no way of finding food, again they complained to Moses that he had led them into the wilderness to starve.

But God heard their murmurings and sent [129] great flocks of quails on which to feed them. Thousands and thousands were there of them, and they covered the ground, the trees, and the tents, so great were their numbers. The Israelites caught them and ate them, and their hunger was appeased.

"But what shall we do in the morning?" the fretful, faithless ones said.

And in the morning the ground was covered with tiny round loaves of sweet bread, the manna that had been sent from heaven; for so were the children of Israel fed in the wilderness. And when, by and by, again there was no water to drink, Moses struck a great rock with his rod, and the water poured forth.

The children of Israel had now come into the wilderness of Sinai, and had pitched their tents at the foot of the mountain. Moses was [130] commanded by the Lord to go into the mountain, while the people rested in the valley below. And when Moses had reached the top, God spoke to him.

"Go and tell the Israelites how great a thing God has done for them, in bringing them through the Red Sea and freeing them from the cruel king, Pharaoh.

"Tell them to remember that they are my chosen people, and that I will be their God always.

"Bid them prepare themselves for the third day; for on the third day will I come down upon this mountain and speak with them. They shall not come up into the mountain. Whosoever touches the

mountain top shall be put to death. But when the trumpet sounds, then will I speak, and they shall all come up into the mountain." [131] Moses went down into the valley and gave these words to the people. So they all made ready for the third day.

When the morning of the third day came, the Israelites looked up towards the mountain top. Behold, a heavy black cloud hung over it, and fire and smoke poured out from it, and the whole mountain shook!

The people were frightened, and ran and hid themselves. But the trumpet sounded, and God descended upon the mountain.

And a voice called to Moses: "Again say to the people that they shall not come up into the mountain. But thou, and Aaron with thee, come thou up into the mountain."

And Moses and Aaron obeyed. And there, upon the mountain top, they beheld the glory of God, like a great cloud of glory.

Then Moses and Aaron went down into [132] the valley to tell the people what they had seen. And when they had told the people, Moses went back into the mountain; for God had told him to come there alone, that he might tell him how to guide the great multitude that had been given to his charge.



MOSES BREAKING THE TABLETS OF THE LAW.

[133]

It was from Mt. Sinai that God gave to Moses the tablets upon which were written the Ten Commandments; for Moses was in the mountain forty days and forty nights, listening to the words that God spoke to him.

And when so many days had gone by and Moses did not return, then the people began to be frightened.

"Moses has gone away and left us," they wailed, "and we have no gods to guide us. Let us make a golden calf and set it up before us that we may worship it." And so they built an altar, and placed the golden calf upon it, and held a great feast.

[134]They were in the midst of their feast when Moses came down from the mountain, the tablets in his hands.

"What is this?" he thundered, as he drew near and heard the music and saw the dancing and the feasting.

The people were frightened. Some of them ran to hide; and so angry was Moses that he hurled the tablets of stone from him and broke them in pieces.

"Why didst thou allow this thing to be done?" asked Moses of Aaron.

"The people gave me their gold to melt, and it came out from the fire a golden calf," answered Aaron weakly.

Then Moses took the calf and ground it to powder; and the 3,000 idolatrous men among them he commanded to be slain.

Then Moses went again up into the [135] mountain, and again wrote the ten commandments upon tablets of stone, and again carried them to the people.

And now that the children of Israel might have a place for worship, the Lord commanded that the people should make a tabernacle, and that in it should be kept the sacred tablets.

So the people went to work, and every man woman and child had a part in the building of the tabernacle.



THE TABERNACLE.

The tabernacle was made of boards, with bars put across; and these bars and boards were made of shittim wood and covered with gold. Within the tabernacle, under the upper end, were four more pillars; a beautiful covering, called the vail, was hung over them; and this hid the inside, which was the most holy place, "the Holy of Holies," it was called. None could go in there but the High Priest; and he went only once a year. In the Holy of Holies was placed the ark. The ark was a chest, or box, made of shittim wood, covered with gold; and there were rings in the sides for poles to be put in when the ark was moved. The top of the ark was called [137] the mercy-seat; two golden angels, called cherubim, were placed one on each side of the mercy-seat; they looked over it, and their wings covered the top. In the ark were afterwards kept the tables of the commandments, Aaron's rod, and afterwards a golden pot full of manna, which God commanded to be put there. Outside the vail was the altar, on which the holy bread, called shew-bread, was placed, and the great gold candlestick. The tabernacle stood in a large open court; pillars of brass surrounded it, and curtains were hung upon them. The brazen altar for burnt offerings, and the great laver where the priests washed, stood in this court. There were coverings and curtains to the tabernacle and court.

Over the boards of the tabernacle was thrown a covering of fine linen, beautifully worked in scarlet, and purple, and blue; over [138] the linen was a covering of goat's hair; over this, a covering of ram's skins dyed red; and another covering of thick skins was over all. The people were not allowed to go into the tabernacle; but the priests went in every morning to offer incense, and every evening to light the lamps; and on the Sabbath, to take away the old shew-bread from the table, and to put on new. The sacrifices were offered in the court, where the people stood.

Now, when the tabernacle was set up, Moses made Aaron the High Priest and clothed him in the sacred garments of his office,—the coat, the girdle, the robe, the ephod, the breastplate, and the mitre. The coat was a long linen robe, with sleeves, and having a girdle worked in blue and purple and scarlet. The robe was a long, blue linen garment, without sleeves.

[139]Around the skirts were golden bells, which sounded whenever the High Priest went into the Holy Place.

The ephod was a short robe, worked also in blue, purple and scarlet; and around the waist was worn a girdle of gold.

The breastplate was made of cloth, and was very thick. It had four rings to join it to the ephod, and twelve beautiful stones were set in it; and on these stones were cut the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, that is, the twelve sons of Jacob.

The mitre was a linen turban; and on the front of it were the words, *Holy of Holies!*

When all was ready, the children held a sacred feast, and Moses anointed Aaron with oil.

The tabernacle established, the Israelites were now ready to move on towards Canaan.



RETURN OF THE SPIES FROM THE LAND OF PROMISE.

THE PROMISED LAND.

[141] Twelve men were chosen, one from each tribe, and sent ahead to see what manner of place Canaan was, if there was land enough, and if the people dwelling there were friendly.

The twelve men set out, and after forty days came back again to the camp, bringing rich fruits which they had gathered there. "The land of Canaan is a beautiful country," they said, "and it is filled with fruits and corn; but we fear the people there, for they are fierce and warlike."

At this many of the Israelites were frightened. Again they forgot God's promises and began to upbraid Moses for having taken them from their comfortable home in the wilderness.

[142] Then God was angry with them; and he spoke to them in tones of thunder, telling them that for their wickedness they should never be permitted to see the promised land of Canaan; that they should die in the wilderness; and that only the children and the few faithful elders should live to reach the Promised Land.

This was a most grievous punishment to the people; but in a few days they had forgotten it, and again rebellion arose among them.

Three men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, grew jealous of the power of Moses and Aaron, and asked why all glory should be theirs.

Moses, worn with the faithlessness of his people, fell upon his face and wept when these jealous men spoke thus to him. His heart ached with the injustice of it, and he despaired ever of teaching his people.

[143] The next day Korah and all his people came and stood before the tabernacle, as Moses had bid them. Then the voice of the Lord spoke, bidding the people move away from the tabernacle, leaving the three doubting men and their families standing alone.

Then there came a burst of thunder; the earth rocked and groaned; then a great gulf opened beneath the feet of Korah and Dathan and Abiram, and they, with all their children, were swallowed up.

Then God commanded Moses to take twelve rods; and upon the rods to write the names of the twelve tribes. On the rod of the tribe of Levi he was to write the name of Aaron, because Aaron was of that tribe.

"Place now the rods in the tabernacle; and the rod bearing the name of him I appoint High Priest shall bud and blossom."



DEATH OF KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

[145] And when the morning came, behold the rod of Aaron had budded and blossomed. Then the people were content; and the rod was kept ever after in the tabernacle.

For a time peace was in the camp, and more than once the Israelites came near unto the Promised Land. But it had been said they should never reach it; and so many, many times they fell back and turned away.

Over and over again they rebelled at Moses and Aaron, until the patience of those two was exhausted. They forgot themselves to ask for guidance, and once, unable to endure greater trial, they cried out, "O ye rebels! ye rebels!" and there was anger in their hearts as they spoke.

By and by the time came for Aaron to die. So Moses took the priestly garments from him and gave them to Eleazer. Then [146] Aaron died, and the Israelites mourned for him thirty days.

Then the people wandered on and on. Once they were bitten by serpents; and that they might be healed, Moses lifted a brazen serpent in the wilderness and bade the suffering ones to look upon it and live.

But now the forty years were nearly at an end; Canaan, too, was very close; and, although the elders knew that it was not for them to see the Promised Land, yet their children would; and so there was joy in the camp.

But now the death of Moses was at hand. He was one hundred and twenty years old, and had wandered forty years, leading the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness. So God said to Moses, "Come thou up into Mt. Pisgah. From there thou shalt see the fair land of Canaan spread out before thee, although thou mayst never go thither."

[147] So Moses called his people together and told them that his end was at hand. He told them of all God had done for his people, and how wonderfully they had been led forth from bondage. He then bade them take Joshua for their leader; for he it was who should lead them into the Promised Land.

The people wept most bitterly, and many prostrated themselves before the good man who had borne so much for them.

Then Moses turned and went up into Mt. Pisgah. There lay the fair land of Canaan at his feet, with its fertile valleys and rich fruits and abundant harvests of corn.

Upon this fair scene Moses gazed; then, raising his face towards God, thanked Him that the wanderings of the children of Israel were now at an end.

Then he laid himself down and died. [148] The Lord buried him, but no man knew how or where.

And when the children of Israel knew he would come no more to them, they wept too for him thirty days upon the plains of Moab.

THE BURIAL OF MOSES.

By Nebo's lonely mountain, on this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the Land of Moab there lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulchre, and no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod, and laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral that ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling, or saw the train go forth—
Noiselessly as the daylight comes back when night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek grows into the great sun.

Noiselessly as the spring-time her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills open their thousand leaves;
So without sound of music, or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown the great procession swept.

[149]

Perchance the bald old eagle, on gray Beth-Peor's height,
Out of his lonely eyrie looked on the wondrous sight;
Perchance the lion stalking, still shuns that hallowed spot,
For, beast and bird have seen and heard that which man knoweth not.

But when the warrior dieth, his comrades in the war,
With arms reversed and muffled drum, follow his funeral car;
They show the banners taken, they tell his battles won,
And after him lead his masterless steed, while peals the minute gun.

Amidst the noblest of the land we lay the sage to rest.
And give the bard an honored place, with costly marble drest,
In the great minster transept where lights like glories fall,
And the organ rings, and the sweet choir sings along the emblazoned wall.

This was the truest warrior that ever buckled sword,
This the most gifted poet that ever breathed a word;
And never earth's philosopher traced, with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage as he wrote down for men.

And hath he not high honor,—the hillside for a pall,
To lie in state while angels wait with stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes, over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land, to lay him in the grave?

—*Alexander.*



THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL CROSSING JORDAN.

THE STORY OF JOSHUA.

[151] Then Joshua led the Israelites forth; but when they came to the River Jordan, again their courage failed them.

Although they had been led through the Red Sea in the times of their fathers, and though all their lives they had been told of that wonderful deliverance, still, when now they came to the River Jordan, their hearts grew heavy, and fear took possession of them. But there lay the country, fair and beautiful. They could see it; and, with Joshua so brave and true to lead them on, they gathered up their courage, and the great company marched down to the river banks.

Again the miracle of the parting of the [152] waters was repeated; for the waters roared and rushed, and heaped themselves, like great walls, on either side while the Israelites passed through.

Meantime Joshua had sent forward two men into the city of Jericho to learn what manner of people were there; for Jericho was one of the cities upon which the Israelites must make war. These people of Canaan were not likely to give the country into the hands of a new people without a struggle. That the Israelites well knew. Then, too, these were in the days when all nations were at war with each other, and the possession of a country was always a matter of force and strength,—one people overcoming the other.

When the two Israelites came into Jericho, they sought the house of a woman named Rahab; and from her learned all those things about the city that they needed to know.

[153]But the king of Jericho heard that two Israelites were in the city, and at once he suspected them of being spies. Accordingly he sent messengers to seize them and put them in prison. The messengers came, bearing with them the authority of the king; but the two men were hid away by Rahab, and the messenger went away.

"I know," Rahab said, "that this land belongs to you; that God hath promised it to you; for I have heard of the wonderful things that God hath done for you and your people. Because of this I have hidden you beneath the flax on the housetop; and now, when your people come to take the city, forget not me. Tell your people the protection given you in this house; then shall your soldiers spare me in the downfall of the city."

Then the Israelites promised that, in the [154] ransacking of the city, this woman Rahab should be spared.

"When we are gone," they said, "fasten a red cord upon the window of the house. Then, when we enter the city, the house in whose window the red cord is, shall be spared."

At night the woman let the Israelites down from the roof of the house by a rope, and they hurried away to join the Israelites.

In a few days the army of the Israelites appeared before the walls of Jericho. The gates were closed, and the king's armies within were ready to resist the attack.

What were the Israelites to do? Should they attack the city with battering rams and meet the people with spears and swords?

This was the way of besieging cities in those days; and it was for this kind of an [155] attack that the people within were prepared. But this was not the way the Israelites were to do their work; for God had told them, even while in the wilderness, that the walls of Jericho were to be beaten down in a way most strange. They were to take their Ark up to the walls of the city. They were to draw up their soldiers in line. The priests were to bear the Ark, and together all were to march around the city, the priests blowing their trumpets as they passed before the Ark.

Not a spear was to be thrown; not a sword was to be drawn. For seven days they were to do this; but on the seventh day they were to march seven times around the city. Then, amid the shouting of the people and the blowing of the trumpets, the walls would fall; and so the city would lie open before them. All this the Israelites did; and on the seventh [156] day it came about even as Joshua said it should,—the walls fell with a terrible crash. Then the Israelites marched in and took the city. The house of Rahab they did not forget. They brought her and all her family out from the burning city and placed her in safety among their own women and children.



THE WALLS OF JERICHO FALLING DOWN.

Great loads of gold and silver and brass and iron they took from the city. All of this they saved for the building of a temple; for they had been warned to save no part of the city's wealth for their own use.

In all this the Israelites obeyed, save one man. He, Achan, thinking no one saw him, took some of the riches and carried them away and hid them. Now, Joshua knew nothing of all this; but the next day, when the army went against the little city of Ai, behold the Israelites were driven back defeated. [158] Even Joshua's heart was heavy. He could not see why it should have been; but when he knelt before God, God said to him, "Never can I fight for my people while there is sin among them. Go find Achan; he hath hidden gold in the tent. Accuse him before the people and put him to death. Then again shall success be with the Israelites."

Joshua went before his people and told them what God had said to him. Then Achan was called before the Israelites and put to death.

"Now," said Joshua, "let us go against the city of Ai again." They went; and this time the city was taken, and the people bowed before the power of the Israelites, acknowledging them as their masters. [159]

THE GIBEONITES.

The sun stood still, the moon it stayed
Till Israel's vengeance was allayed
Upon his enemy,
Pausing all that awful day
And glowing brilliantly.

While these cities were being taken, the Gibeonites had heard of the coming of the Israelites and of their great conquests. Now, these Gibeonites were a strong people; and so, when they heard these things, they made preparations for the attack which they feared. First, they sent messengers to Joshua.

"We wish to make peace with you," the messenger said.

"If you are Canaanites," said Joshua, "we can make no peace with you."

"But we are not Canaanites," the messengers [160] said. "Behold we come from a great distance. Do you not see how dry our bread is, and how broken our bottles are? Our shoes, too, see how they are worn! All these were new when we began our journey; but we have been so long on the road, they are worn. We have heard of your coming, as have all the kings round about our country. We know how great is your power; and that is why we have come to beg you to be at peace with our people."

Now, this story was in no wise true; but Joshua believed it, and the Gibeonites went away pleased indeed that they had succeeded so well.

But a few days after, Joshua learned that these Gibeonites had been untrue to him, and that they dwelt in the very midst of the country of Canaan.

[161]"Why have you deceived us?" he asked of their leaders.

The leaders could make no reply. They could only say, "But you promised not to slay us."

"That is true," Joshua replied. "And we will not break our promise. We will not slay you; but we will take all prisoners, and you shall serve us as slaves all the days of your life."

The Gibeonites were heavy hearted indeed. They had fallen into their own pit; for they would rather have died than become slaves. But now there was no hope for them, and they could only bow their proud heads beneath the yoke.

Hardly had the Israelites and the Gibeonites made peace with each other in this way, when down came the Amorites upon the Gibeonites to fight them.



JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL.

[163] The Gibeonites, frightened at the appearance of the great army, fled to Joshua for help.

"We shall protect you as our servants and slaves," was the answer. And so, when the Amorites came, it was the Israelites that marched out against them.

A terrible battle followed. For a time no one could have told which army was to be victorious. Many were falling among the Amorites; still their army was pressing forward.

If only the day would not come to an end! If only the darkness would not fall! If only they might keep on with the battle till the Amorites, exhausted, should fall back! To give up the battle and begin again in the morning would be to give the Amorites opportunity to regain strength and courage.

Then the thought came to Joshua, "Why [164] *should* night come? Why should not the sun and the moon stand still in the heavens until this battle is finished and the Amorites are driven back?"



DESTRUCTION OF THE ARMY OF THE AMORITES.

[165]

And as he thought, lo! the prayer was answered, and the sun and the moon did stand still.

Hour after hour passed; the two armies fought on; the Amorites grew weaker and weaker. Why did not the sun go down? Why did the darkness not come to give them rest?

At last the Amorites could hold out no longer. The army turned and fled. The Israelites pursued. The kings hid themselves in a great cave. But Joshua pursued these still. He rolled great stones up before the cave and held them there prisoners. Then, when the Amorites had been scattered, Joshua [166] came back to the cave, brought out the offending kings and slew them all.

So the contention for the possession of the land of Canaan went on. One by one the tribes were overcome; and at last Canaan was in the control of the Israelites.

But now Joshua had grown to be an old man. He knew that the end of his life was near at hand. So he called the people together and told them, even as Moses had told them, of all the wonderful

things that had happened to God's chosen people in all the four hundred years since they had come out of Egypt.

Then he appealed to them in the name of God, who had led them safely into the land of Canaan; he begged them never to forget that they were the Children of Israel, and that the religion of the people into whose land they had come, an idolatrous religion, was not for them. [167] Then the people all promised to be true to the religion of their fathers; and Joshua, taking the great book of the law, wrote their promise in it. More than that, he rolled a great stone up beneath an oak tree and said, "Look at the great stone. It has heard your promise that you will serve always the one God. Guard that stone; and let it be a remembrance to you of the promise you have made."

The people went away sad at heart; for they knew they should never look again upon their patient leader and teacher, who had been so faithful and true to them in all the years he had been with them.



DEBORAH

EHUD AND DEBORAH.

[169] For a few years the Israelites remembered their promise; but alas! they were very prone to sink back into the idolatry which surrounded them. And it was not very long before they were worshipping idols, even as were the heathen tribes round about them.

And again God sent cruel enemies to fight against them; again they cried to Him, and He heard them. For eighteen years they served Eglon, the cruel, wicked king of Moab. But at last God sent the Israelites a man to help them, whose name was Ehud.

Ehud told them to send a present to Eglon, and he would be its bearer. The Israelites did this, and Ehud, making a dagger, [170] and hiding it under his clothes, went to Moab. When he came to the king he said, "I have a secret to tell and must see the king alone." So Eglon sent away his servants. When they were alone, Ehud took out his dagger and thrust it into the king's body. Then Ehud ran out from the room, locked the doors after him, and so escaped.

No one saw Ehud go; and when the servants found the doors locked, they thought their master had fallen asleep, and so they made no attempt to go in. Many hours passed. At last the servants began to wonder why the king did not send for them. Night came on. Still the king did not awake; and so, at last, they took a key and opened the door.

What did they see? There lay the king upon the ground,—dead!

Ehud, meantime, had come back again, [171] bringing many soldiers with him; and the Israelites fought against the Moabites and conquered them.

For some time after this the people held firmly to their faith, and Ehud led them. But Ehud died; and then the Israelites again rebelled against God. Again God, to punish them, sent Jabin, king of Canaan, to fight against Israel; and he conquered them. This king was very cruel, and they suffered much under his power for twenty long, terrible years. Now, there was a very good woman living at that time, named Deborah. She dwelt under a palm tree, between Ramah and Bethel. There she prayed and sang, and talked to, and taught all the people who came to see her. Deborah was a very wise woman and had the gift of prophecy. And so it came about that, when the Israelites began to cry to God, [172] Deborah, at His command, sent for a brave man named Barak, and said to him, "Go now and call men out of the tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali, and take them to fight against Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army. God promises to give us the victory." Barak said, "If thou wilt go with me, I will go." So Deborah, with Barak and 10,000 men, went to fight against Sisera. "Do not kill Sisera," Deborah said; "for God will give the wicked captain into the hands of a woman."

So Barak and his army went and fought against Sisera. Very soon the Israelites won the victory, for it was as Deborah had prophesied. Then Sisera came down from his chariot and fled from Barak.

There was a man named Heber, who was at peace with Jabin; and Sisera ran to Heber's tent for safety. When the man's wife, [173] Jael, saw Sisera coming, she went out to meet him and said, "Come in, come in, and fear not." So Sisera came in and lay down; and Jael covered him with a mantle. He asked for water; and she gave him milk, which he drank; and then he lay down again.

"Stand by the door," he said, "and if any one ask if I am here, say 'No.'" Then Sisera fell asleep, for he was weary with fighting and running so far; and when he was asleep, then Jael went very softly, took a large nail and a hammer, and hammered the nail into Sisera's head and down into the ground.

After this war forty years passed most happily and safely. The Israelites lived in the fear of God, and he kept them in peace and gave them rest from their enemies.

But when the forty years were passed, the Israelites again loved evil; and again, too, sorrows and punishments came upon them.

[174]First, the Midianites came to be their enemies. They came in great numbers; they brought their camels and their cattle with them, and pitched their tents in the land of the Israelites. The Israelites left their pleasant houses and fields, and ran to hide in dens and caves, for fear of the cruel Midianites.

The pleasant land became barren and desolate. Then the Israelites cried again to the Lord, for they knew that He could deliver them, and He alone.

God sent an answer to them by a prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, 'I brought you safely out of Egypt and delivered you from the cruel Egyptians, and drove away your enemies, and gave you the land of Canaan for a possession; and I commanded you to obey and serve Me, and not to worship the idols of the people who live near you; but you have not obeyed My command.'" Then the prophet went away. [175]

THE STORY OF GIDEON.

Now, there was a man (living at Ophrah,) whose son was named Gideon. Gideon was a true servant of the Lord; but his father was an idolater and a worshipper of Baal. One day Gideon was threshing wheat in a hidden place, lest the idolaters should see him and come and take his corn from him. Gideon's heart was full of sorrowful thoughts as he threshed the wheat; but, as he looked up, he saw an angel near him, sitting beneath an oak. And Gideon heard him say, "The Lord is with thee."

When Gideon heard the angel speak, he looked up with wonder. "Is the Lord with us?" he cried. "Then why does He let the [176] Midianites come and destroy us? Why does He not work miracles for us, as He did for our fathers, and deliver us from our enemies?" But the angel said again, "Go now, I send thee to save Israel from the Midianites."

Gideon was frightened; he had faith, but his faith was weak and small. He could not believe that he could save Israel.

"How can I save my brethren?" he said. "I am poor; all my family are poor, and I am least in my father's house." But the angel said again, "I will be with thee; I will give thee power to smite the Midianites."

Gideon wondered. Could it be an angel that was talking to him? An angel could give him power to conquer his enemies!

"Wilt thou give me a sign that I may know who thou art?" he asked. "Stay till I come again, and bring my offering with me."

[177]Then Gideon hurried away and made ready a kid and cakes of flour. He put the flesh into a basket and the broth into a pot, and brought all out to the oak tree where the angel waited.

Now, the angel did not need food to strengthen him, but he accepted Gideon's offering, and told him to lay the flesh and cakes upon the rock, and to pour out the broth. Gideon hardly knew why, but he obeyed; and then the angel of the Lord touched with his staff the flesh and the cakes, and fire came out of the rocks and consumed them.

The angel went away. Gideon knew not how or where; but he knew who the angel was. Then Gideon cried with fear, "O, Lord God! for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face."

And a voice answered, "Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die;" and [178] Gideon named the place, "Jehovah-shalom," or "The Lord send peace;" and he built an altar there to the Lord.

Again the angel of the Lord God spoke to him. "Take thy father's bullock and throw down the altar of Baal which thy father has. Build there an altar unto the Lord and offer the bullock in sacrifice upon it."

Now, Gideon's family all worshipped this Baal, and they would be very angry if the idol altar was thrown down; it might be they would kill Gideon. But Gideon rose and went at once to destroy Baal's altar, lest the men of the city should try to prevent him if he waited until morning came.

When the people rose next day, they wondered to see Baal's altar thrown down, the new altar to God ready built, and a bullock offered upon it. "Who did all this?" they asked.[179] Gideon was

not afraid to confess the truth. He was bold, because he knew God was with him. But the people were angry with Gideon. "Bring out thy son," they said to Joash, "that we may slay him!"

Before Gideon began to fight, he prayed; "Give me now a sign, that I may know that Thou wilt be merciful to the Israelites. I will put a fleece of wool upon the ground to-night; in the morning I will look at it, and if I see the fleece wet with dew, and all the ground dry, then I shall know that Thou dost promise to save us from our enemies."

Gideon put the fleece of wool upon the ground, for God had heard his prayer. In the morning, when Gideon looked at it, it was so wet that he wrung from the fleece a bowlful of water, though there was no dew upon the ground.



GIDEON CHOOSING HIS SOLDIERS.

[181] The next night Gideon again tried the fleece. "To-night let the fleece alone be dry, and all the ground wet, and then I shall know that Thou wilt save Israel," he prayed. The next morning all the ground was wet with dew, and the wool alone was dry. And now Gideon was convinced. He asked no further proof.

Gideon had many thousand men to fight with him. But God wished to teach the Israelites that He alone could save them. So he told Gideon to say to the soldiers, "Those who are afraid may return home and not come into the battle." Gideon did as he was told; and 22,000 of the soldiers, struck with fear, went away, leaving only 10,000 to meet the foe. But God said, "I do not want even so many; if all these soldiers go the Israelites will say that their own power and courage gained the victory. Bring the 10,000 men [182] down to the water and let them drink. Notice the men who lap

the water like a dog and put them on one side; and the men who kneel down to drink water, put on the other side; and I will tell thee whom I will choose to fight against the Midianites."

Gideon obeyed. He brought the soldiers to the water and told them to drink. Three hundred of them lapped, putting their hands to their mouths; but most of them stooped down on their knees to drink. Then God said, "By the 300 men who lapped the water will I save you; let all the others return home."

Gideon had a very, very small army now. The Midianites were in great numbers, the Israelites only 300. It was the night before the battle. To-morrow Gideon and his army must fight against their cruel enemies, the Midianites.

[183]When Gideon was lying down to rest, and his 300 soldiers by him, he heard a voice calling to him. Was it an enemy come to kill him and his little army? No, it was the voice of God. "Arise, go down to the army of the Midianites," the voice said. "If thou fear to go alone, take Phurah, thy servant, with thee. Go, and hear what the Midianites are saying; for afterwards thou shalt feel strengthened to go down to the army."

So Gideon and his servant, Phurah, went as God had commanded. The tents of the Midianites and the Amalekites covered the whole valley. The soldiers were sleeping in the tents, and their camels lay by them. So many were they that Gideon could not count them. But the Midianites were not all asleep; some were making ready for the morrow, some were talking; but none of them saw Gideon and his servant.

[184]There were two men, Midianites, talking together, and Gideon and Phurah went near to them. "I dreamed," said one, "that I saw a cake of bread tumble into the hosts of the Midianites; I saw it fall upon a tent, and the tent was overturned and thrown down." "That cake," his friend answered, "is Gideon, the commander of the Israelites; he will fall upon us and destroy our army, because God is with him."

When Gideon heard this tale, he rejoiced. He now felt sure of the victory. Then he and Phurah went back to the Israelites, and Gideon said, "Arise, for God gives the Midianites into our hands."

Then Gideon divided his army into three companies, and gave to every man a trumpet and a pitcher, with a lamp in every pitcher. They had no swords, nor spears, nor bows, [185] nor arrows. Then Gideon said, "Come with me and do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, you must blow too, and cry, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'" It was still night when Gideon went again with his soldiers to the camp of the Midianites. The soldiers stood around the camp, and when Gideon commanded, they blew with the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and cried aloud, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The Midianites heard the noise and the shout, and were struck with fear. They knew not what to do. They ran like mad men. They fell one upon another, killing their own friends, and fathers, and brothers; and those who were not killed fled away; and the Israelites followed after these and killed them.

The Israelites were grateful for what Gideon had done for them. "Come and rule [187] over us," they said, "and be our king, and we will serve and obey thee." But Gideon was not an ambitious man; he wanted neither power, riches, nor possessions. So, when the Israelites asked Gideon to be their king, he said, "No, I do not wish to rule over you; the Lord only is your king; obey Him. But give me if ye will the earrings and gold chains that were taken from the enemies."



THE MIDIANITES PUT TO FLIGHT.

"Yes, we will willingly give them," the people said. And they spread out a large garment and threw into it all the earrings and chains they had, and with them purple garments and many more beautiful things. Gideon made them into an ephod like Aaron's ephod; and this he took into his own city Ophrah. The ephod Gideon made in remembrance of his victory. After Gideon was dead, the Israelites again forgot God, and worshipped idols.



DEATH OF ABIMELECH.

ABIMELECH.

[189] Gideon had many sons, but they were not like him. The name of one was Abimelech. He was a most ambitious man, and aspired to be king. He went to Shechem and asked to be made king over that city. The men of Shechem were pleased with Abimelech, and they attended to what he said, and gave him much gold, promising to make him king.

Then he went home to Ophrah, and, cruel, ambitious man that he was, he called his brothers together and killed them,—all but the youngest, named Jotham, who hid himself and escaped. Now, why did Abimelech kill his brothers? It was because they might wish to reign too, and he was determined to reign alone.

[190]The men of Shechem made Abimelech king. But the people in that city soon grew tired of their king. He was cruel and greedy and unjust. They rebelled, and refused to obey Abimelech. So Abimelech came and fought against them and conquered them. Some of the Shechemites escaped to an idol temple, and hid there. But Abimelech and his soldiers cut down the boughs from the tree and put the boughs under the place where the people were hid, and set it on fire; so that the people were all burned to death.

Then Abimelech went to a city named Thebez, and tried to take it. The people in Thebez had gone up to a high, strong tower. Abimelech was under the tower fighting against it, when a woman on the top of the tower took a large mill-stone and threw it down upon Abimelech's head. Abimelech was [191] severely crushed by the stone. When he knew he must soon die, he cried to a soldier near him, "Thrust thy sword into me and slay me; for I will not let the people say that a woman killed me." So the soldier thrust his sword into him, and Abimelech fell down dead.

At this time there was a man in Gilead named Jephthah. He was most brave and warlike; but his brothers hated him. They would not let him live with them, but sent him away. Some years after, when the Ammonites came and fought against Israel, the men of Gilead were frightened, and they sent for Jephthah to help them conquer their enemies. When Jephthah heard what the messengers said, he answered, "Why do you come to me now when you are in trouble?" But the Gileadites promised to make Jephthah [192] their captain if he would come; so Jephthah forgave their past unkindness and went to their aid.

The Ammonites were very wicked people. They had always been enemies to Israel. Jephthah told the Ammonites that God had commanded that they be destroyed, and had promised to give their possessions to the Israelites; but they would not listen. Then Jephthah made ready to fight against them. But before he went to the battle, he asked God's help, and made this promise: "If Thou wilt give me the victory, then the first thing I meet at the door of my house, when I return in peace, shall be the Lord's; and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering."

Then Jephthah went into battle; the Ammonites were conquered, and very many of them killed. But when the battle was [193] ended, Jephthah went home again to Mizpah. Jephthah had one child, a daughter, who was very dear to him. This little daughter loved her father, and when she heard of the victory, she knew she should soon see her dear father. So she waited and watched for him, and when she saw him coming, she ran out to meet him, dancing and singing for joy. Alas! alas! Jephthah rent his clothes and cried, "O my daughter, my daughter! I have made a promise to the Lord, and I cannot break my vow!" But the daughter said, "My father, do not weep; if thou hast

made a vow to the Lord, do as thou hast promised. God has been very merciful to us, and I am ready and willing to help bear all thou hast vowed to do."

Jephthah thought now of his foolish vow, and O how sorry he was that he had made it! He must give up his dear daughter and [194] never see her again! But when he told her what he had vowed, she asked to be allowed to go upon the mountains to mourn there with her friends. After two months she came home again, and Jephthah did with her as he had vowed.

Though the virgins of Salem lament,
Be the judge and the hero unbent;
I have won the great battle for thee,
And my father and country are free.
When this blood of thy giving has gushed,
When the voice that thou lovest is hushed,
Let my memory still be thy pride,
And forget not I smiled as I died.

THE STORY OF SAMSON.

Would any strive with Samson for renown,
Whose brawny arm can strike most pillars down?
Preserve he then unstained in his breast
A milk-white conscience; let his soul be blest
With simple innocence; this sevenfold shield
No dart shall pierce; no sword shall make it yield;—
Well guarded with himself he walks along,
When most alone, he stands a thousand strong.

After this Jephthah judged Israel six years and then died. And now again the people began to sin against the Lord; and He, to recall them again, gave them up to their enemies, the Philistines, for forty years. This was a long time to be in sorrow and trouble; but did not the Israelites deserve their punishment?

There was a good man in the tribe of Dan, named Manoah. One day an angel of [196] the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Soon God will give thee a son, who shall deliver Israel from the Philistines. No razor must come upon him, for he shall be a Nazarite unto God." Now, the Nazarites were people who had made a vow to give themselves to God. They did not drink wine, nor any strong liquor; and they never cut their hair or shaved their beards.

Manoah's wife wondered very much to hear what the angel said, and she went and told her husband. It seemed very strange; still Manoah knew that nothing was too wonderful for God to do; and he was thankful for God's promise to deliver Israel. But Manoah, fearful lest he and his wife might forget what the angel had said and not bring up their child rightly, prayed God to send the angel to them again.

[197]A few days after, the woman was sitting alone in the field, and she looked up and saw the angel again standing by her. She ran and called her husband; and Manoah, following his wife, came to the angel and asked, "What shall we do to the child when he is born?" The angel repeated what he had told the woman before. Then Manoah said, "Stay here till we have made ready a kid for thee." The angel answered, "I will not eat of thy bread; and if thou wilt offer a sacrifice, offer it to God."

Manoah wondered who the angel was; so he asked again, "What is thy name?" But the angel answered, "Why dost thou ask my name? It is a very secret and a very wonderful name." Then Manoah offered a kid in sacrifice to the Lord upon the rock, and God sent fire upon the sacrifice to consume it.

[198]Manoah and his wife looked at the angel, and they saw him going up to Heaven in the flame of fire. Then they both fell upon their faces in holy fear and wonder; and Manoah said, "Now we shall die, because we have seen God." The woman said to her husband, "Do not be afraid. God has shown us wonderful things; he has accepted our sacrifice, and surely he cannot wish to hurt or frighten us."

Manoah and his wife never again saw the angel of the Lord; but God remembered His promise, and very soon there came to them a little son, whom they called Samson. Samson's parents were

very careful to attend to God's commands regarding him. They remembered that he was to be given to God; that he was to be a Nazarite; that he must drink no wine; that he must not shave his head, nor cut his hair.

[199]Samson grew to be wonderfully strong. Great strength had been given him because he had much to do; for he was to deliver Israel from the Philistines. When Samson was grown up, he went to Timnath with his father and mother, to marry a young woman who was a Philistine. As he passed the vineyards at Timnath, a lion rushed out of the woods and roared at him. But Samson was a very bold man. He ran at the lion and tore it in pieces, without stick, or sword, or spear—by his own great strength alone. Samson said nothing of this to his father or mother, but went on and came to Timnath.

After a time Samson passed again along the place where he had killed the lion, and it came to him to go and look at the dead body of the animal. He saw a strange sight. Some wild bees had made their home in the [200] lion, and Samson found much honey there. He took it and ate it, and gave some to his father and mother; but he did not tell them where he had found it.



SAMSON SLAYING A LION.

[201]

Once Samson made a feast at Timnath; and when the company were all talking merrily together, he said, "I will give you a riddle to guess; if you guess right, I will give you thirty sheets and thirty garments; but if you cannot guess, you shall give me thirty sheets and thirty garments." Then the people said, "Tell us the riddle, and we will try to guess it." So Samson said, "Out of the eater came forth meat; and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Now, the eater was the strong lion; and the meat was the sweet honey Samson found in it; but no one knew the story of the lion, and they could not guess the riddle. They tried six days, and then they [202] called in their friend, Samson's wife, and said, "Ask Samson to explain the riddle to thee, else we will burn thee and thy father's house with fire."

The woman then begged so hard and long for her husband to tell her that, at last, he explained the riddle to her; and she forthwith went and told the Philistines. Then they came to Samson and said, "What is so strong as a lion, and what is so sweet as honey?" But Samson quietly said, "My wife told you, else you could never have guessed my riddle."

Samson was obliged, however, to give what he had promised to the men who found out the riddle. But he got the garments in a strange way. He went down to Askelon and killed thirty men of the Philistines and took from them the things he wanted to give to the men who told the riddle. [203] Soon after, Samson's wife went away from him, and it was then that Samson began his war upon the Philistines. He caught 300 foxes and tied firebrands to their tails, and drove them into the corn fields belonging to the Philistines. All the corn and vineyards and olives were burned of course.

Then the Philistines asked, "Who did this?" The people said, "Samson did it, because his wife has been taken away." Then the Philistines went and burned Samson's wife and her father with fire. Samson was now still more angry. He killed a great number of the Philistines, and then went to the top of a rock and lived there alone.

The Philistines now went to fight against Judah. "We must have Samson, and bind him, and take him prisoner," they said. The people of Judah were frightened; they ran to [204] Samson and said, "We are come to bind thee; we will not kill thee; but we will give thee into the hands of the Philistines." Then they bound him with two new ropes and led him away. But Samson had strength to break the ropes, and he soon escaped; then, picking up the jawbone of an ass, which he found on the way as he ran, he killed 1,000 men of the Philistines with it.



SAMSON DESTROYING THE PHILISTINES WITH THE JAWBONE OF AN ASS.

[205]

After this slaughter, Samson was most thirsty. He cried to God and asked for water, that he might not die of thirst. Then water sprang up like a well, and Samson drank and became strong again.

Samson had been raised up to deliver his country from the Philistines, and so to him was given great strength, and boldness and courage to do it.

Soon after, Samson went to Gaza. The [206] people heard he was there, and they waited quietly for him all night. "In the morning we shall kill him," they said. But Samson arose in the night and went to the gate of the city, and took it up, and the posts, and the bar, and carried them upon his shoulders to the top of the hill near Hebron.

Samson had now another wife. Her name was Deliah. The Philistines needed very much to know wherein Samson's great strength lay. So they went to Deliah and said, "Ask Samson what makes him so strong. Learn how we can bind him; and we will each give thee 1100 pieces of silver." Deliah did not love her husband as she loved money; so she went to Samson and begged him to

tell her what made him so strong. Samson did not mean to tell her; so he deceived her, and said, "Let them bind me [207] with seven fresh green withes." Deliah told the Philistines, and they brought the withes, and she bound Samson with them, while the Philistines were hiding in the room.

Then Deliah cried, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" Samson bounded up, broke the withes, and the defeated Philistines ran away. Again Deliah asked Samson to tell her what made him so strong; and he said, "Let them bind me with new ropes." Deliah bound him with the ropes and cried again, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" Then Samson sprang up, broke the ropes like little threads, and escaped again.

Then Deliah said, "Now do not deceive me; but tell me the truth. How can I bind thee?" He said, "Weave the hair of my head with the web." when Samson was asleep, Deliah wove his hair and fastened it [208] most strongly. Then she said, "The Philistines are upon thee!" And he awoke, bounded up, and went away with the pin, and the beam, and the web.



SAMSON AND DELIAH.

[209]

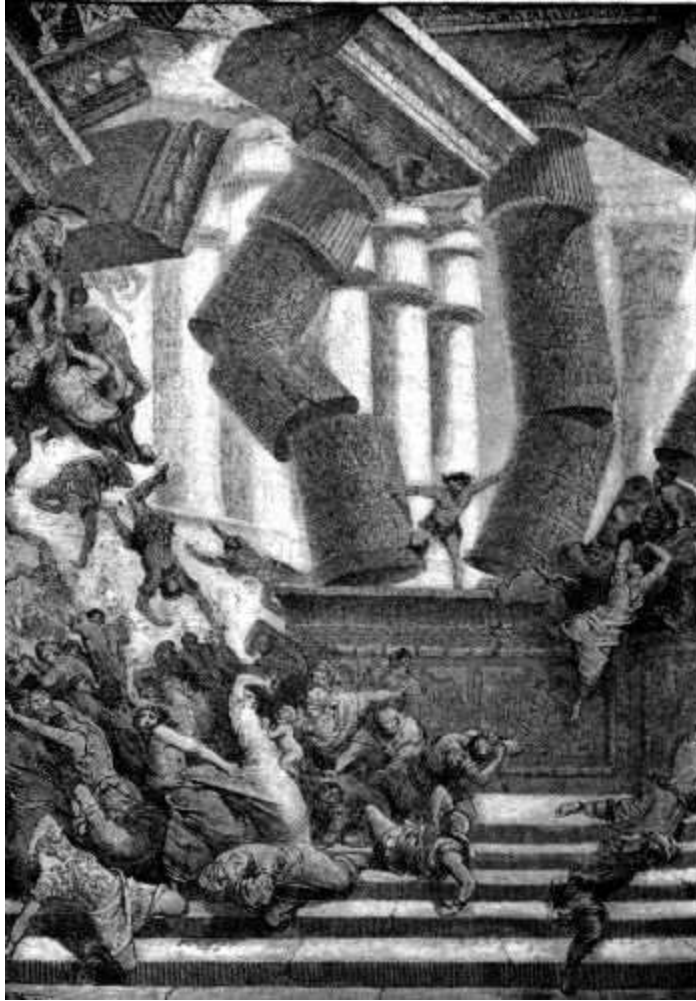
Then Deliah said, "Why hast thou deceived me these three times? Tell me now where thy great strength lies." Samson was tired of his wife's asking him so often; so he said, "I am a Nazarite to God! I have never shaven my head; but, if my hair is cut off, then I shall become weak like other men."

Then Deliah sent to the Philistines and said, "Come once again; Samson has told me the truth; I know now what it is makes him so strong." The lords of the Philistines were glad enough to think that soon they might have their enemy in their power. They came at once, and brought money with them to give to Deliah. Then the cruel wife, when Samson [210] was asleep, called a man and told him to shave off Samson's hair. When he had finished, Deliah cried, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!"

Samson arose, but alas, his strength was gone! He could not defend himself now! His enemies came and took him, and put out his eyes, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Gaza, and made him work hard in the prison there.

Samson was now in prison at Gaza, alone and blind, without any friend to comfort him. When he first went to prison, his strength was all gone; but, after a time, his hair began to grow, and his strength came again. Now, the Philistines worshipped an ugly idol, shaped like a fish, and named Dagon. They made a great sacrifice to Dagon and praised him, because they thought he had given Samson into their [211] hands. They were very merry, playing, and laughing, and feasting, and praising their idol; and they said, "Let us call Samson, and we will play with him, and laugh at him, and make merry."

Then poor Samson was led in. He could not see his cruel enemies, and they all laughed at him, because he was blind and weak and in their power; and they made him stand between two pillars. The house in which they were feasting was very large and full of people. Three thousand of them were upon the roof, looking and wondering at Samson. Samson asked the boy who led him in to let him rest against the pillars on which the house stood. Then he seized one with his right hand and the other with his left hand. "Lord, give me now strength to conquer my enemies; Let them die, and let me die with them," [212] Samson said. Then he bowed himself down with all his might and broke the pillars. They fell, and the house with them; and the people who were upon the roof were crushed; and Samson died with them.



DEATH OF SAMSON.



THE STORY OF RUTH AND NAOMI.

There dwelt in Bethlehem in these days a good man named Elimelech, with his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. All their days these people had dwelt in the land, and always faithful had they been to the God of Israel.

But there came into the land a great famine. For days and weeks no rain fell; the trees were dropping their leaves; the grasses were dry and brown; and the corn lay wilted in the fields.

Everywhere there was suffering among the people; starvation was upon them, and the fathers of the little children could bring no food to them. [215] "My wife and children must have food!" Elimelech cried. And so it came about that, when this famine was abroad in the land, Elimelech and his family went to Moab to live. And when they had come into Moab, Mahlon and Chilion chose for their wives Ruth and Orpah from the women of Moab, idolaters though they were.

It was not very long before Mahlon and Chilion, and Elimelech, too, died, and Naomi was left alone with Ruth and Orpah.

They were kind to Naomi, for they loved her well. Still, Naomi's heart longed for her own old home and for the people she had left there; and so (the days of mourning over) Naomi said to Ruth and Orpah, "Dear daughters, now will I return to my own land. You have been very kind to me, and gladly would I take you with me."



NAOMI AND HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

[217] Then Ruth And Orpah wept and begged her to stay with them. But when they saw she would not, then they wanted to go with her.

Naomi would have been so happy to take them with her! But she feared they might be sorry by and by should they go into a new land. So she said, "No, my daughters go not with me. Live here in your own country and among your own people. Here are your parents and your friends; and may God deal kindly with you as you have dealt with me."

Then Naomi kissed them and bade them good-bye; but they went out from the village with her, saying, "Surely we may go with thee to Bethlehem."

But when they were far out across the country, then Naomi turned again and bade them return now to their people.

[218] Then Orpah kissed Naomi and turned back to her own city. But Ruth begged to be allowed to go a little farther.

"Nay, nay," Naomi said; "go back, Ruth, with Orpah. See, she is already far back upon the road."

But Ruth fell at Naomi's feet and cried aloud. "O, send me not away from thee! Let me follow thee! Where thou goest, I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. Death only shall part thee and me!"

Then old Naomi's heart grew glad; for she loved Ruth and longed to take her with her. Then the two women walked on, and in time they came into the village of Bethlehem.

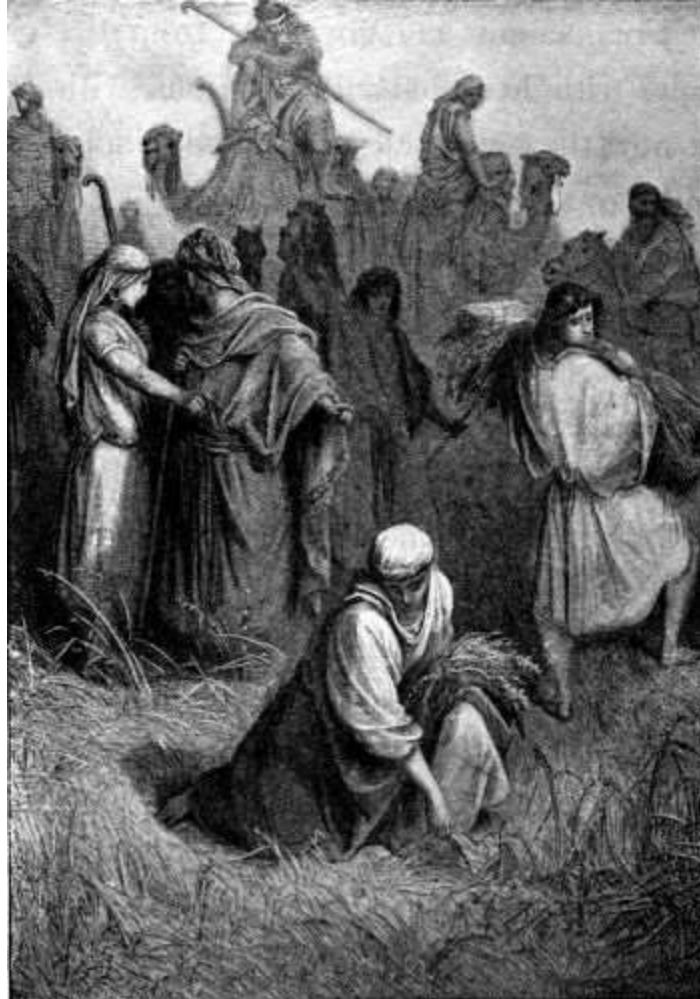
And as they neared Bethlehem, the old friends of Naomi came out and said, "Can this be Naomi?"

[219]For Naomi had gone out from the city happy, with her husband and sons with her. But now they were all dead; and Naomi was returning, a lonely, sad woman.

It was the harvest time when Naomi and Ruth came into Bethlehem; and, when Ruth saw the gleaners at work, she said, "Let me not be idle; let me go forth into the fields to glean."

Now, Ruth knew no one among the gleaners; but, when she came into the field, and the gleaners looked upon her sweet face, they loved her at once and gladly took her into the field with them.

This field in which Ruth gleaned belonged to a rich man, named Boaz; and, when Boaz saw Ruth at work, he said kindly, "Stay here with my maidens and glean in my field. Follow them and glean after the reapers.



BOAZ AND RUTH.

[221] And when thou art thirsty, then go and drink of the water which my servants have brought."

Ruth wondered at the kindness of Boaz and said, "Why dost thou show such kindness to me, a stranger?"

And Boaz smiled kindly upon Ruth and said, "Because I have heard of thy love for Naomi; and that thou hast left thy home to come with her and live among her people. May God bless and reward thee!"

By and by it came the time when all the gleaners stopped their work and ate their noonday meal. Kindly the maidens took Ruth with them, and they ate together. But when Ruth had had her share given her, she laid aside a part and carried it home to Naomi.

"Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" Naomi asked.

[222]And when Ruth told her she had gleaned in the field of Boaz, and how kindly he had welcomed her, then Naomi was filled with gladness; for Boaz was of the family of Elimelech; and she knew that now he would be kind to them and not allow suffering and hunger to come to them.

All the long beautiful autumn Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz; and each day Boaz loved Ruth more and more, so gentle and kind was she.

Then, when the harvest was over, Boaz came to Naomi and told her that in Canaan there was land that belonged to Elimelech; and that he would buy this land and take Ruth and Naomi to his home.

Then Ruth and Boaz married; and by and by a little child was born to them. How much Naomi loved this little baby! How [223] tenderly she nursed it; and how carefully she taught it as it grew into boyhood!

And so these people lived together until Naomi grew old and died. Then Ruth and Boaz, who had loved her and cared for her all these years, mourned for her, and buried her tenderly beside her own people in the land that had been her father's—the land she had loved so well.





SAMUEL PRESENTED TO ELI. (Opir.)

THE STORY OF SAMUEL.

[225] At Mount Ephraim there dwelt a man, named Elkanah, with his good wife, Hannah.

These good people had one son, Samuel, whom they loved with great tenderness. He was their only child; but, though they loved him so, they carried him when he was yet a tiny boy to the temple and left him with the holy priests.

"Here is my child," the good mother said. "I give him now to our God, the God of Israel. So long as he lives shall he be the Lord's."

Then the priest, Eli, took the child and blessed it, and blessed the mother too; and [226] Samuel grew up a true, honest boy, and came in time to be himself a holy priest.

One night, when Samuel lay upon his bed, he heard a voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel!"

"Here am I, Eli," Samuel answered; for he thought it was the voice of the priest.

But Eli said, "No, my son, I did not call thee."

And Samuel went and lay down upon his bed again.

Again the voice called, "Samuel, Samuel!"

And again Samuel ran to Eli's bedside, saying, "Here am I, Eli."

A third time, even, the voice called. A third time Samuel ran to Eli's bedside.

"Samuel," Eli said, when the lad came a third time, "it may be it is the voice of the Lord. Go back to thy bed; and if it speaks [227] again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'"

Samuel obeyed; and a fourth time the voice called.

Then Samuel answered as Eli bade him. And the voice then said, "Lo, I am about to punish Eli and his sons; for the sons are wicked and Eli punishes them not."

Now, these sons were priests in the temple with their father, and Eli knew full well that they were wicked men. Still, because they were his own sons, and he loved them, he had not driven them forth from the temple.

Poor old Eli was sad when Samuel told him what the voice had said to him; but he bowed his head and said, "It is the voice of God that hath spoken. Let him do with me what seemeth to him wise and good."

[228] Then came a great battle between the Philistines and the Israelites; and in this battle the Israelites were beaten, and the two sons of Eli slain.

Eli was too old to go himself into the battle, and so he sat at the gate of the city and waited with the people for news of the battle.

At last a man came running. His clothes were rent, and there was dust upon his head, and from this the people knew that he brought sad news only.

Then they set up a weeping and wailing; and old Eli, whose eyes were dim with age, said, "What is this noise I hear? Why do the people cry?"

Then the messenger said, "I have just come from the battle-field."

Eli's heart beat fast. "Tell me," he cried [229] with trembling voice, "what has happened there?"

The messenger dreaded to tell the old priest the sad news; but he said, "Alas! alas! the Israelites are conquered! Your own sons have fallen; and even the Ark which the Israelites carried into battle has been taken!"

Poor old Eli! This was more than he could bear. The Ark taken! And the old man threw up his hands and fell back, dead.

Now, the Ark was taken by the Philistines to one of their own heathen temples, and one of their idols was set upon it.

The Philistines thought the Ark was one of the gods of the Israelites, just as their idols were their gods; so they set it up on their altar, and it was their chief god, Dagon they called it, that they set beside it.

But when the Philistines went into their [230] temple the morning after the battle, there lay Dagon upon the floor.

"This is strange!" they said; and they put the idol back upon the Ark again.

The next morning, again was the idol found upon the floor, its hands and its head broken.

Then a dreadful plague settled upon the people. "It is the idol of the Israelites that has done all this!" the people cried. "Let us send it away!"

So the Ark was sent to Gath; but there a plague fell upon the people.

"We will not have it among us!" the people of Gath cried; so they sent it on to Ekron.

But when the people of Ekron saw it coming, they cried out, "Take away this idol of the Israelites! We fear the plague that is sure to come with it!"

[231]At last the Philistines said, "We will not have it in our land." So they placed it upon a cart, and they fastened two cattle to the cart. Then they set the cart upon a road leading towards Bethshemesh and bade the oxen go.

The oxen, obedient, carried the Ark out upon the road, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and straight into the village of Bethshemesh.

Now, the people of the village were at work in their fields, for it was harvest time.

They heard the coming of the cart and looked. "It is the Ark! It is the Ark!" they cried; and the Levites came and took the Ark and set it upon a great stone.

Then followed a day of great sacrifice and rejoicing. And the Israelites later repented of all their sins, and came to Samuel and asked him what they should do.



RETURN OF THE ARK TO BETHSHEMESH.

[233] Samuel called them all to him at Mizpah, and there he prayed for them and taught them wisely and well.

But as he was teaching them and offering sacrifices, lo! a great army of Philistines drew near. They had come again to fight the Israelites.

But Samuel bade them have no fear; for this time it was the Philistines that were to be conquered and not the Israelites.

So the Israelites made ready for battle; but, before they were ready, a great black cloud rolled up across the sky. The winds blew, the hail fell, and the skies blazed with terrible lightnings.

Never had such a storm been known either to Philistines or Israelites.

"Fear not," Samuel said; "this is God's hand." And the Philistines fled in terror.

[234] Then, when the storm was over, and again the sun shone out, Samuel took a great stone and set it up near Mizpah; and the stone at Mizpah was for a sign to the Israelites that "God shall watch ever over thee and me."

And Samuel named the stone Ebenezer—which means, a stone of help.

For many years now Samuel had been judge over Israel; and so long as the people obeyed him they were safe and happy.

But there came a time when Samuel was an old, old man. Then the Israelites came to him and said, "Thou art very old; thy sons, who now judge over us, are not like thee. Let us have a king."

But Samuel said, "God only is the king of the Israelites."

The people would not listen to the words [235] of Samuel. "We will have a king," they said. "We will be like other nations. We will have a king, and he shall go into battle with us."

And so it came about that from out their number a king was chosen.

Now, there was a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who had a son, named Saul.

Saul was a tall, strong, brave, young man, and of him the Lord said to Samuel, "If the Israelites have a king, let this man Saul be that king."

One day it chanced that the cattle belonging to Kish, Saul's father, strayed away; and Kish said to Saul, "Take a servant with thee and go and seek the cattle that have strayed."

So Saul took a servant, and they searched the country round about, going great distances; still the cattle could not be found.

[236]At last Saul said to the servant, "I am tired with this search. Let us go back and tell my father all we have done."

Then the servant said, "There is a prophet living near this place into which we have come. Let us seek him; for I am told he is most wise. Perhaps he may help us to find our cattle."

"Let us go to him," Saul answered readily; and so the two men came into the city where Samuel dwelt; for it was he they sought.

As they drew near the city, they met two young women coming to a well to draw water.

"Tell me, is the prophet here?" Saul asked.

And the young women said, "Yes, to-day he offers sacrifice in the city. First, he blesses the sacrifice, and then the people feast; and now he is going towards the temple. Make haste and you will see him."

[237]Saul and the servant hurried on towards the gate of the city; and there they saw an old man, sitting alone.

"Tell us," said Saul, "where we may find the prophet Samuel."

And the old man answered, "I am Samuel. Come and feast with me; and to-morrow thou shalt go. Grieve not about the cattle; already they are found. But come with me, for I have much to tell thee. The desire of all Israel is upon thee and upon thy father's house."

Then Saul said, "Why dost thou speak so to me? Knowest thou not that my family is one of the least of the tribe of Benjamin?"

But Samuel knew; and he led Saul to his house and feasted him. And when the feast was over, Samuel said to Saul, "The people of Israel desire a king; and it is thou, Saul, [238] whom the Lord has chosen to be that king."



SAMUEL BLESSING SAUL.

[239]

Then, when morning came, Saul and his servant set out upon their journey home; and Samuel went with them, even unto the city gates. Then Samuel said to the servant, "Go on before. I would speak once more with Saul alone." And when he had gone, Samuel poured oil upon the head of Saul and kissed him, saying, "God has chosen thee to be king to rule over his people in Israel."

Then Samuel went back to his home, and Saul went on his way. It was to him a strange journey back to his home, for God had already given him great wisdom and power. Already the gift of prophecy was his; and when he met a company of prophets, he too prophesied with them of things to come.

And the people wondered to hear Saul uttering prophecies. "What does this mean?" they cried. "Is Saul also a prophet?"

[240]But now Samuel called all the tribes of Israel together at Mizpah. "It is your wish," he said, "that a king should be chosen to rule over you and lead you forth into battle. Now, God is not

pleased that you should choose a king; for he was himself your king. Still, because it is your wish, a king shall be chosen by God. And that man chosen shall be Saul."

"But where is Saul?" the people asked; for nowhere was Saul to be found.

Then the Lord told the people that Saul was hiding; and he bade them go and search for him in that place which God should name.

The people obeyed, and Saul was found and brought before the people.

"Is this the man?" the people asked. And the Lord said, "This is the man."

[241]Then the people shouted, and Saul was made king over the Israelites.

Then Samuel said to the people, "Behold I am an old man. My hair is white with age. All my life I have been with you, from the time when I was a little child until now. Tell me, have I ever oppressed you, or have I ever taken anything from you?"

And all the people shouted, "No! No! Never! Never have you oppressed us or wronged us in any way!" For the people all loved Samuel, from the oldest to the youngest.

"Wait, then," said Samuel, "and hear what I would say to you. Many years ago God brought your fathers out of Israel and gave this land to them for a possession.

"Often your fathers rebelled against God; and as often he sent punishment upon [242] them that they might turn back to him. Sisera and the Philistines and the Moabites God sent to fight against the Israelites; but whenever they repented and turned back, then He forgave them. Many good captains He sent them,—Gideon, Jephthah and Samson.

"And now you have asked for a king, and God has given you one. And so long as the king and his people are true to the one God, so long shall His blessing be upon you."

And so ended that time in the history of the children of Israel when they were content to be ruled over by Judges chosen by God; and of these Judges, Samuel was the last.
