

Beautiful
Stories
from the
Old
Testament





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DAVID AND JONATHAN.

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BEAUTIFUL STORIES

FROM THE

OLD TESTAMENT

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CHICAGO, ILL.

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By HENRY ALTEMUS

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BEAUTIFUL STORIES

FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

ADAM AND EVE.

 IN the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. He also made the sun, moon, and stars; trees, flowers, and all vegetable life; and all animals, birds, fishes, and insects. Then God made man. The name of the first man was Adam, and the first woman was Eve. Both were placed in a beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden, where they might have been happy continually had they not sinned. But God forbade them to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempted Eve to take the fruit of this tree. She ate, and gave to Adam, and he ate also. Thus they sinned, and sin came into the world.

Then God called to Adam and said, "Where art thou?" Before this, Adam and Eve had been happy when God was near, now they were afraid. Why? Because they knew they had done wrong. So sin makes us afraid of God.

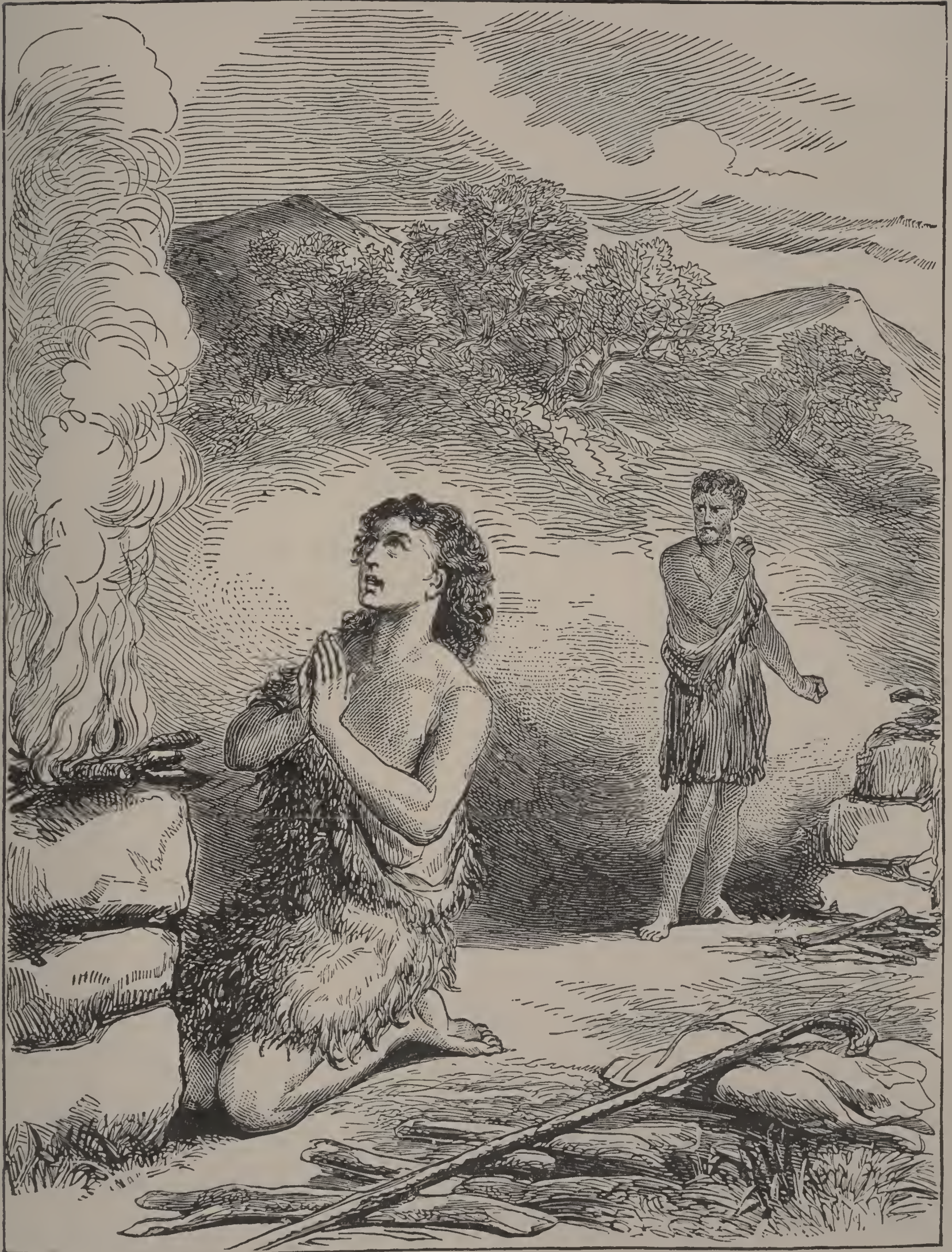
God rebuked them for the evil they had done; and then drove them out of the Garden of Eden, placing an angel to keep watch over the gate so that they could not return.

CAIN AND ABEL.

WHAT a sad story the Bible tells us in the fourth chapter of Genesis! Cain and Abel were brothers, the sons of Adam and Eve. How they should have loved each other! Yet we find that Cain killed Abel. Why did he do this?

Cain was a husbandman, who tilled the ground; Abel was a shepherd, who kept sheep. One day each offered a sacrifice to God. Cain brought fruit, and Abel brought a lamb. God accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's. Why? Well, I am not quite sure, but I think it was because Abel offered his sacrifice according as God had commanded, and had faith in a promised Saviour; but Cain simply acknowledged God's goodness in giving him the fruits of the earth. God had probably told them, too, that when they came to worship Him, they were to bring a lamb or a kid as a sacrifice for their sins; this Abel had done, but Cain had not. Cain was angry because God had accepted Abel's offering and not his; and he hated his brother Abel.

God knew the evil thought Cain had towards his brother, and asked him, "Why art thou wroth?" and said, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" But Cain did still more wickedly. When out in the field he killed his brother. Was it not a cruel deed? They were alone when this murder was committed, yet one eye saw it all. God saw it, and said to Cain: "Where is Abel, thy brother?" We cannot sin without God knowing it! Cain told God a lie. He answered, "I know not." But he did know. God was angry with Cain for his sin, and sent him as a fugitive and vagabond to wander on the earth.



ABEL'S SACRIFICE.

THE FLOOD.

ABOUT fifteen hundred years had passed since Cain slew Abel, during which time man had become more and more wicked. At length God saw “that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Then God said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.”

But one man was righteous and served God. His name was Noah. God told him that the world would be drowned by a flood because of the wickedness of the people, and commanded him to build a great ark to float upon the waters. In this ark God promised to preserve alive Noah and his family; and also two of each of every living thing on the earth—animals, birds, and creeping things. All the rest were to die.

Noah built the ark as God commanded. It took him a great many years, during which time the people were warned to forsake their sins and turn to God, but they did not do so. At last the ark was finished, and Noah, with his wife, and his sons with their wives, and the animals, birds, and creeping things, as God had commanded, all entered into it. What a long procession it must have been! Then God shut them in, and they dwelt in safety while the rain came down, and the waters rose up and covered the earth. All were drowned except those in the ark.

A year afterwards, when the waters were dried up, Noah, and all that had been with him, left the ark. Then Noah built an altar, and offered sacrifices to God, in thankfulness for God's goodness to him and his family.



ENTERING THE ARK.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

BABEL means confusion. Was it not a strange name to give a tower? How did it get this?

After Noah left the ark, God made a promise to him that He would no more destroy the earth by a flood, and blessed him and his sons. In course of time many little children were born, baby boys and girls, who grew up to be fathers and mothers having children also. In this manner a great many people dwelt again on the earth. For more than one hundred years they all spoke the same language, and as, in course of time, they journeyed onward, they came to a large plain in the land of Shinar, near to where Babylon was afterwards built. Here they said they would remain and build a great city, with a high tower ascending to heaven.

Now God, when he blessed Noah, had said to him, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth;" meaning that the people were to scatter abroad, so that the world might become inhabited again. But these men wanted to keep together, and found one great empire, the centre of which should be the great city with the lofty tower. So they made bricks and burnt them, and took a kind of pitch for mortar, and began to build. Some learned men say they took three years in getting the materials, and were twenty-two years building the tower. It was very great and high, but it was never finished. The people did wickedly in building it, and God, who saw all they were doing, confounded their language, so that one could not understand another. Thus they left off building the tower, and that is why it is called Babel. Then God scattered them abroad to re-people the earth.



BUILDING THE TOWER OF BABEL.

LOT'S FLIGHT FROM SODOM.



IN Palestine, the land in which Jesus dwelt when He was upon earth, there is an inland sea, called the Dead Sea. Its waters are very salt, and no trees grow upon its shores. Many long years before the birth of Jesus Christ, two cities stood upon the plain which the waters of the Dead Sea now cover. These cities were named Sodom and Gomorrah. Their inhabitants were very wicked, so God destroyed their cities by raining brimstone and fire upon them.

Before God destroyed these cities, He sent two angels to Lot, Abraham's nephew, who dwelt in Sodom, commanding him to flee from it, taking his family with him. The angels hastened him, saying, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Then the angels took all four by the hand and led them out, and said to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Lot pleaded that he might take refuge in a little city, named Zoar, not very far distant; and having obtained the angels' permission to do so, he took his wife and daughters, and hastened away. In our picture we see him and his daughters entering Zoar, and Sodom burning in the distance—but what is that strange figure standing on the plain? Alas! that is Lot's wife; the angel had commanded them that none were to look back, but she did so, and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Lot did wrong in dwelling in such a wicked city as Sodom, and lost all his property when he escaped for his life.



LOT ENTERING ZOAR.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC.

ABRAHAM feared God and obeyed His commandments; and God promised to bless Abraham very greatly. He gave him riches in cattle, and silver, and gold; and said that the land of Canaan should belong to him and his descendants. God also gave him a son in his old age, whom he loved very dearly and named Isaac. But God intended to try Abraham, to see if he loved Him above all else.

One day God told Abraham to take his son Isaac, and to journey into the land of Moriah; there to build an altar and offer Isaac as a sacrifice upon it. It was a strange command, but Abraham knew that God would not bid him do what was wrong, and believed that even if he slew his son, God was able to raise him to life again. So he rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, took two of his young men, and wood for the fire; and then, accompanied by Isaac, started on his journey. On the third day they came near the place God had pointed out, and Abraham left the young men with the ass, while he and his son journeyed up the mountain alone. As they went along, Isaac—who carried the wood, while his father carried the knife and the fire, said: “My father.” And Abraham replied, “Here am I, my son.” Then Isaac said: “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham answered: “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”

The altar was built, Isaac was bound and laid upon it, and Abraham’s arm was uplifted to strike the blow that was to take his son’s life away. Then God called to Abraham, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything



unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.” Abraham looked up, and behind him saw a ram which was caught in a thicket by its horns; this he took and offered as a sacrifice to God.

So God tried Abraham; and also Himself provided the lamb for the burnt offering, as Abraham had said.

THE STORY OF REBEKAH.

WHEN Abraham had grown old, he desired that his son, Isaac, should take a wife. But he did not wish him to choose one from among the women of Canaan, for they worshipped idols. So he called his oldest servant, and commanded him to make a journey to Abraham's own country, and there to choose a wife for Isaac. Then the man took ten camels, together with food and other goods for the journey, and set out for the city of Nahor. When he came to the walls of the city he spied a well, and, as it was evening, the young women were coming out to draw water. Then he asked God to help him to choose a wife for Isaac, saying, “Let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, ‘Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink,’ and who shall reply, ‘Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also;’ let her be the one Thou hast chosen for Thy servant Isaac.”



REBEKAH GIVING DRINK TO ABRAHAM'S SERVANT.

Before he had done speaking, there came out a beautiful young woman, whose name was Rebekah. She was the grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother. She carried a pitcher upon her shoulder, and went down to the well and filled it. Then Abraham's servant ran to her and asked her for a drink from her pitcher. She said, "Drink, my lord," and held the pitcher for him, and afterwards drew water for his camels also. Then he took a golden jewel and a pair of gold bracelets, and put them upon her, and asked whose daughter she was, and if her father could lodge him and his company. When she told him who she was, he was glad, and worshipped God, for he was sure then that he had been led to the house of Abraham's brother.

Then Rebekah called out her friends, and they took the man in to lodge him for the night, and set food before him. But he would not eat until he had told them his errand, and how he believed God had chosen Rebekah for Isaac's wife. He then asked the parents to say whether they would give their daughter or not, but they said: "It has been ordered by God; we cannot give or refuse her. Rebekah is before you. Take her and go. Let her be Isaac's wife, as the Lord hath spoken."

When the man heard these words, he again praised God; and then he brought out rich clothing, and jewels of gold and silver, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave presents to her mother and brother. When they asked Rebekah if she would go with the man, she said "Yes," and took leave of her friends, who blessed her. Then, with her nurse and her maids, she rode upon the camels, and followed the man, for she believed that so God had ordered it.

Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi, and one evening he walked into the fields to meditate. As he lifted up his eyes



REBEKAH JOURNEYING TO ISAAC.

he saw the company of camels coming towards him. At the same time, Rebekah lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. When the man told her it was his master Isaac, she alighted from the camel, and covered her face with a veil, according to the custom of the East. When the man told Isaac all he had done, Isaac was pleased, and welcomed Rebekah, and gave her the tent that had been his mother's. And she became his wife.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.



HOW wonderful is the way in which God works for those who fear Him! The history of Joseph teaches us this truth.

Joseph had one younger and ten elder brothers. The name of the younger brother was Benjamin. Jacob was the father of them all; and Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons, and made him a coat of many colours; but his elder brothers hated him, and one day, when far away from home, proposed to kill him. They cast him into a pit instead, and afterwards sold him as a slave to some merchants who were travelling from Gilead to Egypt. When they returned to their father, they took Joseph's coat of many colours, which they had dipped in blood, and brought it to Jacob, saying: "This have we found: know now if it be thy son's coat or no." Jacob knew the coat; and thought Joseph had been killed by some wild beast, and mourned for him greatly.



THE MEETING OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

The merchants carried Joseph into Egypt, and sold him to one of the king's officers, named Potiphar. But, though a slave, he was not forsaken by God. No, God was with him, and made all that he did to prosper. His master placed him over all his house, but his mistress wanted him to commit a great sin. When he refused, she accused him unjustly to his master, and Potiphar had him cast into prison.

God was with Joseph in the prison, and gave him such favour with the keeper that he set him over all the other prisoners. Among them were two; one who had been the king's butler, and the other his baker. Both had dreams which troubled them much, but Joseph was enabled by God to interpret their dreams for them. By-and-by Pharaoh, the king, dreamed a dream. He was standing on the banks of a river, and saw seven fat cows come up out of the water and feed in a meadow; afterwards seven very lean cows came up and devoured the fat ones. Then Pharaoh awoke; but he dreamed again, and saw that seven very poor ears of corn devoured seven that were full and good. In the morning he was greatly troubled. What could the dreams mean? He called for the magicians and the wise men, but they could not tell. At last it was told him how Joseph had interpreted the dreams in the prison; so he sent for Joseph, who came from the prison, and stood before the king.

Pharaoh said, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." Joseph answered, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Then Joseph told Pharaoh that the dreams had been sent by God, to show him that after seven years of great plenty had passed there would come seven years of famine. He also advised Pharaoh to lay up corn in cities



JOSEPH BEFORE PHARAOH.

during the years of plenty, so that the people might be fed during the years of famine. Pharaoh saw what great wisdom God had given Joseph, and made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. The corn was stored up; and after the years of plenty the famine came.

During all this time Jacob and his sons had been dwelling in Canaan; where, through the famine, they were now in want of food. So Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn. The Bible tells us, in the book of Genesis, how they came to Egypt, and all that befell them there; and how at last Joseph, the ruler of the mighty kingdom, made himself known to them as the brother they had cruelly sold for a slave. But he forgave them, and sent to fetch his father Jacob, saying that all were to come into Egypt, where he would provide for them.

Jacob could not at first believe the good news his sons brought; but when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him and the little ones, he said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." So he journeyed to Egypt, with his sons, and all that he had; and as he drew near Joseph went to meet him. When Joseph met his father, he fell on his neck, and wept there. And Jacob said, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." He was so full of joy that it seemed to him there was nothing else worth living for. Afterwards Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh; who allowed him and his family to dwell in the land of Goshen.



JACOB PRESENTED TO PHARAOH.

THE FINDING OF MOSES.

PHARAOH, becoming alarmed at the increasing power and numbers of the Israelites in Egypt, ordered that every male child who might be born to them should be cast into the river, and drowned. But the wife of a man named Levi felt that she could not give up her babe, and for three months she hid him. When she could hide him no longer, she prepared a basket of rushes, and coated it with pitch, so that it would float upon the river and keep out the water. In this ark she placed her infant son, and hid the ark among the flags and bulrushes on the river-bank, and set the child's sister to watch it.

Now it happened that the daughter of Pharaoh came with her maidens to bathe in the river; and when she saw the basket she sent one of her maids to fetch it. And when she looked at the child he wept, and she had compassion for him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Then the child's sister came forward and said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I call to thee a Hebrew woman that she may nurse the child for thee?" And when the princess said, "Go!" she, the maid, went and called her own mother, to whom Pharaoh's daughter said, "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And the woman took the child and nursed him. And when he had grown, his mother took him to the princess, who adopted him as her son, and called his name Moses, which means *drawn out*, because she took him from the water. Afterwards he grew to be a great man: he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and we are told, "he was mighty in words and deeds."



THE FINDING OF MOSES.

THE FLIGHT FROM EGYPT.

WHEN Moses was forty years old he had to flee from Egypt. He went to Midian, where he dwelt for forty years; at the end of which time God appeared to him, and instructed him to return to Egypt; where he was appointed by God to lead the Israelites from bondage to the land of Canaan. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and delivered to him God's command to let the people of Israel go; telling him that if he disobeyed terrible plagues would come upon his land. Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, and refused to let the people go; so ten dreadful plagues were sent, the last of which was that the firstborn of every Egyptian should die, whether it were man or beast. But not a single Israelite was to suffer harm. This plague God said should come in the night; when an angel would pass through the land, destroying the Egyptians but sparing the Israelites.

Each family of the Israelites was commanded, on the evening that God had appointed, to kill a lamb, and to dip a bunch of hyssop in its blood, sprinkling this blood upon the top and side posts of the door. All the houses thus marked God said would be spared when the destroying angel passed through the land. In the night, while the Israelites were, according to God's command, eating the lambs that had been slain, all ready to depart, a great cry arose among the Egyptians. In every house, from the palace downwards, the eldest child lay dead.

Then the Egyptians arose, and thrust the Israelites out; and they left Egypt, and journeyed towards the Red Sea.



SPRINKLING THE BLOOD.

MOSES STRIKING THE ROCK.

AFTER the Israelites left Egypt they crossed the Red Sea, whose waters divided so that they passed through on dry land. Then they travelled through the wilderness toward Mount Sinai. Passing onward, they wanted water and food; and forgetting the great things God had already done for them, they began to murmur. At a place called Marah they found the water too bitter to drink; so they grumbled, saying to Moses, "What shall we drink?" He asked God; who showed him a tree, which, when cast into the water, made it sweet.

Next the people murmured for food, and God sent them manna, which they gathered every day except the Sabbath; but with all God's care and kindness the Israelites continued to grumble whenever any difficulty arose. Journeying forward, they entered another wilderness, called the Desert of Sin, and came to a place named Rephidim, where they found no water. They were very thirsty, and came to Moses murmuring and saying, "Give us water that we may drink." How could Moses do that? He was grieved with them, and said, "Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" But the people grew so angry that they were ready to stone him. Then Moses told God all the trouble, and God showed him what to do. He was to go before the people, taking the elders of Israel with him, and his rod, and God would stand before him on a rock among the mountains of Horeb. This rock he was to strike, when water would gush forth.

Moses did as God commanded. He went forward with the elders, struck the rock with his rod; and the pure, clear water gushed out, so that all the people were able to drink.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

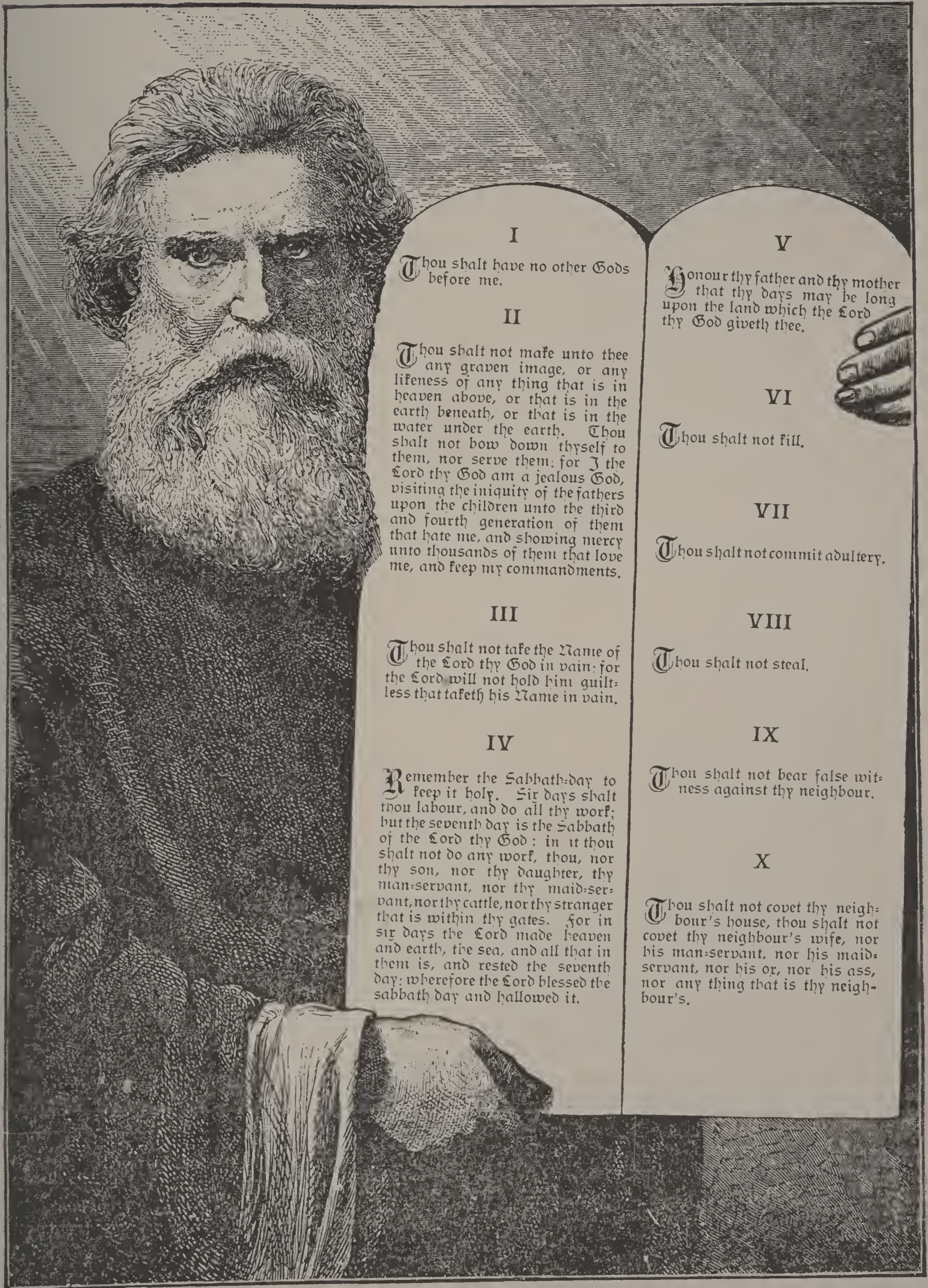


THE Israelites journeyed onward and encamped before Mount Sinai. There God talked with Moses, and instructed him to remind the people of the great things He had done for them; and to say that if they obeyed Him, and kept His covenant, they should be a peculiar treasure to Him above all people, and a holy nation.

When the people heard God's message, they answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." How happy would they have been if they had always kept this promise! But, alas! they did not do so; and great punishments came upon them in consequence.

God also said that on the third day He would descend upon Mount Sinai; and commanded the people to prepare themselves for that great and solemn event. None were to approach the mount, for if they did so they would die. On the third day, according to the command, the people gathered before Mount Sinai. A thick cloud covered the mountain, which smoked and quaked, and there were thunders and lightnings; a trumpet also sounded exceeding loud, so that all the people trembled. Then God spake from the midst of the fire, and gave the people the Ten Commandments. These you will find in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; and little folks with sharp eyes can read them in our picture.

We are told that "all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking;" and when they saw it they were so much afraid that they stood afar off. How holy is God's law, and how careful should we be to obey it!



I

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

II

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

III

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.

IV

Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

V

Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI

Thou shalt not kill.

VII

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII

Thou shalt not steal.

IX

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB.

AFTER God had given the Ten Commandments, He called Moses up into the mountain; where he remained forty days and forty nights. During that time, God told him to speak to the Israelites, asking them to give gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, fine linen, oil, precious stones, and other things, to make a tabernacle or sanctuary, where God would dwell among them. God showed Moses the pattern of this tabernacle, with its coverings, its holy place and most holy place, its ark of the covenant with the cherubims and mercy-seat, its table for the shewbread, golden candlestick, and altar of incense, and the garments for Aaron and his sons, etc.; everything was accurately described by God. Then God instructed Moses as to who could do the work He had commanded to be done, and named two to whom He had given special wisdom and skill: these two were Bezaleel and Aholiab.

When Moses came down from the mountain he called Aaron and all the people of Israel, and told them what God had commanded. The people willingly brought gifts, till more than enough was provided. Then Bezaleel and Aholiab, and other wise-hearted men, worked diligently until the tabernacle and all things belonging to it were made exactly as God had instructed. Some worked in gold and silver, others in brass and wood; wise women spun cloth of blue, purple and scarlet, and fine linen; precious stones were set for the high priest's ephod and breastplate; and, at last, all was finished. Then we are told "Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded." Then Moses blessed them.



BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.



ESUS CHRIST says that "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." What did Jesus mean?

Nearly forty years had passed since God gave His law from Mount Sinai; and frequently the people had sinned during that time. Through their disobedience they were compelled to wander in the wilderness for many long years, instead of going straight to Canaan. While thus wandering they passed round the land of Edom, and became grieved and impatient because of the dreariness and difficulty of the way. They murmured against God and against Moses, and said, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." They meant the manna which God gave them daily.

God allowed fiery serpents to come among the people because of their sin, which bit them, and many died. Then they came to Moses, saying, "We have sinned . . . pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." Moses did so; and God told him to make a serpent of brass and to put it on a pole; and said that all who looked to the serpent should live. The serpent of brass could not heal them, but God healed them as they obeyed his command to look to the serpent. It was *look* and *live*.

Now I think we see what Jesus means. God has said that all must die because of sin; but those who look to Jesus and trust in Him will have their sins pardoned, and will live with Him in glory for ever.



THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

THE PASSAGE OF THE JORDAN.

HAVING wandered for forty years in the wilderness, the Israelites drew near to the river Jordan, at a place opposite Jericho. Moses was dead, and Joshua was now the leader of the host. God told him that the time had come when the people of Israel were to enter Canaan; to which land they had all this long time been travelling, but which previously they had not been permitted to enter on account of their sin. A description of this sin is given in the Bible, in the fourteenth chapter of Numbers.

But the people were now to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan. They were a very great multitude, and the river lay before them. How were they to cross? God told them! He commanded Joshua that the priests were to take the ark of the covenant and to go before the people; who were to follow a short distance behind. Could the priests and the people walk across the deep water? No. But as soon as the priests reached the river, and their feet were dipped in the water, God divided the Jordan into two, leaving dry ground for the Israelites to cross upon.

The priests carried the ark into the middle of the bed of the river and then stood still, and all the people passed on before them. When all were over, the priests carrying the ark moved forward also, and the waters returned to their proper place again. But before they did so, Joshua commanded twelve men, one from each tribe, each to take a stone from the river's bed; and these stones were set up as a memorial of the marvellous manner in which God had brought the Israelites across the Jordan into Canaan.



CROSSING THE JORDAN.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.



NEWS of the miraculous way in which the Israelites had been brought across the Jordan spread rapidly among the Canaanites, and when they heard what God had done, they were very much afraid. We are told that "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel."

God had said to Joshua that the land of Canaan was to be taken possession of by the Israelites; and had commanded him to "Be strong and of a good courage," and had strengthened him by saying, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua and the people were now in Canaan, and before them lay a stronghold of the Canaanites, named Jericho, having high walls and strong gates. This city the Israelites had to capture; but the inhabitants closed the gates, and prepared to fight fiercely to prevent Joshua and his warriors from getting in.

As Joshua was alone at this time, near Jericho, he looked up, and saw a man standing with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and asked, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" The man answered, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I come." Do you know who it was? Was it an angel? I think it was more than an angel. It was the Lord! Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, saying, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" Then the Lord told Joshua, as before he had told Moses, to take his shoes from his feet, for the place on which he stood was holy; and instructed him how Jericho was to be captured.



THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

HOW JERICHOWAS CAPTURED.

WHEN men in olden times attacked a city, they tried to batter down the walls with heavy beams of wood, having heads of iron, called battering rams; but God did not instruct the Israelites thus to capture Jericho. They were to remember that it was not by their own power they could conquer the Canaanites, but only as God gave them the victory over their enemies. So God commanded Joshua to lay siege to Jericho in a very strange way. He said that seven priests, each having a trumpet, were to go before the ark. In front of them the armed men of Israel were to march; and behind the ark the people were to follow. In this way they were to go round the city once each day for six days, the priests blowing their trumpets each time. The seventh day they were to go in the same manner round the city seven times; and God said that when the priests blew their trumpets the seventh time, the people were to give a great shout, and the walls of the city would fall down.

Joshua and the people did as God commanded. They marched round the city carrying the ark, the priests blowing their trumpets; and on the seventh day they marched round seven times. The last time, when the priests blew their trumpets, the people shouted with a great shout, and the walls of the city fell down flat. Then the Israelites went up and took possession of it.

Thus God delivered Jericho into the hands of His people. All the inhabitants were killed except Rahab and her relatives. These were spared because Rahab had been kind to the spies whom Joshua had sent.



THE FALL OF JERICHO.

ACHAN'S SIN.



OD commanded the Israelites to destroy Jericho; and all the gold, silver, and other riches found there were to be devoted to the Lord. If any disobeyed this command then a curse was to rest upon all, and they were not to prosper.

The Israelites were to conquer the Canaanites, and drive them out of the land. So Joshua prepared to attack a city named Ai. Three thousand of his men went to capture it, but the inhabitants came out and drove them back, killing some of them. Joshua was greatly grieved. He knew that unless God made the Israelites victorious, the Canaanites would be able to overcome them, and God had appeared to fail them this time. Oh! he was sorry. But he told God the trouble, and God showed him the cause of it.

One of the Israelites, named Achan, saw among the spoil of Jericho, a handsome garment, some silver, and a bar of gold, and coveted them. He stole these things and hid them away in his tent, thinking that no one saw him; but God knew it all. Achan's sin was the cause of Israel's defeat! God showed Joshua how the man who had done the wickedness was to be discovered. Each tribe was to be brought before God, then each family of the tribe He chose, then each household of the family taken, and lastly each man of the family chosen. Finally, Achan was pointed out by God. Joshua bade him confess what he had done, and he said that he had taken the Babylonish garment and the gold and silver.

Messengers were sent to his tent, who brought what Achan had hidden; and he, with his sons and daughters, his cattle, and all that he had, and the garment, silver, and gold,



ACHAN CONFESSING HIS SIN.

were taken to a valley near by, where the people stoned them, and burned them with fire; and then raised over all a great heap of stones, which remained as a memorial to warn others against sinning as Achan had done.

THE ALTAR ON MOUNT EBAL.

BEFORE Moses died he called the Israelites together, and urged them to faithfully serve God; also directing that when they entered Canaan, they were to build an altar of rough stones, covered with plaster, on Mount Ebal, and to write the words of God's law upon this altar. Then six of the tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim, and six on Mount Ebal, and, in the hearing of all the people, the blessings for obedience and the cursings for disobedience were to be proclaimed.

Mounts Ebal and Gerizim are two rugged mountains that face each other in Samaria. When the Israelites advanced thus far, they remembered the words of Moses. Joshua built the altar as directed, on which he offered sacrifices to God, and wrote a copy of the law upon it. All Israel stood, "half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal," and Joshua read all the words of the law, "the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law." Then the loud voices of the Levites were heard from the mountain sides, declaring, in the hearing of all the people, the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience, as God had commanded.



THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

BEVENGE is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him," says the Saviour; but among the Israelites and other eastern nations a different practice prevailed. If one slew another, the kinsman of him that was slain felt bound to avenge his relative, and to slay him that had done the deed. Sometimes people were killed by accident, when it was clearly unjust that he who had unwittingly killed another should be slain. To guard against the innocent thus suffering, God commanded that "cities of refuge" should be appointed, to which the slayer might flee, "which killeth any person at unawares."

These cities were six in number: Kedesh, Shechem, and Kirjath-arba, on the west of Jordan; and Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan, on the east of that river. They were so arranged that a few hours' rapid flight would bring the slayer from any part of the land to one of the cities of refuge. Jewish writers say that the roads leading to these cities were always kept in good repair, and that guide-posts were placed at every cross road with "Refuge! Refuge!" written upon them. But the man that wilfully killed another was not sheltered. He was given up to the avenger to be slain.

In our picture we see the slayer running to the city gate; the avenger close behind, shooting arrows at him. He has thus far escaped, and two or three more steps will place him in safety. But, once within the city, he must not quit its refuge until the death of the high priest. If he do so and the avenger find him he may be slain. But upon the death of the high priest he will be allowed to return home, to dwell in peace again.



FLEEING TO THE CITY OF REFUGE.

JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION.



EXHORTATION seems a hard word, but it simply means to strongly urge to good deeds, and this is what our artist shows Joshua to be doing.

Joshua is now an old man, and the Israelites are settled peaceably in Canaan. He has called them before him, with their elders, and heads, and judges, and officers. He tells them that he is old and about to die, and reminds them of the land that has already been conquered and divided among them, and of that which still remains to be conquered; urging them to be "very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that they turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." He bids them take good heed therefore unto themselves, that they love the Lord their God; and warns them that if they go back and do wickedly, the anger of the Lord will be kindled against them, and they will perish quickly from off the good land which God has given them.

In his address, Joshua said, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." How faithful is God! He never fails in His promises: and we are told He is unchangeable, so that whatever He promises now He will fulfil, and whatever warnings He gives will surely come to pass. How good is it to have this holy and wise God for our Father, and to know that He promises abundantly to bless all those that trust in the Saviour, Jesus Christ. But let us take heed of the warnings against sin given in God's Holy Word.



JOSHUA EXHORTING THE PEOPLE.

GIDEON AND THE FLEECE.

AFTER the death of Joshua, the Israelites turned away from God, and served idols. Therefore the evils came upon them of which they had been warned by Moses and Joshua. But at different times God, seeing their distress, raised up "judges" to deliver them from their enemies, and to judge over them. The first of these judges was named Othniel. He was Caleb's nephew. The last was Samuel. One that lived about one hundred years before Samuel was named Gideon.

The Israelites were at this time in great trouble. They were hiding in dens and caves because of the Midianites, who had conquered them and overrun their country. When their corn was ripe these enemies came and destroyed it, so altogether they were in sad plight. One day Gideon was threshing wheat in a secluded place, so as to escape the notice of the Midianites, when an angel from God appeared to him, bidding him to go and save the Israelites from their foes. Gideon obeyed the command: but before commencing the battle he much desired a sign from God showing that He would give the Israelites the victory. The sign Gideon asked for was, that when he laid a fleece of wool on the ground, if the victory were to be his, then the fleece should be wet and the ground dry. He placed the wool on the ground, and taking it up the next morning found it wet, although the ground was dry. So he knew God had answered him as he desired. But he was not quite satisfied. He begged God for a second sign. This time the ground was to be wet and the fleece of wool dry. God gave him this sign also: and then Gideon felt sure that the Israelites would be victorious over the Midianites.



EXAMINING THE FLEECE.

THE DEFEAT OF THE MIDIANITES.

LARGE numbers of the Israelites gathered around Gideon, prepared to fight against the Midianites, who were encamped in a valley, "like grasshoppers for multitude." How Gideon's host was reduced till only three hundred men remained, and the wonderful dream he heard related, when he and his servant went down as spies into the enemy's camp, are recorded in the seventh chapter of Judges. It was not by their own bravery or power that the Israelites were to overcome their enemies. God was to give them the victory: and He chose Gideon and three hundred men to overcome the great and mighty host of the Midianites.

Gideon divided his three hundred men into three companies, and put a trumpet in every man's hand, and gave to each a pitcher with a lamp inside. Then he said, "Look on me, and do likewise: when I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of the camp, and say, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'" Gideon and the hundred men of his company approached the enemy's camp by night, and the other two companies drew nigh also, so that the Midianites were surrounded. Then all blew their trumpets, broke their pitchers, held up their lamps (torches), and cried out as they had been commanded.

The Midianites heard the trumpets' blast and the cry, and saw the lights. They were thrown into confusion, and one fought against another; then they fled, and were pursued by the Israelites, great numbers of whom gathered together and followed after their flying enemies. Thus the Midianites were overcome, and Israel had peace during the lifetime of Gideon.



“THE SWORD OF THE LORD, AND OF GIDEON.”

THE DEATH OF SAMSON.



SAMSON'S birth was foretold by an angel. He was to grow up a Nazarite, forbidden to drink strong drink, neither was his head to be shaved. His strength was very great; but his marriage was sinful, and his doings with the idolatrous Philistines terrible. Though an Israelite and a judge, I fear much he sinned greatly against God. On one occasion he went to Gaza, a city of the Philistines. The inhabitants tried to take him, but he arose at midnight and carried away the gates of their city. In our picture though he looks so strong, yet we see chains on his legs, and he is blind! How came he to lose his sight and be made a prisoner? I think it was owing to his sin and folly.

He became acquainted with a wicked woman, who enticed him to tell her in what his great strength lay. Three times he told her falsely, but at last he said that if the flowing locks of his hair were removed his strength would depart. While he slept these locks were cut off, then the Philistines burst in upon him, and when he arose to resist them, he found that his strength was gone. Then his eyes were cruelly put out, and he was bound with fetters of brass.

Our artist shows him blind, brought out to make sport at the Philistines' feast. He is very sorrowful, and, I think, angry. He asks the lad beside him to place his hands upon the pillars supporting the house; then, his great strength returning, he bows himself with all his might; the pillars break, the house falls, and Samson, with very many of the Philistines, is crushed amid the ruins. Was not this a terrible end to what might have been a noble life?



SAMSON MAKING SPORT FOR THE PHILISTINES.

RUTH AND NAOMI.



NAOMI was the wife of a Jew named Elimelech, who left his own city of Bethlehem to go into the land of Moab, because there was a famine in Canaan. Some time afterwards he died, leaving Naomi a widow with two sons, all dwellers in a strange land. Her sons married two young women belonging to Moab, whose names were Orpah and Ruth. After living there about ten years Naomi's sons died also, leaving Orpah and Ruth widows, along with their widowed mother-in-law. Then Naomi determined to return to her own land. Orpah and Ruth accompanied Naomi some distance on her journey; then she bade them to leave her, telling each to go back to her mother's house in Moab, while she would pursue her way alone to the land of Judah. They were unwilling to do so, saying they would go with her to her land and people; but she urged them to depart, assuring them that they would gain nothing by leaving their own country to accompany her, and that they had better return to their own homes. Then the story informs us—you will find it in the Bible, in the Book of Ruth—that Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and departed; but Ruth clave unto her, saying, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

So Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law, and journeyed with her until they reached Canaan. Then they both dwelt in the city of Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, where we shall meet with them again.



RUTH AND NAOMI.

BOAZ AND RUTH.

WHEN Naomi returned to Bethlehem she was poor. The poor were allowed at harvest time to follow the reapers; gleaning or gathering up the stray ears of corn. One day, Ruth obtained permission from her mother-in-law to go gleaning, and went to glean in the field of a rich man named Boaz, who happened to be a kinsman, or relative of Elimelech. But Ruth did not know of this relationship.

Boaz saw Ruth gleaning, and asked one of his servants who she was. The servant replied, "It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." Then Boaz spoke kindly to Ruth, telling her not to go to any other field to glean, but to stay with his maidens and glean in his field. She fell on her face before him and bowed herself to the ground, and asked, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" Boaz was pleased with her because of her kindness to Naomi, so he replied, "It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband." He also bade her to eat and drink with his servants, and told his reapers to let some handfuls of grain fall on purpose for her. So Ruth gleaned that day quite a large quantity of barley, which she took home to Naomi. Then she learned that Boaz was her kinsman.

She continued gleaning until the end of harvest; and afterwards became the wife of Boaz and grandmother of Jesse, the father of David. Jesus Christ descended from David; so we see what high honour was bestowed upon Ruth for her kindness to her mother-in-law.



BOAZ SHOWING KINDNESS TO RUTH.

HANNAH PRAYING BEFORE THE LORD.



THE Tabernacle, which had been set up by the Israelites in the wilderness, was after the conquest of Canaan erected at Shiloh, a city about ten miles south of Shechem. There it remained for more than three hundred years. No Temple was at Jerusalem in those days, so the Jewish priests offered sacrifices to God in the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

One day, Hannah, the wife of a priest named Elkanah, came to the Tabernacle to worship. She was grieved because she had no children; and especially sad because she had no son. So she knelt down and prayed to God, and asked God to remember her sorrow and to give her a son; promising that if God granted her request, she would give that son to Him all the days of his life.

As Hannah prayed, Eli, the high priest, saw her. She did not speak aloud, but prayed in her heart; her lips moved, but no voice was heard; so Eli thought that a drunken woman had come before the Lord. He reproved her saying, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee." But Hannah had not drunk wine. She answered Eli, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." Then Eli bade her "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

Hannah left the Tabernacle. Her face was no longer sad. She believed God had heard her prayer; and He had done so. In due time a son was given her, whom she named Samuel. Samuel means *Heard of God*, which name Hannah gave him in remembrance of God's goodness in hearing her prayer.



5—*Beautiful Stories, Old Test.* HANNAH PRAYING BEFORE THE LORD.

ELI AND SAMUEL.



ELKANAH went up to Shiloh yearly to offer sacrifice; and when Samuel was old enough, Hannah went with her husband and took her little boy with her. They came to Eli the high priest, and Hannah said: "Oh, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition. Therefore also have I given him to the Lord." Then she left Samuel with Eli.

Samuel assisted Eli in the Tabernacle service, and wore a linen ephod like a priest. His mother came yearly to see him, when she accompanied Elkanah to the sacrifice at Shiloh, and each time brought with her a little coat, which she had made for her son. Eli was an old man, who had two wicked sons. These he had not restrained as he should have done. So God was displeased with him and them on account of their sins.

One night, while the lamp in the Tabernacle was burning, and Eli was resting, Samuel was sleeping. A voice came to him calling, "Samuel!" He rose, and ran to Eli saying, "Here am I." But Eli had not called, so Samuel lay down again. A second time the same voice called, "Samuel!" He went to Eli and said, "Here am I; for thou didst call me." But Eli replied, "I called not, my son; lie down again." The call was repeated a third time; then Eli told Samuel it was the Lord who called him; and bade him answer if the voice came again, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Again God called, and Samuel answered as Eli had commanded him. Then God told Samuel what terrible things should befall Eli and his sons through their wickedness.



SAMUEL COMING TO ELI.

DEATH OF ELI AND HIS SONS.

IN the morning Samuel feared to tell Eli what the Lord had shown him; but Eli bade him do so, saying to Samuel, "God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all that He said unto thee." So Samuel told Eli all God had said, keeping nothing back, and Eli answered, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Afterwards there was war between the Israelites and the Philistines, and both sides prepared for battle. They fought; the Israelites were defeated, and many of them slain. Then they sent to Shiloh and fetched the ark of the covenant out of the Tabernacle, carrying it to the camp, and thinking that if the ark were with them they would overcome their enemies. But the ark only signified God's presence in their midst; it was not God Himself, to give them victory. It was very sinful of them thus to use what God had made so holy; and God suffered them again to be defeated. The ark was taken by the Philistines, and many of the Israelites were slain.

Eli, who was then ninety-eight years old, and nearly blind, sat by the wayside, trembling for the safety of the ark, and waiting for messengers to bring news of the battle. Presently a messenger came who told him the Israelites had fled before the Philistines, that his two sons Hophni and Phinehas were slain, and that the ark of God had been taken. When he heard that the ark had been taken, he fell backward from off his seat and died. Thus God's judgment upon Eli and his sons came to pass. In our picture we see the messenger, who has just come from the field of battle, telling Eli the sad tidings that caused his death.



ELI RECEIVING THE EVIL TIDINGS.

PLAYING ON THE HARP BEFORE SAUL.

WE are not told much in the Bible concerning the early life of David. He was born in Bethlehem. We have seen who his father was, but I do not find that his mother's name is given. His own name means "beloved." What a happy name! He must have been much loved by his parents, and we know he was loved by God.

Like many other youths in Canaan, he acted as a shepherd to his father's flocks. He was a fair, open-faced boy; "ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at," so the Scriptures say. He was a good musician, knew how to sling stones at a mark, and was so brave that when a lion and a bear came to attack the lambs of his flock he went after them and killed them both. One day a strange and most important event happened. Samuel, the prophet, came from Ramah, and pouring some very precious oil upon the head of David, anointed him to be the future King of Israel. Saul was then King, but on account of his wickedness God had rejected him, saying that another should reign in his stead.

Soon after this event Saul became very wretched. An evil spirit troubled him, we are told. His servants advised him to get a man that could play skilfully upon the harp, so that music might drive away his misery. Some one suggested David; and David was sent for. He brought sweet strains from his harp, and Saul was soothed. Saul was pleased with David. We are told that "he loved him greatly," and that David became his armour-bearer. But he soon grew jealous, and twice threw a javelin at David, seeking to smite him to the wall and kill him. This, however, he was not able to do.



DAVID PLAYING ON THE HARP BEFORE SAUL.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

HOW attentively David looks at the stones in his hand. His sling is on his arm, and his bag by his side. What is he about to do with those stones? And who is that tall man in armour, strutting about with such a long spear in his hand?

Two armies were drawn up in battle array. They were the armies of the Israelites and Philistines. The camp of the Israelites was on one hill, and that of the Philistines was upon another; a valley lying between. For forty days these armies had been facing each other, but yet the battle had been delayed. The Philistines had on their side a giant of great height and strength, encased in armour, who daily came out, challenging the Israelites to send a man from their camp to fight with him. But no man among them dared to go against Goliath, the Philistines' champion.

Meanwhile Jesse had sent David to the Israelites' camp to see after his brethren. He heard what the giant said, and offered to go out against him. Saul was informed of David's offer, and sent for him. Saul told David he was not able to fight the giant, but he boldly replied, "The Lord which delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." David trusted not in his own power, but in God! Then Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

He went, slung one of the smooth stones he had chosen out of the brook, smote the Philistine in the forehead so that he fell to the earth, and then ran and cut off his head. Thus God enabled this ruddy youth to overcome the giant Philistine, and to slay him with a sling and a stone.



CHOOSING SMOOTH STONES OUT OF THE BROOK.

NATHAN REPROVING THE KING.

DAVID was now King. He had great riches and honour, and a palace had been built for him. He had brought the ark from Kirjath-jearim, and placed it in the tabernacle prepared for it at Jerusalem, and he now reigned over all the people of Israel and Judah. But David did a very wicked thing. He took the wife of Uriah the Hittite for his wife, and caused Uriah to be slain. God was displeased at what he had done, and sent Nathan the prophet to reprove him.

Nathan's reproof was given by a parable. It was a story of a poor man who had one dear little lamb. It grew up in his house, played with his children, and was very precious to him. But one day a traveller came to a rich neighbour, who possessed great flocks and herds, and this neighbour, instead of killing one of his own lambs and setting it before his guest, sent and took the poor man's lamb and killed it.

David heard the story, and was very angry. He said the rich man should die, and the lamb taken away should be restored fourfold. Then Nathan, looking at the King, said: "Thou art the man!" He showed David how greatly he had sinned, and told him that trouble and sorrow would come upon him for what he had done. God had given him riches and honour, and all that he could wish for; yet he had taken the one precious thing of Uriah's, even his wife, and had caused him to be slain. David was sorely grieved when he saw how wickedly he had acted. He confessed his sin to God, and God forgave it; but great trouble came upon the King afterwards through this crime.



“THOU ART THE MAN.”

DAVID AND ARAUNAH.

AFTER David had reigned many years he numbered the people of Israel. This was wrong; and God sent a pestilence which destroyed seventy thousand men. David was grieved, and prayed that God would punish him and spare the people. God stayed the hand of the destroying angel; who stood by the threshing-floor of Araunah, whither David was told to go and offer sacrifice. David went. He purchased the threshing-floor of Araunah, also oxen and wood, and offered a burnt sacrifice to God. The following verses describe the scene:—

BESIDE Araunah's threshing-place
The awful angel took his stand,
When from high heaven came words
of grace—
“It is enough; stay now thine hand.”

For David's penitential prayer
Had enter'd God's compassionate ear;
And where the angel stood, even there
God bade the King an altar rear.

Araunah offered ground, and wood,
And oxen for the sacrifice:
David the noble wish withstood,
And bought them all at the full price.

His answer has a royal ring;
Its lesson high shall not be lost:
“Burnt offerings I will never bring
Unto Jehovah without cost.”

The altar rose, the victims died,
The plague was stayed, and lo, there
fell—
Token that Heaven was satisfied—
A fire from God, and all was well.

'Twas like a finger from the skies—
That falling fire—to show God's will,
That here the Temple should arise
And crown Moriah's sacred hill.

And still God marks the faithful prayer,
The careful work, the costly pains;
The Spirit's fire descendeth there,
And there, as in a shrine, remains.

RICHARD WILTON, M. A.



DAVID AND ARAUNAH.

ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS.



OD was displeased with King Ahab, and sent His prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, to say unto him, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth there shall not be dew nor rain for years in all Israel." God knew that these words would make Ahab angry with Elijah, so He commanded Elijah to get out of Ahab's way. "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

Elijah went, and the ravens brought him bread and meat, morning and evening, and he drank of the brook. But after many days the brook dried up, and God told him to go to Zarephath, where a widow would sustain him. So he arose and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the city he saw the widow gathering sticks; and called to her, saying, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink, and a morsel of bread in thy hand, that I may eat."

The widow turned and said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but only a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering a few sticks, that I may go in and bake it for me and my son, that we may eat it before we starve to death." Elijah told her not to fear, but to make a cake for him, and, afterwards, one for her son and herself, for God had said that neither her handful of meal nor her cruse of oil should fail until He again sent rain upon the earth. So she did as Elijah told her, and there was always enough oil and meal for their daily food, according to the word of the Lord which He spake by Elijah.



ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS.

PLOUGHING IN CANAAN.



IN Scripture frequent mention is made of the husbandman and his work. Ploughing the land, sowing the seed, reaping the harvest, and winnowing the grain are often referred to. Our picture shows an Eastern husbandman ploughing. How different it is to ploughing in our own land! There is no *coulter*; and instead of the broad steel *plough-share* we see a pointed piece of wood. And the long handles with which our labourers guide their ploughs—where are they? The strong horses, too, harnessed one behind the other, are missing. Yes! none of these were used in Canaan. Small oxen drew the plough; and the husbandman guided it by means of a single handle, as we see him doing in the picture. Thus their method of ploughing was a slow one, and unless the land had been very good their harvests would have been poor.

Often these husbandmen had to wait until the rain made the ground soft enough for their ploughs to enter it, consequently many had to toil in cold, stormy, winter weather. To this the proverb alludes which says: “The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.” (Prov. xx. 4.)

Perhaps it was just such a plough, drawn by just such oxen as we see in our picture, that Elisha was using when Elijah passed by and cast his mantle upon him; thereby calling Elisha to be his servant and successor. We are told that Elisha “took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.”



THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.

MANY interesting stories are told in the Bible, few of which are more touching than that of Elisha the prophet, and the Shunammite woman. This story we find in the fourth chapter of the Second Book of Kings.

We read of the prophet journeying to and fro, and resting in the little chamber that the kind Shunammite had built for him on the wall of her house. We see its bed, table, stool, and candlestick; and the joy beaming upon the good woman's face when a tiny infant son was given her. How she loved him! And as he grew up how carefully she watched over him. But a sad time was coming.

The golden corn was in the field ready for reaping, for the harvest time had come. The hot sun shone overhead, and the little lad was out with his father in the field, probably running about among the corn. Suddenly he felt a violent pain, and cried out, "My head, my head!" Then joy was changed to sorrow. The father saw his son was ill, and bade a lad carry the little boy to his mother, on whose knees he sat till noon, and then he died.

Next we see the mother leaving her dead son, and journeying to find the prophet. Elisha sees her coming, and sends Gehazi to inquire if all is well. Then she falls down before the prophet and tells him her trouble; and he sends his servant with his staff to lay it upon the dead child. The story closes by stating how Elisha follows Gehazi, goes to the chamber where the dead boy lay, prays to God that the life may be restored, and finally has the joy of giving the lad, alive and well again, into the arms of his mother.



THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON RESTORED.

THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID.



NAAMAN was a great general in the army of the King of Syria, who esteemed him highly, because it was Naaman that led the Syrians when God gave them victory over the Israelites. But in spite of his bravery and his high position, he was miserable, because he suffered from a terrible disease called leprosy. Now, among the captives whom the Syrians had brought back from war was a little Israelitish maiden, who was appointed to wait upon Naaman's wife. She had heard of the wonderful things which Elisha did in the name of God; and she told her mistress that if Naaman could only see this prophet, who was in Samaria, he could be cured. And the King was told what the maid had said, and he sent a letter to the King of Israel commanding him to cure Naaman of his leprosy. But the King of Israel was afraid, and thought the King of Syria sought this way to quarrel with him. When Elisha heard of the King's fear, he sent and desired that Naaman should be brought to him. So Naaman came in his chariot, and stood at Elisha's door. But the prophet instead of coming to him, sent a message directing Naaman to wash in Jordan seven times, when his leprous flesh would be restored to health. Naaman had thought that Elisha would have received him with much ceremony and touched him, bidding the leprosy to depart; so he was angry and said, "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" Therefore he went away in a rage. But his servants persuaded him to carry out the prophet's injunction, and he went and dipped seven times in Jordan, and was made whole.



THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID.

JONAH AT NINEVEH.

JONAH was commanded to go to Nineveh, and cry out that the city should be destroyed on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. But instead of obeying God's command he fled in a ship that was bound for Tarshish. Then a great storm arose, and the shipmen cast Jonah into the sea, believing that the storm had been sent through his disobedience. God saved Jonah by means of a large fish, and brought him safely to land again.

A second time God said to Jonah, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." So Jonah arose and went as God had directed him. Now Nineveh was a very large city, about sixty miles in circumference, and Jonah went some distance inside and then cried out, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" It was a strange and terrible cry which sounded throughout the city, and as the Ninevites heard it they feared God, proclaimed a fast, covered themselves with sackcloth, and every man was commanded to forsake evil. So they hoped God would forgive them and spare their city.

God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, therefore He spared their city. When Jonah saw that Nineveh was spared he was very angry, and prayed God to take away his life. He made a booth and sat under it to see what would become of the city. Then God sheltered him from the sun by a gourd, and afterwards taught him by it how wrong he was in being displeased because Nineveh had been spared. Nineveh was afterwards overthrown, and has remained since then but a heap of ruins.



JONAH AT NINEVEH.

HEZEKIAH AND SENNACHERIB.



SENNACHERIB, the King of Assyria, invaded the land of Judah, and threatened to lay siege to Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah took counsel with his princes and mighty men, and repaired the broken walls, and made them higher. He made many other preparations for the defence of the city, and went among his people, exhorting them to trust in God, and be of good courage. But Sennacherib sent messengers to induce those that guarded the walls of the city to revolt against Hezekiah, saying, "Do not believe this Hezekiah when he tells you that your God will deliver you; hath any of the nations against which I have made war been delivered by their gods?"

When Hezekiah heard these words he went into the house of the Lord, and sent messengers to Isaiah, asking for his prayers. Isaiah said to them, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Be not afraid of the words with which the King of Assyria hath blasphemed Me. I will send a blast upon him, and he shall return and shall fall by the sword in his own land.'" Afterwards the King of Assyria sent a letter to Hezekiah, in which he repeated his sneers at the power of God. When Hezekiah read it, he went into the house of the Lord, and spreading the letter before the Lord, prayed for His help. God answered, by the mouth of Isaiah, that the King of Assyria should not enter Jerusalem, nor shoot over it, but be turned back the way he came. And the same night the angel of the Lord went into the camp of the Assyrians, and smote one hundred and eighty-five thousand. Then Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, and as he was worshipping in the house of his god, there came to him two of his sons, who killed him.



HEZEKIAH LAYING THE LETTER BEFORE GOD.

THE BRAVE HEBREW BOYS.

BRAVE boys and girls! We all wish to be brave, do we not? Then we must learn to say "No," when tempted to do wrong.

These Hebrew boys were young nobles who had been carried captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; but though in a strange land, subject to the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar, they feared not to refuse his food and wine when they knew that the taking of it would cause them to sin against God. They were well educated Hebrew youths, and the Babylonish king had commanded that they should be taught the learning of the Chaldeans; also, to keep them in health and with beautiful countenances, he had ordered that the meat and wine from his table should be given them. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel seems to have been their leader. We find "he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." So he begged the king's servant to feed him and his three companions on plain food and pure water; but the servant feared to do so, lest the king should find them worse looking than those who ate his meat and drank his wine, and the servant should lose his head in consequence. A trial was made, however, for ten days, at the end of which time they were found to be better looking than the boys fed on rich food and wine. Therefore, the servant let them live plainly according to their request; and at the end of three years, when they stood before the king, we are told that for wisdom and understanding none were found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.



THE BRAVE HEBREW BOYS.

DANIEL AND THE LIONS.

WHEN Darius came to the throne, upon the death of Belshazzar, he set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes. Over these he appointed three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. Now the princes and other presidents were jealous of Daniel, and sought to find some fault against him; but could not, as he was a faithful servant of the King. Then they tried to injure him because of his praying to God. So they came to the King, and said, "King Darius live for ever: all the great officers of thy kingdom have consulted together to establish a royal law, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O King, he shall be cast into a den of lions." The King signed the writing and established the law. But Daniel still knelt and prayed three times a day as before.

His enemies saw him praying, and told the King, urging him to carry out the law. But the King was angry with himself that he had agreed to such a law, and tried to think of some way to save Daniel. Then these men urged that the law could not be altered. So Daniel was cast into the den of lions, and a stone was put over the mouth of the den, which was sealed by the King and the lords. But the King had said to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest will deliver thee."

The King passed the night fasting, and could not sleep. In the morning, very early, he arose and went to the den of lions, and cried with a lamentable voice, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God able to deliver thee from the lions?" Then Daniel said, "O King, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths."



DANIEL AND THE LIONS.

ESTHER BEFORE THE KING.

AHASUERUS reigned over the vast empire of Persia, and Esther, the adopted daughter of a Jew named Mordecai, was Queen. None in the palace knew she was a Jewess, for Mordecai had charged her not to make it known. He abode in the king's palace, and was one of the king's servants.

Ahasuerus promoted Haman, one of his courtiers, a cruel and wicked man, to be over all his princes and officers; and all bowed down to Haman and did him reverence except Mordecai, the Jew. Then was Haman filled with wrath against Mordecai and his people, and obtained from the king a decree ordering that all the Jews throughout his dominions should be slain. Mordecai informed Queen Esther of this decree, and bade her go to the king and plead for her people. Now it was one of the laws of the palace that no one should approach the king in the inner court unless he had been previously called; the penalty for not obeying this law being death, unless the king should hold out the golden sceptre to the offender so that he might live. Esther knew the danger of approaching the king uncalled for, but she bade Mordecai to gather the Jews so that they might spend three days in fasting and prayer, while she and her maidens did the same, and, said she, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Esther went in. The king graciously held out the golden sceptre to her, accepted her invitation to a banquet, and finally ordered the wicked Haman to be hanged, and measures to be taken to preserve the lives of the Jews.



ESTHER BEFORE THE KING.

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

(See Frontispiece.)

JONATHAN was the son of Saul, the king. He loved David greatly, and regretted that his father, through jealousy, sought David's life. David, after the last attempt of Saul to smite him to the wall by a javelin, fled away, and meeting with Jonathan said: "What have I done? What is mine iniquity, and what is my sin before thy father that he seeketh my life?"

Jonathan sympathised deeply with his friend, and tried to save him. He promised to ascertain whether Saul fully intended to kill David, and, if so, to inform him, that he might escape. Meantime David was to remain in hiding, but on the third day Jonathan was to return with the required information. Before they parted they entered into a solemn covenant, one with the other, to remain firm friends during life; and David promised to show kindness to Jonathan and his children, after God should make him king.

At the time appointed, after ascertaining that Saul still sought David's life, Jonathan went to the field where David lay concealed. Jonathan took with him his bow and arrows and a little lad. Shooting an arrow beyond the lad, he cried, "Make speed, haste, stay not!" These words were intended as a warning to David to flee quickly. When the lad had gone, David arose from his hiding place and came to Jonathan, bowing three times before him. Then they kissed each other, wept, and again pledged themselves to be faithful; after which David fled, and Jonathan returned to the city.

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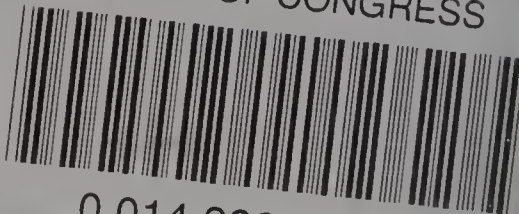
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