

STORY OF THE BIBLE

STORY OF THE BIBLE
TOLD FOR YOUNG AND OLD

BY

JESSE LYMAN HURLBUT

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

Cover and arrangement © 2007 Yesterday's Classics, LLC.

This edition, first published in 2007 by Yesterday's Classics, an imprint of Yesterday's Classics, LLC, is an unabridged republication of the text originally published by W. E. Scull in 1904. For a complete listing of the books that are published by Yesterday's Classics, visit www.yesterdaysclassics.com. Yesterday's Classics is the publishing arm of the Baldwin Online Children's Literature Project which presents the complete text of hundreds of classic books for children at www.mainlesson.com.

ISBN-10: 1-59915-178-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-178-6

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 3418
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

To the Young People of America

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, IN THE
HOPE THAT IT MAY INTEREST
THEM IN THE READING OF

THE BEST OF ALL BOOKS

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THIS BOOK

SOME years ago, the editor of an English magazine sent a communication to “the hundred greatest men in Great Britain” asking them this question: “If for any reason you were to spend a year absolutely alone, in a prison for instance, and could select from your library three volumes to be taken with you as companions in your period of retirement please to inform us what those three books would be.” The inquiry was sent to peers of the realm, prominent leaders in politics, judges, authors, manufacturers, merchants, gentlemen of leisure—men who would represent every aspect of successful life. In the answers it was found that ninety-eight of the hundred men named “The Bible” first on the list of the three books to be chosen.

If from the middle class of society, instead of the highest, another hundred names were taken at random, requiring only character and not greatness, the proportion of those who would name the Bible as the most desirable book in all literature would be almost, perhaps quite, as large. And if one should ask the same question of a hundred moral honest people in the lower walks of life—workingmen and housewives in humble homes,—the answer from the largest number would still be “The Bible.” There is no other book in all the world which commands annually a circulation of ten million copies, in order to supply the demand for it in every land and in every language. Choose if you please the new novel that last year sold the largest number of copies, and you will find during the same year more than ten times the number of Bibles were sold. And three years from now, when the new novel will be old, forgotten, and no

longer in demand, there will again be ten million Bibles in three hundred and twenty-five languages printed and bound and sold in a year!

A book which stands in such honor as the Bible no one can afford to neglect. It is everywhere quoted, referred to, written about, preached from, and every one who would be considered as intelligent must have some acquaintance with it. And the time when one can most readily obtain a familiarity with the Bible is in early life. Those who in childhood learn the Story of the Bible are fortunate, for they will never forget it. Wise parents tell the Stories of the Bible to their little children, and both parents and children find them the most fascinating of all stories. "David and Goliath" is more interesting than "Jack, the Giant Killer;" "Joseph and His Brothers" will compare favorably with "Whittington, Lord Mayor of London;" the battles of Joshua and David are as wonderful as those of "King Arthur and the Table Round." The Bible is a veritable "Arabian Nights" of entertainment when parents are themselves familiar with the stories and know how to tell them. No book is so delightful to children as the Bible.

But the parents who are not thoroughly informed, or who do not possess the great gift of story-telling, find difficulties in the path of teaching the contents of the Bible to their children. Here is a great Book with masses of matter interesting only to students, as history, genealogy, details of law and customs of worship, psalms, prophecies, proverbs, epistles—how shall a selection be made appropriate to childhood? There are Oriental forms of speech, antiquated, unfamiliar, sometimes unacceptable to the taste of the age. The Stories of the Bible must be chosen with care, some statements must be explained, and some allusions must be omitted. There is need of a "Child's Bible," if children are to be interested in the Book of Books.

The writer of this work has been for many years a Bible student, a Bible teacher and a helper through the press, of many who are instructing the young in the Bible. He has long felt the need of a Book of Bible Stories, different in some respects from

any work that has yet appeared. With this conviction he has undertaken the preparation of this work, which after patient labor and many revisions is now submitted to the public. In its purpose and plan its distinguishing features are the following:

1. The aim has been not merely to make a selection of the most striking and interesting among the stories contained in the Bible, but to tell all the principal stories in their connected order, and in such relation with each other as to form a continuous history. Whoever reads this book will find in it not only "Stories from the Bible," but also the "Story of the Bible" in one narration. He will follow the current of Scripture history and biography.

2. This Bible Story, though continuous and connected, is arranged in the form of a series of Stories, each independent of all the others and treated separately. Every Story has its title; and an effort has been made to give to each a striking title, one that will arrest the young reader's attention. A child or a parent who might hesitate in undertaking to read through the history in the Bible, may open almost at random and find a Story. Here are one hundred and sixty-eight Stories, each one complete in itself, while together combining to form one narrative. And with each Story is named the place where it may be found in the Bible.

3. Special care has been given to the language of this book. I have endeavored to make it childlike without making it childish. Every word has been carefully chosen and there are few words in these Stories which a child of ten years old will not readily understand. Whenever it has been found necessary to introduce any word outside the realm of childhood, as "altar," "offering," "tabernacle," "synagogue," "centurion," etc., it is carefully explained, not once only, but a number of times, until it becomes familiar. Doctrinal and technical terms have been everywhere excluded, and in place of them plain, familiar words have been given.

4. Inasmuch as the book is designed to lead the young reader to the Bible itself, and not away from it, the language of the Bible, or a language somewhat like that of the Bible, has been employed. For the same reason I have refrained from adding to the Bible record any imaginary scenes or incidents or conversations. I wish every child who hears this book read to feel instinctively that it is *the Bible*, and not a fairy-tale, to which he is listening. When he grows older and reads these Stories himself for the first time in the Bible itself, I would not have him feel that he has been misled, or taught that which is not contained in the Word of God. The Bible stories are made plain, but they are not rewritten or changed.

5. In my opinion many books for children containing stories from the Bible are greatly marred by the evident attempt to interject a body of divinity into them, to make them teach doctrines which may be right or may be wrong, but are not stated nor hinted in the Scripture stories. Some excellent works have occupied much space here and there in trying to put into childlike language and to connect with Bible stories the deepest and most mysterious doctrines, which theologians find hard to understand. Others contain many moral reflections and applications which may be useful, but are not contained in the text of the story. I have sought to explain what needs explanation, but to avoid all doctrinal bias, and not to be wise above what is written. Only in a few instances where the New Testament warrants a spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament story has an application been given, and then in the simplest and fewest words. It is my confident hope that all denominations of Christians may feel at home in the pages of this book.

6. In the management of the material, the paragraphs are short, and according to the modern manner the conversations are generally printed in separate paragraphs. The results of recent knowledge in Bible lands and Bible history are used as far as is suitable in a book for children. Where the Revised Version is a manifest improvement upon the Old Version, it has been

followed, as bringing the reader a step nearer to the thought of the Biblical writers.

In the hope that this book may be an aid to parents and teachers in imparting Bible truth, and to children in learning it, with an earnest desire to increase the interest in the Sacred Narrative, these pages have been prepared and are sent forth into the world.

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut

AUGUST 1, 1904.

CONTENTS

PART FIRST

Stories from the First Five Books in the Bible

I. THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN	1
II. THE FIRST BABY IN THE WORLD, AND HIS BROTHER	5
III. THE GREAT SHIP THAT SAVED EIGHT PEOPLE	7
IV. THE TOWER THAT WAS NEVER FINISHED	12
V. THE STORY OF A LONG JOURNEY	15
VI. HOW LOT'S CHOICE BROUGHT TROUBLE AND ABRAM'S CHOICE BROUGHT BLESSING	19
VII. THE ANGEL BY THE WELL	22
VIII. THE RAIN OF FIRE THAT FELL ON A CITY	24
IX. THE BOY WHO BECAME AN ARCHER.....	28
X. HOW AN ANGEL'S VOICE SAVED A BOY'S LIFE	31
XI. THE STORY OF A JOURNEY AFTER A WIFE.....	34
XII. HOW JACOB STOLE HIS BROTHER'S BLESSING	37
XIII. JACOB'S WONDERFUL DREAM	42
XIV. A MIDNIGHT WRESTLING MATCH	45
XV. THE RICH MAN'S SON WHO WAS SOLD AS A SLAVE.....	48
XVI. FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE	52
XVII. HOW JOSEPH'S DREAM CAME TRUE	57

XVIII.	A LOST BROTHER FOUND	62
XIX.	FROM THE LAND OF FAMINE TO THE LAND OF PLENTY.....	67
XX.	THE BEAUTIFUL BABY WHO WAS FOUND IN A RIVER.....	70
XXI.	THE VOICE FROM THE BURNING BUSH.....	74
XXII.	THE RIVER THAT RAN BLOOD	78
XXIII.	THE NIGHT WHEN A NATION WAS BORN.....	82
XXIV.	HOW THE SEA BECAME DRY LAND, AND THE SKY RAINED BREAD	85
XXV.	THE MOUNTAIN THAT SMOKED AND THE WORDS THAT WERE SPOKEN FROM IT	90
XXVI.	HOW AARON MADE A GOLDEN CALF, AND WHAT BECAME OF IT	94
XXVII.	THE TENT WHERE GOD LIVED AMONG HIS PEOPLE	98
XXVIII.	HOW THEY WORSHIPPED GOD IN THE TABERNACLE .	102
XXIX.	WHAT STRONG DRINK BROUGHT TO AARON'S SONS..	105
XXX.	THE SCAPEGOAT IN THE WILDERNESS	107
XXXI.	THE CLUSTER OF GRAPES FROM THE LAND OF CANAAN	109
XXXII.	HOW THE LONG JOURNEY OF THE ISRAELITES CAME TO AN END	113
XXXIII.	WHAT A WISE MAN LEARNED FROM AN ASS	117
XXXIV.	HOW MOSES LOOKED UPON THE PROMISED LAND	124
XXXV.	THE STORY OF JOB.....	127

PART SECOND

Stories of Joshua and the Judges

XXXVI.	THE STORY OF A SCARLET CORD	135
XXXVII.	HOW THE RIVER JORDAN BECAME DRY, AND THE WALLS OF JERICHO FELL DOWN	138
XXXVIII.	THE STORY OF A WEDGE OF GOLD	143
XXXIX.	HOW JOSHUA CONQUERED THE LAND OF CANAAN....	146
XL.	THE OLD MAN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THE GIANTS..	149
XLI.	THE AVENGER OF BLOOD, AND THE CITIES OF REFUGE.....	153
XLII.	THE STORY OF AN ALTAR BESIDE THE RIVER.....	156
XLIII.	THE PRESENT THAT EHUD BROUGHT TO KING EGLON.....	159
XLIV.	HOW A WOMAN WON A GREAT VICTORY	162
XLV.	GIDEON AND HIS BRAVE THREE HUNDRED	166
XLVI.	JEPHTHAH'S RASH PROMISE, AND WHAT CAME FROM IT	174
XLVII.	THE STRONG MAN: HOW HE LIVED AND HOW HE DIED.....	176
XLVIII.	THE IDOL TEMPLE AT DAN, AND ITS PRIEST.....	184
XLIX.	HOW RUTH GLEANED IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ	188
L.	THE LITTLE BOY WITH A LINEN COAT	191
LI.	HOW THE IDOL FELL DOWN BEFORE THE ARK.....	194
LII.	THE LAST OF THE JUDGES	197
LIII.	THE TALL MAN WHO WAS CHOSEN KING.....	199

PART FOURTH

Stories of the Kingdom of Israel

LXXIV.	THE BREAKING UP OF A GREAT KINGDOM	281
LXXV.	THE KING WHO LED ISRAEL TO SIN, AND THE PROPHET WHO WAS SLAIN BY A LION	284
LXXVI.	THE PROPHET WHOSE PRAYER RAISED A BOY TO LIFE	288
LXXVII.	THE PRAYER THAT WAS ANSWERED IN FIRE.....	292
LXXVIII.	THE VOICE THAT SPOKE TO ELIJAH IN THE MOUNT ..	296
LXXIX.	THE WOUNDED PROPHET AND HIS STORY	299
LXXX.	WHAT AHAB PAID FOR HIS VINEYARD	301
LXXXI.	THE ARROW THAT KILLED A KING.....	303
LXXXII.	ELIJAH'S CHARIOT OF FIRE	306
LXXXIII.	A SPRING SWEETENED BY SALT; AND WATER THAT LOOKED LIKE BLOOD	309
LXXXIV.	THE POT OF OIL AND THE POT OF POISON.....	312
LXXXV.	THE LITTLE BOY AT SHUNEM	314
LXXXVI.	HOW A LITTLE GIRL HELPED TO CURE A LEPER	317
LXXXVII.	THE CHARIOTS OF FIRE AROUND ELISHA	321
LXXXVIII.	WHAT THE LEPERS FOUND IN THE CAMP	323
LXXXIX.	JEHU, THE FURIOUS DRIVER OF HIS CHARIOT	325
XC.	ELISHA AND THE BOW; JONAH AND NINEVEH.....	331
XCI.	HOW THE TEN TRIBES WERE LOST.....	335

PART FIFTH

Stories of the People and Kingdom of Judah

XCII.	THE FIRST FOUR KINGS OF JUDAH.	341
XCIII.	THE LITTLE BOY WHO WAS CROWNED KING	345
XCIV.	THREE KINGS AND A GREAT PROPHET	349
XCv.	THE GOOD KING HEZEKIAH	354
XCVI.	THE LOST BOOK FOUND IN THE TEMPLE.....	358
XCvII.	THE LAST FOUR KINGS OF JUDAH, AND THE WEEPING PROPHET	362
XCvIII.	WHAT EZEKIEL SAW IN THE VALLEY	367
XCIX.	THE JEWISH CAPTIVES IN THE COURT OF THE KING ..	370
C.	THE GOLDEN IMAGE AND THE FIERY FURNACE	375
CI.	THE TREE THAT WAS CUT DOWN AND GREW AGAIN.	378
CII.	THE WRITING UPON THE WALL	381
CIII.	DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS.	384
CIV.	THE STORY OF A JOYOUS JOURNEY	387
CV.	THE NEW TEMPLE ON MOUNT MORIAH.....	391
CVI.	THE BEAUTIFUL QUEEN OF PERSIA.....	394
CVII.	THE SCRIBE WHO WROTE THE OLD TESTAMENT.....	403
CVIII.	THE NOBLEMAN WHO BUILT THE WALL OF JERUSALEM.....	406
CIX.	EZRA'S GREAT BIBLE CLASS IN JERUSALEM.....	411

PART SIXTH

The Story of Jesus

CX.	THE ANGEL BY THE ALTAR	417
CXI.	THE MANGER OF BETHLEHEM.....	421
CXII.	THE STAR AND THE WISE MEN.....	424
CXIII.	THE BOY IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.....	427
CXIV.	THE PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS.....	430
CXV.	JESUS IN THE DESERT, AND BESIDE THE RIVER	432
CXVI.	THE WATER JARS AT THE WEDDING FEAST.....	436
CXVII.	THE STRANGER AT THE WELL.....	440
CXVIII.	THE STORY OF A BOY IN CAPERNAUM, AND OF A RIOT IN NAZARETH	444
CXIX.	A NET FULL OF FISHES	447
CXX.	THE LEPER, AND THE MAN LET DOWN THROUGH THE ROOF.....	450
CXXI.	THE CRIPPLE AT THE POOL, AND THE WITHERED HAND IN THE SYNAGOGUE.....	453
CXXII.	THE TWELVE DISCIPLES AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT	456
CXXIII.	THE CAPTAIN'S SERVANT, THE WIDOW'S SON, AND THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.....	460
CXXIV.	SOME STORIES THAT JESUS TOLD BY THE SEA	464
CXXV.	"PEACE, BE STILL"	468
CXXVI.	THE LITTLE GIRL WHO WAS RAISED TO LIFE	470

CXXVII.	A DANCING GIRL, AND WHAT WAS GIVEN HER	473
CXXVIII.	THE FEAST BESIDE THE SEA, AND WHAT FOLLOWED IT.....	476
CXXIX.	THE ANSWER TO A MOTHER'S PRAYER.....	480
CXXX.	THE GLORY OF JESUS ON THE MOUNTAIN.....	483
CXXXI.	THE LITTLE CHILD IN THE ARMS OF JESUS	488
CXXXII.	AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES	490
CXXXIII.	THE MAN WITH CLAY ON HIS FACE	493
CXXXIV.	THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE GOOD SAMARITAN...	496
CXXXV.	LAZARUS RAISED TO LIFE.....	499
CXXXVI.	SOME PARABLES IN PEREA	502
CXXXVII.	THE POOR RICH MAN, AND THE RICH POOR MAN....	507
CXXXVIII.	JESUS AT JERICHO	512
CXXXIX.	PALM SUNDAY	516
CXL.	THE LAST VISITS OF JESUS TO THE TEMPLE	519
CXLI.	THE PARABLES ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES	523
CXLII.	THE LAST SUPPER.....	527
CXLIII.	THE OLIVE ORCHARD AND THE HIGH PRIEST'S HALL.....	531
CXLIV.	THE CROWN OF THORNS	535
CXLV.	THE DARKEST DAY OF ALL THE WORLD.....	540
CXLVI.	THE BRIGHTEST DAY OF ALL THE WORLD.....	544
CXLVII.	THE STRANGER ON THE SHORE	550

PART SEVENTH

Stories of the Early Church

CXLVIII.	THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST DAYS.....	557
CXLIX.	THE MAN AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.....	559
CL.	THE RIGHT WAY TO GIVE AND THE WRONG WAY.....	563
CLI.	STEPHEN WITH THE SHINING FACE.....	567
CLII.	THE MAN READING IN THE CHARIOT.....	570
CLIII.	THE VOICE THAT SPOKE TO SAUL.....	573
CLIV.	WHAT PETER SAW BY THE SEA.....	578
CLV.	HOW THE IRON GATE WAS OPENED.....	582
CLVI.	THE EARLIEST MISSIONARIES.....	585
CLVII.	THE SONG IN THE PRISON.....	589
CLVIII.	PAUL'S SPEECH ON THE HILL.....	594
CLIX.	PAUL AT CORINTH.....	597
CLX.	PAUL AT EPHESUS.....	599
CLXI.	PAUL'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.....	603
CLXII.	THE SPEECH ON THE STAIRS.....	607
CLXIII.	TWO YEARS IN PRISON.....	611
CLXIV.	THE STORY THAT PAUL TOLD TO THE KING.....	615
CLXV.	PAUL IN THE STORM.....	619
CLXVI.	HOW PAUL CAME TO ROME, AND HOW HE LIVED THERE.....	622
CLXVII.	THE THRONE OF GOD.....	626
CLXVIII.	THE CITY OF GOD.....	628

PART FIRST

STORIES FROM THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

STORY 1

THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

Genesis i: 1, to iii: 24.

THIS great round world, on which we live, is very old; so old that no one knows when it was made. But long before there was any earth, or sun, or stars, God was living, for God never began to be. He always was. And long, long ago, God spoke, and the earth and the heavens came. But the earth was not beautiful as it is now, with mountains and valleys, rivers and seas, with trees and flowers. It was a great smoking ball, with land and water mingled in one mass. And all the earth was blacker than midnight, for there was no light upon it. No man could have breathed its air, no animals could walk upon it, and no fish could swim in its black oceans. There was no life upon the earth.

While all was dark upon earth, God said, “Let there be light,” and then the light began to come upon the world. Part of the time it was light, and part of the time it was dark, just as it is now. And God called the dark time Night, and the light time Day. And that was the first day upon this earth after a long night.

Then at God’s word, the dark clouds all around the earth began to break, and the sky came in sight, and the water that was in the clouds began to be separate from the water that was on the earth. And the arch of the sky which was over the earth God called Heaven. Thus the night and the morning made a second day.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

Then God said, “Let the water on the earth come together in one place, and let the dry land rise up.” And so it was. The water that had been all over the world came together, and formed a great ocean, and the dry land rose up from it. And the great water God called Sea, and the dry land he named Earth: and God saw that the Earth and the Sea were both good. Then God said, “Let grass and trees, and flowers, and fruits, grow on the earth.” And at once the earth began to be green and bright with grass, and flowers, and trees bearing fruit. This made the third day upon the earth.

Then God said, “Let the sun, and moon, and stars come into sight from the earth.” So the sun began to shine by day, and the moon and the stars began to shine in the night. And this was done on the fourth day.

And God said, “Let there be fishes in the sea, and let there be birds to fly in the air.” So the fishes, great ones and small, began to swim in the sea; and the birds began to fly in the air over the earth, just as they do now. And this was the fifth day.

Then God said, “Let the animals come upon the earth, great animals and small ones; those that walk and those that creep and crawl on the earth.” And the woods and the fields began to be alive with animals of all kinds. And now the earth began to be more beautiful, with its green fields and bright flowers, and singing birds in the trees, and animals of every kind walking in the forests.

But there were no people in the world—no cities nor houses, and no children playing under the trees. The world was all ready for men and women to enjoy it: and so God said, “I will make man, to be different from all other animals. He shall stand up and shall have a soul, and shall be like God; and he shall be the master of the earth and all that is upon it.”

So God took some of the dust that was on the ground, and out of it he made man; and God breathed into him the breath of life, and man became alive, and stood up on the earth.

And so that the man whom God had made might have a home, God planted a beautiful garden on the earth, at a place where four rivers met. Perhaps we might rather call it a park, for it was

THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

much larger than any garden that you have ever seen, for it was miles and miles in every direction. In this garden, or park, God planted trees, and caused grass to grow, and made flowers to bloom. This was called "The Garden of Eden," and as in one of the languages of the Bible the word that means "garden," or "park," is a word quite like the word "Paradise," this Garden of Eden has often been called "Paradise." This garden God gave to the man that he had made; and told him to care for it, and to gather the fruits upon the trees and the plants, and to live upon them. And God gave to the first man the name Adam: and God brought to Adam the animals that he had made, and let Adam give to each one its name.

But Adam was all alone in this beautiful garden. And God said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make some one to be with Adam, and to help him." So when Adam was asleep, God took a rib from Adam's side, and from it God made a woman; and he brought her to Adam, and Adam called her Eve. And Adam and Eve loved one another; and they were happy in the beautiful garden which God had given them for a home.

Thus in six days the Lord God made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. And on the seventh day God rested from his work.

For a time, we do not know how long, Adam and Eve were at peace in their beautiful garden. They did just as God told them to do, and talked with God as a man would talk with his friend; and they did not know of anything evil or wicked. It was needful for Adam and Eve to understand that they must always obey God's commands. So God said to Adam and Eve:

"You may eat the fruit of all the trees in the garden except one. In the middle of the garden grows a tree, with fruit upon it that you must not eat and you must not touch. If you eat of the fruit upon that tree, you shall die."

Now among the animals in the garden there was a snake: and this snake said to Eve, "Has God told you that there is any kind of fruit in the garden, of which you are forbidden to eat?"

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

And Eve answered the snake, “We can eat the fruit of all the trees except the one that stands in the middle of the garden. If we eat the fruit of that tree, God says that we must die.”

Then the snake said, “No, you will not surely die. God knows that if you eat of the fruit of that tree, you will become as wise as God himself, for you will know what is good and what is evil.”

Eve listened to the snake, and then she looked at the tree and its fruit. As she saw it, she thought that it would taste good; and if it would really make one wise, she would like to eat it, even though God had told her not to do so. She took the fruit, and ate it; and then she gave some to Adam, and he too ate it.

Adam and Eve knew that they had done wrong in not obeying God’s words: and now for the first time they were afraid to meet God. They tried to hide themselves from God’s sight among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called and said, “Adam, where are you?” And Adam said, “Lord, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and I hid myself.”

And God said, “Why were you afraid to meet me? Have you eaten the fruit of the tree of which I told you that you must not touch it?” And Adam said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me some of the fruit, and I ate it.”

Then God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” And Eve said, “The snake told me that it would do me no harm if I should eat the fruit, and so I took some of it and ate it.”

Then the Lord God said to the snake, “Because you have led Adam and Eve to do wrong, you shall no more walk as do other animals; you shall crawl in the dust and the dirt forever. You shall hate the woman, and the woman shall hate you. You shall try to kill her and her children, and her children’s children forever, and they shall try to kill you.”

And the Lord God said to the woman, “Because you led your husband to disobey me, you shall suffer and have pain and trouble all the days of your life.”

THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

And God said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife when she told you to do what was wrong, you too must suffer. You must work for everything that you get from the ground. You will find thorns and thistles and weeds growing on the earth. If you want food, you must dig and plant and reap and work, as long as you live. You came out from the ground, for you were made of dust, and back again into the dust shall your body go when you die.”

And because Adam and Eve had disobeyed the word of the Lord, they were driven out of the beautiful Garden of Eden, which God had made to be their home. They were sent out into the world; and to keep them from going back into the garden, God placed his angels before its gate, with swords which flashed like fire.

So Adam and his wife lost their garden, and no man has ever been able to go into it from that day.

STORY 2

THE FIRST BABY IN THE WORLD, AND HIS BROTHER

Genesis iv: 1 to 18.

SO Adam and his wife went out into the world to live and to work. For a time they were all alone, but after a while God gave them a little child of their own, the first baby that ever came into the world. Eve named him Cain; and after a time another baby came, whom she named Abel.

When the two boys grew up, they worked, as their father worked before them. Cain chose to work in the fields, and to raise grain and fruits. Abel had a flock of sheep and became a shepherd.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

While Adam and Eve were living in the Garden of Eden, they could talk with God, and hear God's voice speaking to them. But now that they were out in the world, they could no longer talk with God freely, as before. So when they came to God, they built an altar of stones heaped up, and upon it they laid something as a gift to God, and burned it, to show that it was not their own, but was given to God, whom they could not see. Then before the altar they made their prayer to God, and asked God to forgive their sins, all that they had done that was wrong; and prayed God to bless them and do good to them.

Each of these brothers, Cain and Abel, offered upon the altar to God his own gift. Cain brought the fruits and the grain which he had grown; and Abel brought a sheep from his flock, and killed it and burned it upon the altar. For some reason God was pleased with Abel and his offering, but was not pleased with Cain and his offering. Perhaps God wished Cain to offer something that had life, as Abel offered; perhaps Cain's heart was not right when he came before God.

And God showed that he was not pleased with Cain; and Cain, instead of being sorry for his sin, and asking God to forgive him, was very angry with God, and angry also toward his brother Abel. When they were out in the field together, Cain struck his brother Abel and killed him. So the first baby in the world grew up to be the murderer of his own brother.

And the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"

And Cain answered, "I do not know; why should I take care of my brother?"

Then the Lord said to Cain, "What is this that you have done? Your brother's blood is like a voice crying to me from the ground. Do you see how the ground has opened, like a mouth, to drink your brother's blood? As long as you live, you shall be under God's curse for the murder of your brother. You shall wander over the earth, and shall never find a home, because you have done this wicked deed."

THE FIRST BABY IN THE WORLD, AND HIS BROTHER

And Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Thou hast driven me out from among men; and thou hast hid thy face from me. If any man finds me he will kill me, because I shall be alone, and no one will be my friend.”

And God said to Cain, “If any one harms Cain, he shall be punished for it.” And the Lord God placed a mark on Cain, so that whoever met him should know him, and should know also that God had forbidden any man to harm him. Then Cain and his wife went away from Adam’s home, to live in a place by themselves, and there they had children. And Cain’s family built a city in that land; and Cain named the city after his first child, whom he had called Enoch.

STORY 3

THE GREAT SHIP THAT SAVED EIGHT PEOPLE

Genesis v: 1, to ix: 17.

AFTER Abel was slain, and his brother Cain had gone into another land, again God gave a child to Adam and Eve. This child they named Seth; and other sons and daughters were given to them, for Adam and Eve lived many years. But at last they died, as God had said that they must die, because they had eaten of the tree that God had forbidden them to eat.

By the time that Adam died, there were many people on the earth; for the children of Adam and Eve had many other children; and when these grew up, they also had children; and these too had children. And in those early times people lived much longer than they do now. Very few people now live to be a hundred years old; but in those days, when the earth was new, men often lived to be

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

eight hundred or even nine hundred years old. So after a time that part of the earth where Adam's sons lived began to be full of people.

It is sad to tell that as time went on more and more of these people became wicked, and fewer and fewer of them grew up to become good men and women. All the people lived near together, and few went away to other lands; so it came to pass that even the children of good men and women learned to be bad, like the people around them.

And as God looked down on the world that he had made, he saw how wicked the men in it had become, and that every thought and every act of man was evil and only evil continually.

But while most of the people in the world were very wicked, there were some good people also, though they were very few. The best of all the men who lived at that time was a man whose name was Enoch. He was not the son of Cain, but another Enoch, who came from the family of Seth, the son of Adam who was born after the death of Abel. While so many around Enoch were doing evil, this man did only what was right. He walked with God, and God walked with him and talked with him. And at last, when Enoch was three hundred and sixty-five years old, God took him away from earth to heaven. He did not die, as all the people have died since Adam disobeyed God, but "he was not, for God took him." This means that Enoch was taken up from earth without dying.

Enoch left a son whose name was Methuselah. We do not know anything about Methuselah, except that he lived to be nine hundred and sixty-nine years old, which was longer than the life of any other man who ever lived. But at last, Methuselah died like all his people, except his father Enoch. By the time that Methuselah died, the world was very wicked. And God looked down on the earth, and said:

"I will take away all men from the earth that I have made; because the men of the world are evil, and evil continually."

But even in those bad times, God saw one good man. His name was Noah. Noah tried to do right in the sight of God. As

THE GREAT SHIP THAT SAVED EIGHT PEOPLE

Enoch had walked with God, so Noah walked with God, and talked with him. And Noah had three sons: their names were Shem and Ham and Japheth.

God said to Noah, "The time has come when all the men and women on the earth are to be destroyed. Every one must die, because they are all wicked. But you and your family shall be saved, because you alone are trying to do right."

Then God told Noah how he might save his life and the lives of his sons. He was to build a very large boat, as large as the largest ships that are made in our time; very long and very wide and very deep; with a roof over it; and made like a long wide house in three stories, but so built that it would float on the water. Such a ship as this was called "an ark." God told Noah to build this ark, and to have it ready for the time when he would need it.

"For," said God to Noah, "I am going to bring a great flood of water on the earth, to cover all the land and to drown all the people on the earth. And as the animals on the earth will be drowned with the people, you must make the ark large enough to hold a pair of each kind of animals, and several pairs of some animals that are needed by men, like sheep and goats and oxen; so that there will be animals as well as men to live upon the earth after the flood has passed away. And you must take in the ark food for yourself and your family, and for all the animals with you, enough food to last for a year, while the flood shall stay on the earth."

And Noah did what God told him to do, although it must have seemed very strange to all the people around, to build this great ark where there was no water for it to sail upon. And it was a long time, even a hundred and twenty years, that Noah and his sons were at work building the ark, while the wicked people around wondered, and no doubt laughed at Noah for building a great ship where there was no sea. At last the ark was finished, and stood like a great house on the land. There was a door on one side, and a window on the roof, to let in the light. Then God said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and your wife, and your three sons, and their wives with them; for the flood of waters will come very soon. And take with you animals of all kinds, and birds, and things that creep; seven

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

pairs of those that will be needed by men, and one pair of all the rest; so that all kinds of animals may be kept alive upon the earth.”

So Noah and his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, with their wives, went into the ark. And God brought to the door of the ark the animals, and the birds, and the creeping things of all kinds; and they went into the ark, and Noah and his sons put them in their places, and brought in food for them all. And then the door of the ark was shut, so that no more people and no more animals could come in.

In a few days the rain began to fall, as it had never rained before. It seemed as though the heavens were opened to pour great floods upon the earth. The streams filled, and the rivers rose, higher and higher, and the ark began to float on the water. The people left their houses and ran up to the hills, but soon the hills were covered, and all the people on them were drowned.

Some had climbed up to the tops of higher mountains, but the water rose higher and higher, until even the mountains were covered and all the people, wicked as they had been, were drowned in the great sea that now rolled over all the earth where men had lived. And all the animals, the tame animals—cattle and sheep and oxen—were drowned; and the wild animals—lions and tigers and all the rest—were drowned also. Even the birds were drowned, for their nests in the trees were swept away, and there was no place where they could fly from the terrible storm. For forty days and nights the rain kept on, until there was no breath of life remaining outside of the ark.

After forty days the rain stopped, but the water stayed upon the earth for more than six months; and the ark, with all that were in it, floated over the great sea that covered the land. Then God sent a wind to blow over the waters and to dry them up; so by degrees the waters grew less and less. First the mountains rose above the waters, then the hills rose up; and finally the ark ceased to float, and lay aground on a mountain which is called Mount Ararat. But Noah could not see what had happened on the earth, because the door was shut, and the window may have been in the roof. But he felt that the ark was no longer moving, and he knew that the water must

THE GREAT SHIP THAT SAVED EIGHT PEOPLE

have gone down. So, after waiting for a time, Noah opened a window and let loose a bird called a raven. Now the raven has strong wings; and this raven flew round and round until the waters had gone down, and it could find a place to rest, and it did not come back to the ark.

After Noah had waited for it a while, he sent out a dove; but the dove could not find any place to rest, so it flew back to the ark, and Noah took it into the ark again. Then Noah waited a week longer, and afterward he sent out the dove again. And at the evening, the dove came back to the ark, which was its home; and in its bill was a fresh leaf which it had picked off from an olive tree.

So Noah knew that the water had gone down enough to let the trees grow once more. He waited another week, and sent out the dove again; but this time the dove flew away and never came back. And Noah knew that the earth was becoming dry again. So he took off a part of the roof and looked out, and saw that there was dry land all around the ark. Noah had now lived in the ark a little more than a year, and he was glad to see the green land and the trees once more. And God said to Noah:

“Come out of the ark, with your wife, and your sons, and their wives, and all the living things that are with you in the ark.”

So Noah opened the door of the ark, and with his family came out, and stood once more on the ground. All the animals and birds and creeping things in the ark came out also, and began again to bring life to the earth.

The first that Noah did, when he came out of the ark, was to give thanks to God for saving all his family when the rest of the people on the earth were destroyed. He built an altar, and laid upon it an offering to the Lord, and gave himself and his family to God, and promised to do God’s will.

And God was pleased with Noah’s offering, and God said:

“I will not again destroy the earth on account of men, no matter how bad they may be. From this time no flood shall again cover the earth; but the seasons of spring and summer and fall and

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

winter shall remain without change. I give to you the earth; you shall be the rulers of the ground and of every living thing upon it.”

Then God caused a rainbow to appear in the sky, and he told Noah and his sons that whenever they or the people after them should see the rainbow, they should remember that God had placed it in the sky and over the clouds as a sign of his promise that he would always remember the earth and the people upon it, and would never again send a flood to destroy men from the earth.

So, as often as we see the beautiful rainbow, we are to remember that it is the sign of God’s promise to the world.

STORY 4

THE TOWER THAT WAS NEVER FINISHED

Genesis x: 1, to xi: 9.

AFTER the great flood, the family of Noah and those who came after him grew in number until, as the years went on, the earth began to be full of people once more. But there was one great difference between the people who had lived before the flood and those who lived after it. Before the flood, all the people stayed close together, so that very many lived in one land and no one lived in other lands. So far as we know, all the people on the earth before the great flood, lived in the lands where the two great rivers flowed, called the Tigris and Euphrates. This part of the world was very full of people; but few or none crossed the mountains on the east, or the desert on the west; and the great world beyond was without people living in it. After the flood, families began to move from one place to another, seeking for themselves new homes. Some went one way, and some another.

THE TOWER THAT WAS NEVER FINISHED

This moving about was a part of God's plan to have the whole earth used for the home of men, and not merely a small part of it. Then, too, a family who wished to serve God, and do right, could go away to another land if the people around them became evil; and in a place by themselves they could bring up their children in the right way.

From Mount Ararat, where the ark rested, many of the people moved southward into a country between two great rivers, the rivers Tigris and Euphrates: and there they built houses for themselves. They undertook to build a great city, which should rule all the peoples around them. They found that the soil in that country could be made into bricks, and that the bricks could be heated and made hard; so that it was easy to build houses to live in, and walls around their city to make it strong against enemies.

And the people said to each other, "Let us build a great tower, that shall stand on the earth and shall reach up to the sky; so that we may be kept together, and not scattered abroad on the earth."

So they began to build their great tower out of bricks, which they piled up, one story above another. But God did not wish all the people on the earth to live close together, just as they had lived before the great flood. God knew that if they all kept together, those that were wicked would lead away from God those that were good, and all the world would become evil again, as it had been before the flood.

This was the way that God kept people from staying in one place. While they were building this great city and tower which they intended to rule the world, God caused their speech to change. At that time, all men were speaking one language, so that everybody could understand what every other person said.

God caused men to change their language, perhaps not all at once, but by degrees, little by little. After a time, the people that belonged to one family found that they could not understand what the people of another family were saying, just as now Germans do not understand English, and French people cannot talk to Italians, until they have learned their different languages.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

As people began to grow apart in their speech they moved away into other places, where the families speaking one language could understand each other. So the men who were building the city and the great tower could no longer understand each other's speech; they left the building without finishing it, and many of them went away into other lands. So the building stayed forever unfinished.

And the city was named Babel, a word which means "confusion." It was afterward known as Babylon, and for a long time was one of the greatest cities of that part of the world, even after many of its people had left it to live elsewhere.

Part of the people who left Babylon went up to the north, and built a city called Nineveh, which became the ruling city of a great land called Assyria, whose people were called Assyrians.

Another company went away to the west, and settled by the great river Nile, and founded the land of Egypt, with its strange temples and pyramids, its Sphynx, and its monuments.

Another company wandered northwest until they came to the shore of the great sea which we call the Mediterranean Sea. There they founded the cities of Sidon and Tyre, where the people were sailors, sailing to countries far away, and bringing home many things from other lands to sell to the people of Babylon, and Assyria, and Egypt, and other countries.

So after the flood, the earth again become covered with people living in many lands and speaking many languages.

STORY 5

THE STORY OF A LONG JOURNEY

Genesis xi: 27, to xiii: 18.

NOT far from the city of Babylon, where they began to build the tower of Babel, was another city, called Ur of the Chaldees. The Chaldees were the people who lived in the country which was called Chaldea, where the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris come together. Among these people, at Ur, was living a man named Abram. Abram was a good man, for he prayed to the Lord God, and tried always to do God's will.

But the people who lived in Ur, Abram's home, did not pray to God. They prayed to idols, images made of wood and stone. They thought that these images were gods, and that they could hear their prayers and could help them. And as these people who worshipped idols did not call on God, they did not know his will, and they did many wicked things.

The Lord God saw that Abram was good and faithful, though wicked people were living all around him. And God did not wish to have Abram's family grow up in such a place, for then they too might become wicked. So the Lord spoke to Abram, and said:

“Abram, gather together all your family and go out from this place, to a land far away, that I will show you. And in that land I will make your family to become a great people, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that all the world shall give honor to your name. If you will do as I command you, you shall be blessed, and all the families of the earth shall obtain a blessing through you.”

Abram did not know just what this blessing meant that God promised to him. But we know that Abram's family grew after many years into the Israelite people, out of whom came Jesus, the Saviour of the world, for Jesus was a descendant of Abram: that is, Jesus

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

came a long time afterward from the family of which Abram was the father; and thus Abram's family became a blessing to all the world by giving to the world a Saviour.

Although Abram did not know just what the blessing was to be that God promised to give him, and although he did not know where the land lay, to which God was sending him, he obeyed God's word. He took all his family, and with them his father Terah, who was very old, and his wife, whose name was Sarai; and his brother Nahor and his wife, and another brother's son whose name was Lot; for Lot's father, Haran, who was the younger brother of Abram, had died before this time. And Abram took all that he had, his tents, and his flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle, and went forth on a long journey, to a land of which he did not even know the name.

He journeyed far up the great river Euphrates to the mountain region, until he came to a place called Haran, in a country called Mesopotamia. The word Mesopotamia means "between the rivers"; and this country was between the two great rivers Tigris and Euphrates. At Haran they all stayed for a time. Perhaps they stopped there because Terah, the father of Abram, was too old to travel further; for they stayed at Haran until Terah died.

After the death of Terah, his father, Abram again went on his journey, and Lot, his brother's son, went with him; but Nahor, Abram's brother, stayed in Haran, and his family, and children, and children's children, whom they call "his descendants," lived at Haran for many years.

From Haran, Abram and Lot turned toward the southwest, and journeyed for a long time, having the mountains on their right hand and the great desert on their left. They crossed over rivers, and climbed the hills, and at last they came into the land of Canaan, which was the land of which God had spoken to Abram.

This land was called Canaan, because the people who were living in it were the descendants, or children's children, of a man who had lived long before, whose name was Canaan. A long time after this it was called "the Land of Israel," from the people who

THE STORY OF A LONG JOURNEY

lived in it; and because in that same land the Lord Jesus lived many years afterward; we now call it “The Holy Land.”

When Abram came into the land of Canaan, he found in it a few cities and villages of the Canaanites. But Abram and his people did not go into the towns to live. They lived in tents, out in the open fields, where they could find grass for their sheep and cattle. Not far from a city called Shechem, Abram set up his tent under an oak tree on the plain. There the Lord came to Abram, and said:

“I will give this land to your children, and to their children, and this shall be their land forever.”

And Abram built there an altar, and made an offering, and worshipped the Lord. Wherever Abram set up his tent, there he built his altar and prayed to God; for Abram loved God, and served God, and believed God’s promises.

Abram and Lot moved their tents and their flocks to many places, where they could find grass for their flocks and water to drink. At one time they went down to the land of Egypt, where they saw the great river Nile. Perhaps they saw also the Pyramids, and the Sphinx, and the wonderful temples in that land, for many of them were built before Abram lived.

Abram did not stay long in the land of Egypt. God did not wish him to live in a land where the people worshipped idols; so God sent Abram back again to the land of Canaan, where he could live apart from cities, and bring up his servants and his people to worship the Lord. He came to a place where afterward a city called Bethel stood; and there as before he built an altar and prayed to the Lord.

Now Lot, the son of Abram’s younger brother who had died, was with Abram; and Lot, like Abram, had flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, and many tents for his people. Abram’s shepherds and Lot’s shepherds quarreled, because there was not grass enough in one place for both of them to feed their flocks; and besides these people, the Canaanites were also in the land, so that there was not room for them all.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

When Abram heard of the quarrel between his men and the men under Lot, he said to Lot:

“Let there be no quarrel between you and me, nor between your men and my men; for you and I are like brothers to each other. The whole land is before us; let us go apart. You shall have the first choice, too. If you will take the land on the right hand, then I will take the land on the left; or if you choose the left hand, then I will take the right.”

This was noble and generous in Abram, for he was the older, and might claim the first choice. Then, too, God had promised all the land to Abram, so that he might have said to Lot, “Go away, for this land is all mine.” But Abram showed a kind, good heart in giving to Lot his choice of the land.

And Lot looked over the land from the mountain where they were standing, and saw down in the valley the river Jordan flowing between green fields, where the soil was rich. He saw the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah upon the plain, near the head of the Dead Sea, into which the Jordan flows. And Lot said, “I will go down yonder to the plain.”

And he went down the mountain to the plain, with his tents and his men, and his flocks of sheep and his cattle, leaving the land on the mountains, which was not so good, to his uncle Abram. Perhaps Lot did not know that the people in Sodom were the most wicked of all the people in the land; but he went to live near them, and gradually moved his tent closer to Sodom, until after a time he was living in that wicked city.

After Lot had separated from Abram, God said to Abram:

“Lift up your eyes from this place, and look east and west, and north and south. All the land that you can see, mountains and valleys and plains, I will give it to you, and to your children, and their children, and those who come after them. Your descendants shall have all this land, and they shall be as many as the dust of the earth; so that if one could count the dust of the earth, they could as easily count those who shall come from you. Rise up, and walk through the land wherever you please, for it is all yours.”

THE STORY OF A LONG JOURNEY

Then Abram moved his tent from Bethel, and went to live near the city of Hebron, in the south, under an oak tree; and there again he built an altar to the Lord.

STORY 6

HOW LOT'S CHOICE BROUGHT TROUBLE AND ABRAM'S CHOICE BROUGHT BLESSING

Genesis xiv: 1, to xv: 21.

SO Lot lived in Sodom, and Abram lived in his tent on the mountains of Canaan. At that time in the plain of Jordan, near the head of the Dead Sea, were five cities, of which Sodom and Gomorrah were two; and each of the five cities was ruled by its own king. But over all these little kings and their little kingdoms was a greater king, who lived far away, near the land of Chaldea, from which Abram had come, and who ruled all the lands, far and near.

After a time these little kings in the plain would not obey the greater king; so he and all his army made war upon them. A battle was fought on the plain, not far from Sodom, and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were beaten in the battle, and their soldiers were killed. Then the king who had won the victory over his enemies came to Sodom, and took everything that he could find in the city, and carried away all the people in the city, intending to keep them as slaves. After a battle, in those times, the army that won the victory took away all the goods, and made slaves of all the people on the side that had been beaten.

So Lot, with all that he owned, was carried away by enemies, who went up the valley from Sodom, and did not stop to rest until they came to the head-waters of the river Jordan, at a place after-

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

ward called Dan. So, all that Lot's selfish choice gained for him was to lose all that he had, and to be made a prisoner and a slave.

Some one ran away from the battle, and came to Abram, who was living in his tent under the oak tree near Hebron. As soon as Abram heard what had happened, he called together all the men who were with him, his servants, his shepherds, and his people, and his friends; and he led them after the enemy that had taken away Lot. He followed as fast as his men could march, and found the enemy, with all the goods they had taken and all their prisoners, at Dan, one of the places where the Jordan River begins.

Abram rushed upon the enemies at night, while they were asleep, and fought them, and drove them away; so suddenly that they left behind them everything, and ran far off among the mountains. And in their camp Abram found his nephew Lot, safe, with his wife and daughters, and all his gods, and besides, all the goods and all the other people that had been carried away from Sodom.

Then the king of Sodom came to meet Abram, at a place near the city of Jerusalem, which was afterward called "The King's Valley." And with him came the king of Jerusalem, which at that time was called Salem. The name of this king was Melchizedek, and unlike most other kings in the land at that time, he was a worshipper of the Lord God, as Abram was. And the King Melchizedek blessed Abram, and said, "May the Lord God Most High, who made heaven and earth, bless Abram; and blessed be the Lord God Most High, who has given your enemies into your hand."

And Abram made a present to the King Melchizedek, because he worshipped the Lord. And Abram gave to the king of Sodom all the people and all the goods that had been taken away; and he would not take any pay for having saved them.

You would have thought that after this, Lot would have seen that it was wrong for him to live in Sodom; but he went back to that city, and made his home there once more, even though his heart was made sad by the wickedness that he saw around him.

After Abram had gone back to his tent under the oak trees at Hebron, one day the Lord God spoke to him, and said:

HOW LOT'S CHOICE BROUGHT TROUBLE

“Fear not, Abram; I will be a shield to keep you safe from enemies; and I will give you a very great reward for serving me.”

And Abram said, “O Lord God, what good can anything do to me, since I have no child to whom I can give it; and after I die, the man who will own everything that I have is not my son, but a servant.” For although Abram had a large family of people around him, and many servants, he had no heir, and he was now an old man, and his wife Sarai was also old.

And God said to Abram, “The one to receive what you own shall not be a stranger, but shall be your own son.”

And that night God brought Abram out of his tent, under the heavens, and said to him:

“Look now up to the sky, and count the stars, if you can. The people who shall spring from you, your descendants, in the years to come, shall be many more than all the stars that you can see.”

Abram did not see how this promise of God could be kept; but he believed God’s word, and did not doubt it. And God loved Abram because he believed the promise. Although Abram could not at that time see how God’s promise could be kept, yet we know that it was kept, for the Israelite people in the Bible story, and the Jews everywhere in the world now, all came from Abram.

After that, one day, just as the sun was going down, God came to Abram again, and told him many things that should come to pass. God said to Abram:

“After your life is ended, those who are to come from you, your descendants, shall go into a strange land. The people of that land shall make slaves of them, and shall be cruel to them. And they shall stay in that strange land four hundred years; and afterward they shall come out of that land, not any more as slaves, but very rich. And after the four hundred years they shall come back to this land, and this shall be their home. All this shall come to pass after your life, for you shall die in peace and be buried in a good old age. And all this land where you are living shall belong to your people.”

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

So that Abram might remember this promise of God, God told Abram to make ready an offering of a lamb and a goat and a pair of pigeons, and to divide them in pieces, and place them opposite to each other. And that night Abram looked, and saw a smoke and fire, like a flaming torch, that passed between the pieces of the offering.

So a promise was made between God and Abram. God promised to give Abram a son and a people and a land, and Abram promised to serve God faithfully.

Such a promise as this, made by two people to each other, was called a covenant; and this was God's covenant with Abram.

STORY 7

THE ANGEL BY THE WELL

Genesis xvi: 1, to xvii: 27.

YOU remember that Abram's wife, who had journeyed with him from Ur of the Chaldees, and who lived in his tent all those years, was named Sarai. Now Sarai had a maid, a servant that waited on her, whose name was Hagar. She came from the land of Egypt, where were the pyramids and the temples. But Sarai and her maid Hagar had some trouble; they could not agree, and Sarai was so sharp and severe with Hagar, that at last Hagar ran away from Sarai's tent.

She went out into the desert, and took the road that led down to Egypt, her own country, the land from which she had come. On the way she stopped beside a spring of water. There an angel from the Lord met her, and said to her:

"Hagar, are you not the servant of Sarai, Abram's wife? What are you doing here? Where are you going?"

THE ANGEL BY THE WELL

And Hagar said to the angel:

“I am going away from my mistress Sarai, because I do not wish to stay with her and serve her any longer.”

Then the angel said to Hagar:

“Go back to your mistress Sarai, and submit to her, for it is better for you than to go away. God knows all your troubles, for he sees you and hears you, and he will help you. By and by you shall have a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael, because God has heard you.”

The word Ishmael means “God hears.” So whenever Hagar should speak her boy’s name, she would think “God has heard me.”

Then the angel told Hagar that her son Ishmael should be strong and fierce, and that no one should be able to overcome him, or his children, or his descendants, those who should come after him.

So Hagar was comforted, and went back again to serve Sarai.

And afterward the well where she saw the angel was called by a name which means “The well of the Living One who sees me.” And after this, Hagar had a son; and as the angel told her, she called his name Ishmael; that is, “God hears.” We shall read more about Hagar and Ishmael a little later. After this, while Abram was living near Hebron, the Lord came to him again and spoke to him, while Abram bowed with his face to the ground. God said:

“I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect; and I will make you a father of many nations. And your name shall be changed. You shall no more be called Abram, but Abraham, a word that means “Father of a multitude,” because you shall be the father of many nations of people. And your wife’s name shall also be changed. She shall no more be called Sarai, but Sarah; that is, “princess.” And you and Sarah shall have a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and he shall have sons when he becomes a man, and his descendants, those who spring from him, shall be very many people.” So from this time he was no longer Abram, but Abraham, and his wife was called Sarah.

STORY 8

THE RAIN OF FIRE THAT FELL ON A CITY

Genesis xviii: 1, to xix: 30.

ONE day Abraham,—for we shall call him now by his new name,—was sitting in the door of his tent, when he saw three men coming toward him. He knew from their looks that they were not common men. They were angels, and one of them seems to have been the Lord God himself, coming in the form of a man.

When Abraham saw these men coming, he went out to meet them, and bowed to them; and he said to the one who was the leader:

“My Lord, do not pass by; but come and rest a little under the tree. Let me send for water to wash your feet; and take some food; and stay with us a little while.”

So this strange person, who was God in the form of a man, sat with his two followers in Abraham’s tent, under the oak-trees at Hebron. They took some food which Sarah, Abraham’s wife, made ready for them, and then the Lord talked with Abraham. He told Abraham again that in a very little time God would send to him and Sarah a little boy, whose name should be Isaac. In the language that Abraham spoke, the name Isaac means “laughing;” because Abraham and Sarah both laughed aloud when they heard it. They were so happy that they could scarcely believe the news.

Then the three persons rose up to go, and two of them went on the road which led toward Sodom, down on the plain of Jordan, below the mountains. But the one whom Abraham called “My Lord” stopped after the others had gone away, and said:

THE RAIN OF FIRE THAT FELL ON A CITY

“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am going to do? For Abraham is to be the father of a great people, and all the world shall receive a blessing through him. And I know that Abraham will teach his children and all those that live with him to obey the will of the Lord, and to do right. I will tell Abraham what I am going to do. I am going down to the city of Sodom and the other cities that are near it, and I am going to see if the city is as bad as it seems to be; for the wickedness of the city is like a cry coming up before the Lord.”

And Abraham knew that Sodom was very wicked, and he feared that God was about to destroy it. And Abraham said:

“Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked, the good with the bad, in Sodom? Perhaps there may be fifty good people in the city. Wilt thou not spare the city for the sake of fifty good men who may be in it? Shall not the Judge and Ruler of all the earth do right?”

And the Lord said:

“If I find in Sodom fifty good people, then I will not destroy the city, but will spare it for their sake.”

Then Abraham said again:

“Perhaps I ought not to ask anything more, for I am only a common man, talking with the Lord God. But suppose that there should be forty-five good people in Sodom, wilt thou destroy the city because it needs only five good men to make up the fifty?”

And the Lord said, “I will not destroy it, if there are forty-five good men in it.” And Abraham said, “Suppose there are forty good people in it,—what then?” And the Lord said, “I will spare the city, if I find in it forty good men.” And Abraham said, “O Lord, do not be angry, if I ask that if there are thirty good men in the city, it may be spared.” And the Lord said, “I will not do it, if I find thirty good men there.” And Abraham said, “Let me venture to ask that thou wilt spare it if twenty are there.” The Lord said: “I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty good men, if they are there.” Then Abraham said, “O, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak only this once more. Perhaps there may be ten good men found in the

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

city.” And the Lord said, “If I find ten good men in Sodom, I will spare the city.”

And Abraham had no more to say. The Lord in the form of a man went on his way toward Sodom; and Abraham turned back, and went to his tent.

You remember that Lot, the nephew of Abraham, chose the land of Sodom for his home (Story 5), and lived there, though the people were so wicked. You remember, too, how Lot was carried away captive when Sodom was taken by its enemies, and how he was rescued by Abram. (Story 6.) But after all that had happened, Lot went to live in Sodom again; and he was there when the angels came to Abraham’s tent, as we read in the last story.

Two of the angels who had visited Abraham went down to Sodom, and walked through the city, trying to find some good men; for if they could find only ten, the city would be saved. But the only good man whom they could find was Lot. He took the angels, who looked like men, into his house, and treated them kindly, and made a supper for them.

The men of Sodom, when they found that strangers were in Lot’s house, came before the house in the street, and tried to take the two men out that they might do them harm, so wicked and cruel were they. But the men of Sodom could do nothing against them, for when they tried to break open the door, and Lot was greatly frightened, the two angels struck all those wicked men blind in a moment, so that they could not see, and felt around in the dark for the door.

Then the angels said to Lot:

“Have you here any others besides yourself, any sons, or sons-in-law, or daughters? Whomever you have, get them out of this city quickly, for we are here to destroy this place, because it is so very wicked.”

Then Lot went to the houses where the young men lived who had married some of his daughters, and said to them:

“Hurry, and get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy it.”

THE RAIN OF FIRE THAT FELL ON A CITY

But his sons-in-law, the husbands of his daughters, would not believe his words; they only laughed at him. What a mistake it was for Lot to live in a wicked city, where his daughters were married to young men living there!

And when the morning was coming, the two angels tried to make poor Lot hasten away. They said:

“Rise up quickly, and take your wife, and your two daughters that are here. If you do not haste, you will be destroyed with the city.”

But Lot was slow to leave his house, and his married daughters, and all that he had; and the two angels took hold of him, and of his wife, and his two daughters; and the angels dragged them out of the city. God was good to Lot, to take him out of the city before it was destroyed.

And when they had brought Lot and his wife and his daughters out of the city, one of the angels said to him:

“Escape for your life; do not look behind you; do not stop anywhere in the plain; climb up the mountain, or you may be destroyed!”

And Lot begged the angels not to send him so far away. He said, “O my Lord, I cannot climb the mountain. Have mercy upon me, and let me go to that little city that lies yonder. It is only a little city, and you can spare it. Please to let me be safe there.”

And the angel said, “We will spare that city for your sake; and we will wait until you are safe before we destroy these other cities.”

So Lot ran to the little city, and there he found safety. In the language of that time, the word “Zoar” means little; so that city was afterward called Zoar. It was the time of sunrise when Lot came to Zoar.

Then, as soon as Lot and his family were safely out of Sodom, the Lord caused a rain of fire to fall upon Sodom and the other cities on the plain. With the fire came great clouds of sulphur

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

smoke, covering all the plain. So the cities were destroyed, and all the people in them; not one man or woman or child was left.

While Lot and his daughters were flying from the city, Lot's wife stopped, and looked back; and she became a pillar of salt, standing there upon the plain. Lot and his two daughters escaped, but they were afraid to stay in the little city of Zoar. They climbed up the mountain, away from the plain, and found a cave, and there they lived. So Lot lost his wife, and all that he had, because he had made his home among the wicked people of Sodom.

And when Abraham, from his tent door on the mountain, looked down toward the plain, the smoke was rising from it, like the smoke of a great furnace.

And that was the end of the cities of the plain, Sodom, and Gomorrah, and the other cities with them. Zoar alone was saved, because Lot, a good man, prayed for it.

STORY 9

THE BOY WHO BECAME AN ARCHER

Genesis xxi: 1, to 21.

AFTER Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Abraham moved his tent and his camp away from that part of the land, and went to live near a place called Gerar, in the southwest, not far from the Great Sea. And there at last, the child whom God had promised to Abraham and Sarah was born, when Abraham his father was a hundred years old.

They named this child Isaac, as the angel had told them he should be named. And Abraham and Sarah were so happy to have a

THE BOY WHO BECAME AN ARCHER

little boy, that after a time they gave a great feast to all the people, in honor of the little Isaac.

You remember the story about Sarah's maid Hagar, the Egyptian woman, and how she ran away from her mistress, and saw an angel by a well, and afterward came back to Sarah, and had a child whose name was Ishmael (Story 7). So now there were two boys in Abraham's tent, the older boy, Ishmael, the son of Hagar, and the younger boy, Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah.

Ishmael did not like the little Isaac, and did not treat him kindly. This made his mother Sarah very angry, and she said to her husband:

"I do not wish to have this boy Ishmael growing up with my son Isaac. Send away Hagar and her boy, for they are a trouble to me."

And Abraham felt very sorry to have trouble come between Sarah and Hagar, and between Isaac and Ishmael; for Abraham was a kind and good man, and he was friendly to them all.

But the Lord said to Abraham, "Do not be troubled about Ishmael and his mother. Do as Sarah has asked you to do, and send them away. It is best that Isaac should be left alone in your tent, for he is to receive everything that is yours. I the Lord will take care of Ishmael, and will make a great people of his descendants, those who shall come from him."

So the next morning, Abraham sent Hagar and her boy away, expecting them to go back to the land of Egypt, from which Hagar had come. He gave them some food for the journey, and a bottle of water to drink by the way. The bottles in that country were not like ours, made of glass. They were made from the skin of a goat, sewed tightly together. One of these skin bottles Abraham filled with water, and gave to Hagar.

And Hagar went away from Abraham's tent, leading her little boy. But in some way she lost the road, and wandered over the desert, not knowing where she was, until all the water in the bottle was used up; and her poor boy, in the hot sun and the burning sand, had nothing to drink. She thought that he would die of his terrible

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

thirst, and she laid him down under a little bush; and then she went away, for she said to herself:

“I cannot bear to look at my poor boy suffering and dying for want of water.”

And just at that moment, while Hagar was crying, and her boy was moaning with thirst, she heard a voice saying to her:

“Hagar, what is your trouble? Do not be afraid. God has heard your cry, and the cry of your child. God will take care of you both, and will make of your boy a great nation of people.”

It was the voice of an angel from heaven; and then Hagar looked, and there close at hand was a spring of water in the desert. How glad Hagar was, as she filled the bottle with water, and took it to her suffering boy under the bush!

After this, Hagar did not go down to Egypt. She found a place near this spring, where she lived and brought up her son in the wilderness, far from other people. And God was with Ishmael, and cared for him. And Ishmael grew up in the desert, and learned to shoot with the bow and arrow. He became a wild man, and his children after him grew up to be wild men also. They were the Arabians of the desert, who even to this day have never been ruled by any other people, but wander through the desert and live as they please. So Ishmael came to be the father of many people, and his descendants, the wild Arabians of the desert, are living unto this day in that land, just as the Jews, who are the descendants of Isaac, are living all over the world.

STORY 10

HOW AN ANGEL'S VOICE SAVED A BOY'S LIFE

Genesis xxii: 1, to xxiii: 20.

YOU remember that in those times of which we are telling, when men worshipped God, they built an altar of earth or of stone, and laid an offering upon it, as a gift to God. The offering was generally a sheep, or a goat, or a young ox, some animal that was used for food. Such an offering was called "a sacrifice."

But the people who worshipped idols often did what seems to us very strange and very terrible. They thought that it would please their gods, if they would offer as a sacrifice the most precious living things that were their own: and they would take their own little children and kill them upon their altars as offerings to the gods of wood and stone, that were no real gods, but only images.

God wished to show to Abraham, and all his descendants, those who should come after him, that he was not pleased with such offerings as those of living people, killed on the altars. And God took a way to teach Abraham, so that he and his children after him would never forget it. Then at the same time he wished to see how faithful and obedient Abraham would be to his commands; how fully Abraham would trust in God, or as we should say, how great was Abraham's faith in God.

So God gave to Abraham a command which he did not mean to have obeyed, though this he did not tell to Abraham. He said:

"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love so greatly, and go to the land of Moriah; and there, on a mountain that I will show you, offer him for a burnt offering to me."

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

Though this command filled Abraham's heart with pain, yet he would not be as surprised to receive it as a father would in our day; for such offerings were very common among all those people in the land where Abraham lived. Abraham never for one moment doubted or disobeyed God's word. He knew that Isaac was the child whom God had promised, and that God had promised, too, that Isaac should have children, and that those coming from Isaac should be a great nation. He did not see how God could keep his promise with regard to Isaac, if Isaac should be killed as an offering: unless, indeed, God should raise him up from the dead afterward. But Abraham undertook at once to obey God's command. He took two young men with him, and an ass laden with wood for the fire; and he went toward the mountain in the north, Isaac his son walking by his side. For two days they walked, sleeping under the trees at night in the open country. And on the third day, Abraham saw the mountain far away. And as they drew near to the mountain, Abraham said to the young men:

“Stay here with the ass, while I go up yonder mountain with Isaac to worship; and when we have worshipped, we will come back to you.”

For Abraham believed that in some way God would bring back Isaac to life. He took the wood from the ass, and placed it on Isaac, and the two walked up the mountain together. As they were walking Isaac said, “Father, here is the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?” And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide himself the lamb.”

And they came to the place on the top of the mountain. There Abraham built an altar of stones and earth heaped up, and on it he placed the wood. Then he tied the hands and the feet of Isaac, and laid him on the wood on the altar. And Abraham lifted up his hand, holding a knife to kill his son. A moment longer, and Isaac would be slain by his own father's hand. But just at that moment the angel of the Lord out of heaven called to Abraham, and said, “Abraham! Abraham!” And Abraham answered, “Here I am, Lord.” Then the angel of the Lord said:

HOW AN ANGEL'S VOICE SAVED A BOY'S LIFE

“Do not lay your hand upon your son. Do no harm to him. Now I know that you love God more than you love your only son, and that you are obedient to God, since you are ready to give up your son, your only son, to God.” What a relief and a joy these words from heaven brought to the heart of Abraham! How glad he was to know that it was not God’s will for him to kill his son! Then Abraham looked around, and there in the thicket was a ram caught by his horns. And Abraham took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in place of his son. So Abraham’s words came true, when he said that God would provide for himself a lamb. The place where this altar was built Abraham named Jehovah-jireh, words meaning, in the language that Abraham spoke, “The Lord will provide.”

This offering, which seems so strange, did much good. It showed to Abraham, and to Isaac also, that Isaac belonged to God, for to God he had been offered; and in Isaac, all those who should come from him, his descendants, had been given to God. Then it showed to Abraham, and to all the people after him, that God did not wish children or men killed as offerings for worship; and while all the people around offered such sacrifices, the Israelites, who came from Abraham and from Isaac, never offered them, but offered oxen and sheep and goats instead. And it looked onward to a time when, just as Abraham gave his son as an offering, God should give his Son Jesus Christ to die for the world. All this was taught in this act of worship on Mount Moriah.

Some think that on the very place where this offering was given, the altar in the temple many years afterward stood on Mount Moriah. If that be true, the rock is still there, and over it is a building called “The Dome of the Rock.” Many people now visit this rock under the dome, and think of what took place there so long ago. At this time Abraham was living at a place called Beersheba, on the border of the desert, south of the land of Canaan. From Beersheba he took this journey to Mount Moriah, and to Beersheba he came again after the offering on the mountain. Beersheba was the home of Abraham during most of his later years. After a time, Sarah, the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac, died, being one hundred and twenty years old. And Abraham bought of the

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

people of Hebron a cave, called the cave of Machpelah; and there he buried Sarah his wife. This place is still known as the city of Hebron, but the people who live there will not allow any strangers to visit it.

STORY 11

THE STORY OF A JOURNEY AFTER A WIFE

Genesis xxiv: 1, to xxv: 18.

AFTER the death of Sarah, Isaac, her son, was lonely; and as he was now old enough to marry, Abraham sought a wife for him; for in those countries the parents have always chosen the wives for their sons, and husbands for their daughters. Abraham did not wish Isaac to marry any woman of the people in the land where he was living, for they were all worshippers of idols, and would not teach their children the ways of the Lord. For the same reason, Abraham did not settle in one place, and build for himself and his people a city. By moving from place to place, Abraham kept his people apart.

You remember that when Abraham made his long journey to the land of Canaan (see Story 5), he stayed for a time at a place called Haran, in Mesopotamia, between the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates, far to the northeast of Canaan. When Abraham left Haran to go to Canaan, his brother Nahor and his family stayed in Haran. They worshipped the Lord, as Abraham and his family did; and Abraham thought that it would be well to find among them a wife for his son Isaac.

As Abraham could not leave his own land of Canaan and go to Haran in Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son Isaac, he called his chief servant, Eliezer, the man whom he trusted, who cared for

THE STORY OF A JOURNEY AFTER A WIFE

all his flocks and cattle, and who ruled over his other servants, and sent him to Haran to find a wife for his son Isaac.

And the servant took ten camels, and many presents and went on a long journey, and at last came to the city of Haran, where the family of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, was living. And at the well, just outside of the city, at the time of evening, he made his camels kneel down. Then the servant prayed to the Lord that he would send to him just the right young woman to be the wife of his master's son Isaac.

And just as the servant was praying, a beautiful young woman came to the well, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. As she drew the water and filled her pitcher, the servant came up and bowed to her, and said, "Will you kindly give me a drink of water from your pitcher?"

And she said, "Drink, my lord," and she held her pitcher for him to drink. And then she said, "I will draw some water for your camels also to drink."

And she emptied her pitcher into the trough by the well, and drew more water, until she had given drink to all the camels.

And the servant of Abraham looked at her, and wondered whether she might be the right woman for Isaac to marry. And he said to her, "Will you tell me your name, young lady, and whose daughter you are? And do you suppose that I could find a place to stay at your father's house?" And then he gave her a gold ring and gold bracelets for her wrists. And the beautiful young woman said, "My name is Rebekah; and my father is Bethuel, who is the son of Nahor. You can come right to our house. We have room for you, and a place and food for your camels."

Then the man bowed his head and thanked God, for he saw that his prayer was answered, since this kind and lovely young woman was a cousin to Isaac, his master's son. And he told Rebekah that he was the servant of Abraham, who was so near a relative to her own family.

Then Rebekah ran home and told her parents of the stranger, and showed them the presents that he had given to her.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

And her brother Laban went out to the man, and brought him into the house, and found a place for his camels. And they washed his feet, for that was the custom of the land, where people did not wear shoes, but sandals: and they set the table for a supper, and asked him to sit down and eat with them. But the man said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand."

After this he told them all about Abraham's riches: and how Abraham had sent him to Haran to find a wife for Isaac, his son; and how he had met Rebekah, and felt sure that Rebekah was the one whom the Lord would choose for Isaac's wife: and then he asked that they would give him Rebekah to be taken home to be married to Isaac.

When he had told his errand, Laban, Rebekah's brother, and Bethuel, her father, said, "This comes from the Lord; it is his will; and it is not for us to oppose it. Here is Rebekah; take her, and let her be the wife of your master's son, for the Lord has shown it to be his will."

Then Abraham's servant gave rich presents to Rebekah, and to her mother, and her brother Laban. And that night they had a feast, with great joy. And the next morning Abraham's servant said, "Now I must go home to my master." But they said, "O, not so soon! Let Rebekah stay with us for a few days, ten days at least, before she goes away from her home."

And he said to them, "Do not hinder me; since God has given me what I came for, I must go back to my master."

And they called Rebekah, and asked her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

So the servant of Abraham went away, and took with him Rebekah, with good wishes, and blessings, and prayers, from all in her father's house. And after a long journey, they came to the place where Abraham and Isaac were living. And when Isaac saw Rebekah, he loved her; and she became his wife, and they were faithful to each other as long as they both lived.

Afterward Abraham, great and good man that he was, died, almost a hundred and eighty years old. And Isaac and Ishmael bur-

THE STORY OF A JOURNEY AFTER A WIFE

ied Abraham in the cave where Abraham had buried Sarah at Hebron. Then Isaac became the owner of all the riches of Abraham, his tents, and flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle, and camels, and servants. Isaac was a peaceful, quiet man. He did not move his tents often, as his father had done, but stayed in one place nearly all his life.

STORY 12

HOW JACOB STOLE HIS BROTHER'S BLESSING

Genesis xxv: 27, to xxvii: 46.

AFTER Abraham died, his son Isaac lived in the land of Canaan. Like his father, Isaac's home was a tent; and around him were the tents of his people, and many flocks of sheep and herds of cattle feeding wherever they could find grass to eat and water to drink.

Isaac and his wife Rebekah had two children. The older was named Esau and the younger Jacob. Esau was a man of the woods, and fond of hunting; and he was rough, and covered with hair. Even as a boy he was fond of hunting with his bow and arrow. Jacob was quiet and thoughtful, staying at home, and caring for the flocks of his father. Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, because Esau brought to his father that which he had killed in his hunting; but Rebekah liked Jacob, because she saw that he was wise and careful in his work.

Among the people in those lands, when a man dies, his older son receives twice as much as the younger of what the father has owned. This was called his "birthright," for it was his right as the oldest born. So Esau, as the older, had a "birthright" to more of Isaac's possessions than Jacob. And besides this, there was the

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

privilege of the promise of God that the family of Isaac should receive great blessings.

Now Esau, when he grew up, did not care for his birthright or the blessing which God had promised. But Jacob, who was a wise man, wished greatly to have the birthright which would come to Esau when his father died. Once, when Esau came home, hungry and tired from hunting in the fields, he saw that Jacob had a bowl of something that he had just cooked for dinner. And Esau said: "Give me some of that red stuff in the dish. Will you not give me some? I am hungry."

And Jacob answered, "I will give it to you, if you will first of all sell to me your birthright."

And Esau said, "What is the use of the birthright to me now when I am almost starving to death? You can have my birthright if you will give me something to eat."

Then Esau made Jacob a solemn promise to give to Jacob his birthright, all for a bowl of food. It was not right for Jacob to deal so selfishly with his brother; but it was very wrong in Esau to care so little for his birthright, and with it God's blessing.

Some time after this, when Esau was forty years old, he married two wives. Though this would be very wicked in our times it was not supposed to be wrong then; for even good men then had more than one wife. But Esau's two wives were women from the people of Canaan, who worshipped idols, and not the true God. And they taught their children also to pray to idols, so that those who came from Esau, the people who were his descendants, lost all knowledge of God, and became very wicked. But this was long after that time.

Isaac and Rebekah were very sorry to have their son Esau marry women who prayed to idols and not to God; but still Isaac loved his active son Esau more than his quiet son Jacob.

Isaac became at last very old and feeble, and so blind that he could see scarcely anything. One day he said to Esau:

"My son, I am very old, and do not know how soon I must die. But before I die, I wish to give to you, as my older son, God's

HOW JACOB STOLE HIS BROTHER'S BLESSING

blessing upon you, and your children, and your descendants. Go out into the fields, and with your bow and arrows shoot some animal that is good for food, and make me a dish of cooked meat, such as you know I love; and after I have eaten it, I will give you the blessing.”

Esau ought to have told his father that the blessing did not belong to him, for he had sold it to his brother Jacob. But he did not tell his father. He went out into the fields hunting, to find the kind of meat which his father liked the most.

Now Rebekah was listening, and heard all that Isaac had said to Esau. She knew that it would be better for Jacob to have the blessing than for Esau; and she loved Jacob more than Esau. So she called to Jacob, and told him what Isaac had said to Esau, and she said:

“Now, my son, do what I tell you and you will get the blessing instead of your brother. Go to the flocks and bring to me two little kids from the goats: and I will cook them just like the meat which Esau cooks for your father. And you will bring it to your father; and he will think that you are Esau, and will give you the blessing; and it really belongs to you.”

But Jacob said, “You know that Esau and I are not alike. His neck and arms are covered with hair, while mine are smooth. My father will feel of me, and he will find that I am not Esau; and then, instead of giving me a blessing, I am afraid that he will curse me.”

But Rebekah answered her son, “Never mind, you do as I have told you, and I will take care of you. If any harm comes, it will come to me; so do not be afraid, but go and bring the meat.”

Then Jacob went and brought a pair of little kids from the flock, and from them his mother made a dish of food, so that it would be to the taste just as Isaac liked it. Then Rebekah found some of Esau’s clothes, and dressed Jacob in them; and she placed on his neck and his hands some of the skins of the kids, so that his neck and hands would feel rough and hairy to the touch.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

Then Jacob came into his father's tent, bringing the dinner, and speaking as much like Esau as he could, he said:

“Here I am, my father.”

And Isaac said, “Who are you, my son?”

And Jacob answered, “I am Esau, your oldest son. I have done as you bade me; now sit up, and eat the dinner that I have made; and then give me your blessing, as you promised me.”

And Isaac said, “How is it that you found it so quickly?”

Jacob answered, “Because the Lord your God showed me where to go, and gave me good success.”

Isaac did not feel certain that it was his son Esau, and he said, “Come nearer and let me feel you, so that I may know that you are really my son Esau.”

And Jacob went up close to Isaac's bed, and Isaac felt of his face, and his neck, and his hands, and he said:

“The voice sounds like Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Are you really my son Esau?”

And Jacob again told a lie to his father, and said, “I am.”

Then the old man ate the food that Jacob had brought to him, and he kissed Jacob, believing him to be Esau, and he gave him the blessing, saying to him:

“May God give you the dew of heaven, and the richness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. May nations bow down to you and people become your servants. May you be the master over your brother; and may your family and descendants that shall come from you rule over his family and his descendants. Blessed be those that bless you, and cursed be those that curse you.”

Just as soon as Jacob had received the blessing he rose up and hastened away. He had scarcely gone out, when Esau came in from his hunting, with the dish of food that he had cooked, and he said:

HOW JACOB STOLE HIS BROTHER'S BLESSING

“Let my father sit up, and eat the food that I have brought, and give me the blessing.”

And Isaac said, “Why, who are you?”

Esau answered, “I am your son, your oldest son Esau.”

And Isaac trembled and said, “Who then is the one that came in, and brought to me food? And I have eaten his food, and have blessed him; yes, and he shall be blessed.”

When Esau heard this he knew that he had been cheated; and he cried aloud, with a bitter cry, “O my father, my brother has taken away my blessing, just as he took away my birthright! But cannot you give me another blessing, too? Have you given everything to my brother? And Isaac told him all that he had said to Jacob.

He said, “I have told him that he shall be the ruler, and that all his brothers and their children will be under him. I have promised him the richest ground for his crops, and rains from heaven to make them grow. All these things have been spoken, and they must come to pass. What is left for me to promise you, my son?”

But Esau begged for another blessing, and Isaac said:

“My son, your dwelling shall be of the riches of the earth, and of the dew of heaven. You shall live by your sword, and your descendants shall serve his descendants. But in time to come they shall break loose, and shall shake off the yoke of your brother's rule, and shall be free.”

All this came to pass many years afterward. The people who came from Esau lived in a land called Edom, on the south of the land of Israel, where Jacob's descendants lived. And after a time the Israelites became rulers over the Edomites; and, later still, the Edomites made themselves free from the Israelites. But all this took place hundreds of years after both Esau and Jacob had passed away. The blessing of God's covenant or promise came to Israel, and not to the people from Esau.

It was better that Jacob's descendants, those who came after him, should have the blessing, than that Esau's people should have

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

it; for Jacob's people worshipped God, and Esau's people walked in the way of the idols, and became wicked. But it was very wrong in Jacob to obtain the blessing in the way that he obtained it.

STORY 13

JACOB'S WONDERFUL DREAM

Genesis xxvii: 46, to xxx: 24.

AFTER Esau found that he had lost his birthright and his blessing, he was very angry against his brother Jacob; and he said to himself, and told others, "My father Isaac is very old, and cannot live long. As soon as he is dead, then I shall kill Jacob for having robbed me of my right."

When Rebekah heard this, she said to Jacob, "Before it is too late, do you go away from home, and get out of Esau's sight. Perhaps when Esau sees you no longer, he will forget his anger; and then you can come home again. Go and visit my brother Laban, your uncle, in Haran, and stay with him for a little while, until Esau's anger is past."

You remember that Rebekah came from the family of Nabor, Abraham's younger brother, who lived in Haran, a long distance to the northeast of Canaan; and that Laban was Rebekah's brother, as was told in Story 11.

So Jacob went out of Beersheba, on the border of the desert, and walked alone toward a land far to the north, carrying his staff in his hand. One evening, just about sunset, he came to a place among the mountains, more than sixty miles distant from his home. And as he had no bed to lie down upon, he took a stone and rested his head upon it for a pillow, and lay down to sleep. We would think that a hard pillow, but Jacob was tired, and soon feel asleep.

JACOB'S WONDERFUL DREAM

And on that night Jacob had a wonderful dream. In his dream he saw stairs leading up to heaven from the earth where he lay; and angels were coming down and going up upon the stairs. And above the stairs, he saw the Lord God standing. And God said to Jacob:

“I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac your father; and I will be your God, too. The land where you are lying all alone, shall belong to you and to your children after you; and your children shall spread abroad over the lands, east, and west, and north, and south, like the dust of the earth: and in your family all the world shall receive a blessing. And I am with you in your journey, and I will keep you where you are going, and will bring you back to this land. I will never leave you, and I will surely keep my promise to you.”

And in the morning Jacob awaked from his sleep, and he said, “Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it! I thought that I was all alone, but God has been with me. This place is the house of God; it is the gate of heaven!”

And Jacob took the stone on which his head had rested, and he set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on it as an offering to God. And Jacob named that place Bethel, which in the language that Jacob spoke means “The House of God.”

And Jacob made a promise to God at that time, and said:

“If God really will go with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and will bring me to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God; and this stone shall be the house of God; and of all that God gives me, I will give back to God one-tenth as an offering.”

Then Jacob went onward in his long journey. He waded across the river Jordan in a shallow place, feeling the way with his staff; he climbed mountains, and journeyed beside the great desert on the east, and at last he came to the city of Haran. Beside the city was the well, where Abraham’s servant had met Jacob’s mother, Rebekah (see Story 11); and there, after Jacob had waited for a time, he saw a young woman coming with her sheep, to give them water.

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

Then Jacob took off the flat stone that was over the mouth of the well, and drew water, and gave it to the sheep. And when he found that this young woman was his own cousin Rachel, the daughter of Laban, he was so glad that he wept for joy. And at that moment he began to love Rachel, and longed to have her for his wife.

Rachel's father, Laban, who was Jacob's uncle, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's mother, gave a welcome to Jacob, and took him into his home.

And Jacob asked Laban if he would give his daughter Rachel to him as his wife; and Jacob said, "If you will give me Rachel, I will work for you seven years." And Laban said, "It is better that you should have her than that a stranger should marry her."

So Jacob lived seven years in Laban's house, caring for his sheep and oxen and camels; and such was his love for Rachel that the seven years seemed like a few days.

At last the day came for the marriage; and they brought in the bride, who after the manner of that land was covered with a thick veil, so that her face could not be seen. And she was married to Jacob; and when Jacob lifted up her veil, he found that he had married, not Rachel whom he loved, but her older sister Leah, who was not beautiful, and whom Jacob did not love at all.

Jacob was very angry that he had been deceived, though that was just the way in which Jacob himself had deceived his father and cheated his brother Esau (see Story 12). But his uncle Laban said:

"In our land we never allow the younger daughter to be married before the older daughter. Keep Leah for your wife, and work for me seven years longer, and you shall have Rachel also."

For in those times, as we have seen, men often had two wives or even more than two. No one thought that it was wrong then to have more than one wife, although now it is considered very wicked. So Jacob stayed seven years more, fourteen years in all, before he received Rachel as his wife.

While Jacob was living at Haran, eleven sons were born to him. But only one of these was the child of Rachel, whom Jacob

JACOB'S WONDERFUL DREAM

loved. This son was Joseph, who was dearer to Jacob than any other of his children, partly because he was the youngest, and also because he was the child of his beloved Rachel.

STORY 14

A MIDNIGHT WRESTLING MATCH

Genesis xxx: 25, to xxxiii: 20.

JACOB stayed a long time in the land of Haran, much longer than he had expected to stay. And in that land Jacob became rich. As wages for his work with Laban, Jacob took a share of the sheep, and oxen, and camels. And since Jacob was very wise and careful in his work, his share grew larger, until Jacob owned a great flock and much cattle. At last, after twenty years, Jacob decided to go back to the land of Canaan, and to his father Isaac, who was still living, though now very old and feeble.

Jacob did not tell his uncle Laban that he was going away; but while Laban was absent from home, Jacob gathered together his wives, and children, and all his sheep and cattle, and camels, and he stole away quietly. When Laban found that Jacob had left him, he was not at all pleased; for he wished Jacob still to care for the things that he owned, for Jacob managed them better than Laban himself, and God blessed everything that Jacob undertook. Then, too, Laban did not like to have his two daughters, the wives of Jacob, taken so far away from him.

So Laban and the men who were with him followed after Jacob; but that night God spoke to Laban in a dream and said:

“Do no harm to Jacob, when you meet him.”

Therefore, when Laban came to where Jacob was in his camp on Mount Gilead, on the east of the river Jordan, Laban

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

spoke kindly to Jacob. And Jacob and Laban made a covenant, that is a promise between them. They piled up a heap of stones, and on it they set up a large rock like a pillar; and beside the heap of stones they ate a meal together; and Jacob said to Laban:

“I promise not to go past this heap of stones, and this pillar to do you any harm. The God of your grandfather, Nahor, and the God of my grandfather, Abraham, be the judge between us.”

And Laban made the same promise to Jacob; and then he kissed his daughters, Jacob’s two wives, and all of Jacob’s children, and bade them good-by; and Laban went back to Haran, and Jacob went on to Canaan.

And Jacob gave two names to the heap of stones where they had made the covenant. One name was “Galeed,” a word which means, “The heap of Witness.” The other was “Mizpah,” which means “Watch-tower.” For Jacob said, “The Lord watch between you and me, when we are absent from each other.”

While Jacob was going back to Canaan, he heard news that filled him with fear. He heard that Esau, his brother, was coming to meet him, leading an army of four hundred men. He knew how angry Esau had been long before, and how he had threatened to kill him. And Jacob feared that Esau would now come upon him, and kill, not only Jacob himself, but his wives and his children. If Jacob had acted rightly toward his brother, he need not have feared Esau’s coming; but he knew how he had wronged Esau, and he was terribly afraid to meet him.

That night Jacob divided his company into two parts; so that if one part were taken the other part might escape. And he sent onward before him, as a present to his brother, a great drove of oxen and cows, and sheep and goats, and camels and asses; hoping that by the present his brother might be made more kind toward him. And then Jacob prayed earnestly to the Lord God to help him. After that he sent all his family across a brook that was in his path, called the brook Jabbok, while he stayed alone on the other side of the brook to pray again.

A MIDNIGHT WRESTLING MATCH

And while Jacob was alone, he felt that a man had taken hold of him, and Jacob wrestled with this strange man all the night. And the man was an angel from God. They wrestled so hard, that Jacob's thigh was strained in the struggle. And the angel said:

“Let me go, for the day is breaking.”

And Jacob said:

“I will not let thee go until thou dost bless me.” And the angel said:

“What is your name?”

And Jacob answered, “Jacob is my name.”

Then the angel said:

“Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, that is ‘He who wrestles with God.’ For you have wrestled with God and have won the victory.”

And the angel blessed him there. And the sun rose as the angel left him; and Jacob gave a name to that place. He called it Peniel, or Penuel, words which in the language that Jacob spoke mean “The Face of God.” “For,” said Jacob, “I have met God face to face.” And after this Jacob was lame, for in the wrestle he had strained his thigh.

And as Jacob went across the brook Jabbok, early in the morning, he looked up, and there was Esau right before him. He bowed with his face to the ground, over and over again, as people do in those lands when they meet some one of higher rank than their own. But Esau ran to meet him, and placed his arms around his neck, and kissed him; and the two brothers wept together. Esau was kind and generous to forgive his brother all the wrong that he had done; and at first he would not receive Jacob's present, for he said: “I have enough, my brother.” But Jacob urged him, until at last he took the present. And so the quarrel was ended, and the two brothers were at peace.

Jacob came to Shechem, in the middle of the land of Canaan, and there he set up his tents; and at the foot of the mountain, although there were streams of water all around, he dug his own

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

well, great and deep; the well where Jesus sat and talked with a woman many ages after that time; and the well that may be still seen. Even now the traveler who visits that place may drink water from Jacob's well.

After this Jacob had a new name, Israel, which means, as we have seen, "The one who wrestles with God." Sometimes he was called Jacob, and sometimes Israel. And all those who come from Israel, his descendants, were called Israelites.

After this Isaac died, very old, and was buried by his sons Jacob and Esau, in the cave at Hebron where Abraham and Sarah were buried already. Esau with his children and his cattle went away to a land on the southeast of Canaan, which was called Edom. And Jacob, or Israel, and his family lived in the land of Canaan dwelling in tents, and moving from place to place, where they could find good pasture, or grass upon which to feed their flocks.

STORY 15

THE RICH MAN'S SON WHO WAS SOLD AS A SLAVE

Genesis xxxvii: 1 to 36.

AFTER Jacob came back to the land of Canaan with his eleven sons, another son was born to him, the second child of his wife Rachel, whom Jacob loved so well. You remember we told in Story 13 how long Jacob worked for Laban caring for his sheep and oxen in order that he might have Rachel for his wife. But now a great sorrow was to come to Jacob, for soon after the baby came, his mother Rachel died, and Jacob was filled with sorrow. Even to this day you can see the place where Rachel was buried, on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jacob named the child whom

THE RICH MAN'S SON WHO WAS SOLD AS A SLAVE

Rachel left, Benjamin; and now Jacob had twelve sons. Most of them were grown-up men, but Joseph was a boy, seventeen years old, and his brother Benjamin was almost a baby.

Of all his children, Jacob loved Joseph the best, because he was Rachel's child, because he was so much younger than most of his brothers, and because he was good, and faithful, and thoughtful. Jacob gave to Joseph a robe or coat of bright color made somewhat like a long cloak with wide sleeves. This was a special mark of Jacob's favor to Joseph, and it made his older brothers very envious of him.

Then, too, Joseph did what was right, while his older brothers often did very wrong acts, of which Joseph sometimes told their father, and this made them very angry at Joseph. But they hated him still more because of two strange dreams that he had, and of which he told them. He said one day:

"Listen to this dream that I have dreamed. I dreamed that we were out in the field binding sheaves, when suddenly my sheaf stood up, and all your sheaves came around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." And they said, scornfully, "Do you suppose that the dream means that you will some time rule over us, and that we shall bow down to you?" Then a few days after Joseph said, "I have dreamed again. This time I saw in my dream the sun and the moon and eleven stars all come and bow down to me."

And his father said to him, "I do not like you to dream such dreams. Shall I, and your mother, and your brothers, come and bow down before you, as if you are a king?"

His brothers hated Joseph, and would not speak kindly to him; but his father thought much of what Joseph had said.

At one time, Joseph's ten older brothers were taking care of the flock in the fields near Shechem, which was nearly fifty miles from Hebron, where Jacob's tents were spread. And Jacob wished to send a message to his sons, and he called Joseph, and said to him, "Your brothers are near Shechem with the flock. I wish that you would go to them, and take a message, and find if they are well, and if the flocks are doing well; and bring me word from them."

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

That was quite an errand for a boy to go alone over the country, and find his way, for fifty miles, and then walk home again. But Joseph was a boy that could take care of himself, and could be trusted; so he went forth on his journey, walking northward over the mountains, past Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, and Bethel,—though we are not sure that any of those cities were then built, except Jerusalem, which we know was already a strong city.

When Joseph reached Shechem he could not find his brothers, for they had taken their flocks to another place. A man met Joseph wandering in the field, and asked him, “Whom are you seeking?” Joseph said, “I am looking for my brothers, the sons of Jacob. Can you tell me where I will find them?” And the man said, “They are at Dothan; for I heard them say that they were going there.” Then Joseph walked over the hills to Dothan, which was fifteen miles further. And his brothers saw him afar off coming towards them. They knew him by his bright garment; and one said to another:

“Look, that dreamer is coming! Come, let us kill him, and throw his body into a pit, and tell his father that some wild beast has eaten him; and then we will see what becomes of his dreams.”

One of his brothers, whose name was Reuben, felt more kindly toward Joseph than the others; but he did not dare to oppose the others openly. Reuben said:

“Let us not kill him; but let us throw him into this pit, here in the wilderness, and leave him there to die.”

But Reuben intended, after they had gone away, to lift Joseph out of the pit, and take him home to his father. The brothers did as Reuben told them; they threw Joseph into the pit, which was empty. He cried, and begged them to save him, but they would not. They calmly sat down to eat their dinner on the grass, while their brother was calling to them from the pit.

After the dinner, Reuben chanced to go to another part of the field, so that he was not at hand when a company of men passed by with their camels, going from Gilead, on the east of the river Jordan, to Egypt, to sell spices and fragrant gum from trees to the

THE RICH MAN'S SON WHO WAS SOLD AS A SLAVE

Egyptians. Then Judah, another of Joseph's brothers said, "What good will it do us to kill our brother? Would it not be better for us to sell him to these men, and let them carry him away? After all, he is our brother; and we would better not kill him."

His brothers agreed with him; so they stopped the men who were passing, and drew up Joseph from the pit; and for twenty pieces of silver, they sold Joseph to these men; and they took him away with them down to Egypt.

After a while, Reuben came to the pit, where he had left Joseph, and looked into it; but Joseph was not there. Then Reuben was in great trouble, and he came back to his brothers saying, "The boy is not there! What shall I do?"

Then his brothers told Reuben what they had done, and they all agreed together to deceive their father. They killed one of the goats, and dipped Joseph's coat in its blood, and they brought it to their father, and they said to him, "We found this coat out in the wilderness. Look at it, and see if you think it was your son's." And Jacob knew it at once. He said, "It is my son's coat. Some wild beast has eaten him. There is no doubt that Joseph has been torn in pieces!"

And Jacob's heart was broken over the loss of Joseph, all the more because he had sent Joseph alone on the journey through the wilderness. They tried to comfort him, but he would not be comforted. He said:

"I will go down to the grave mourning for my poor lost son."

So the old man sorrowed for his son Joseph; and all the time his wicked brothers knew that Joseph was not dead; but they would not tell their father the dreadful deed that they had done to their brother, in selling him as a slave.

STORY 16

FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE

Genesis xl: 1, to xli: 44.

THE men who bought Joseph from his brothers were called Ishmaelites, because they belonged to the family of Ishmael, who, you remember, was the son of Hagar, the servant of Sarah (Story 9). These men carried Joseph southward over the plain which lies beside the great sea on the west of Canaan; and after many days they brought Joseph to Egypt. How strange it must have seemed to the boy who had lived in tents, to see the great river Nile, and the cities, thronged with people, and the temples, and the mighty pyramids!

The Ishmaelites sold Joseph as a slave to a man named Potiphar, who was an officer in the army of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Joseph was a beautiful boy, and cheerful and willing in his spirit, and able in all that he undertook; so that his master, Potiphar, became very friendly to him, and after a time he placed Joseph in charge of his house, and everything in it. For some years Joseph continued in the house of Potiphar, a slave in name, but in reality the master of all his affairs, and ruler over his fellow-servants.

But Potiphar's wife, who at first was very friendly to Joseph, afterward became his enemy, because Joseph would not do wrong to please her. She told her husband falsely that Joseph had done a wicked deed. Her husband believed her, and was very angry at Joseph, and put him in the prison with those who had been sent to that place for breaking the laws of the land. How hard it was for Joseph to be charged with a crime, when he had done no wrong, and to be thrust into a dark prison among wicked people!

FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE

But Joseph had faith in God, that at some time all would come out right: and in the prison he was cheerful, and kind, and helpful, as he had always been. The keeper of the prison saw that Joseph was not like the other men around him, and he was kind to Joseph. In a very little while Joseph was placed in charge of all his fellow-prisoners, and took care of them; just as he had taken care of everything in Potiphar's house. The keeper of the prison scarcely looked into the prison at all, for he had confidence in Joseph, that he would be faithful and wise in doing the work given to him. Joseph did right, and served God; and God blessed Joseph in everything.

While Joseph was in prison, two men were sent there by the king of Egypt, because he was displeased with them. One was the king's chief butler, who served the king with wine; the other was the chief baker, who served him with bread. These two men were under Joseph's care, and Joseph waited on them, for they were men of rank.

One morning, when Joseph came into the room in the prison where the butler and the baker were kept, he found them looking quite sad. Joseph said to them:

"Why do you look so sad to-day?" Joseph was cheerful and happy in his spirit, and he wished others to be happy, even in prison.

And one of the men said, "Each one of us dreamed last night a very strange dream; and there is no one to tell us what our dreams mean."

For in those times, before God gave the Bible to men, he often spoke to men in dreams; and there were wise men, who could sometimes tell what the dreams meant.

"Tell me," said Joseph, "what your dreams were. Perhaps my God will help me to understand them."

Then the chief butler told his dream. He said, "In my dream I saw a grape-vine with three branches; and as I looked the branches shot out buds, and the buds became blossoms, and the blossoms turned into clusters of ripe grapes. And I picked the grapes, and

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

squeezed their juice into King Pharaoh's cup, and it became wine; and I gave it to King Pharaoh to drink, just as I used to do when I was beside his table."

Then Joseph said, "This is what your dream means. The three branches mean three days. In three days King Pharaoh will call you out of prison, and will put you back in your place; and you shall stand at his table, and shall give him his wine, as you have given it before. But when you go out of prison, please to remember me, and try to find some way to get me, too, out of this prison. For I was stolen out of the land of Canaan, and sold as a slave; and I have done nothing wrong, to deserve being put in this prison. Do speak to the king for me, that I may be set free."

Of course the chief butler felt very happy to hear that his dream had so pleasant a meaning; and then the chief baker spoke, hoping to have an answer as good.

"In my dream," said the baker, "there were three baskets of white bread on my head, one above the other, and on the topmost basket were all kinds of roasted meat and food for Pharaoh; and the birds came, and ate the food from the baskets on my head."

And Joseph said to the baker:

"This is the meaning of your dream, and I am sorry to tell it to you. The three baskets are three days. In three days, by order of the king, you shall be lifted up, and hanged upon a tree; and the birds shall eat your flesh from your bones as you are hanging in the air."

And it came to pass, just as Joseph had said. Three days after that, King Pharaoh sent his officers to the prison. They came and took out both the chief butler and the chief baker. The baker they hung up by his neck to die, and left his body for the birds to pick in pieces. The chief butler they brought back to his old place, where he waited at the king's table, and handed him his wine to drink.

You would have supposed that the butler would remember Joseph, who had given him the promise of freedom, and had shown

FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE

such wisdom. But in his gladness, he forgot all about Joseph. And two full years passed by, while Joseph was still in prison, until he was a man thirty years old.

But one night, King Pharaoh himself dreamed a dream, in fact two dreams in one. And in the morning he sent for all the wise men of Egypt, and told them his dreams; but there was not a man who could give the meaning of them. And the king was troubled, for he felt that the dreams had some meaning, which it was important for him to know.

Then suddenly the chief butler, who was by the king's table, remembered his own dream, in the prison two years before, and remembered, too, the young man who had told its meaning so exactly. And he said:

“I do remember my faults this day. Two years ago King Pharaoh was angry with his servants, with me and the chief baker, and he sent us to the prison. While we were in the prison, one night each of us dreamed a dream, and the next day a young man in the prison, a Hebrew from the land of Canaan, told us what our dreams meant; and in three days they came true, just as the Hebrew had said. I think that, if this young man is in the prison still, he could tell the king the meaning of his dreams.”

You notice that the butler spoke of Joseph as “a Hebrew.” The people of Israel, to whom Joseph belonged, were called Hebrews as well as Israelites. The word Hebrew means “one who crossed over,” and it was given to the Israelites, because Abraham their father, had come from a land on the other side of the great river Euphrates, and had crossed over the river on his way to Canaan.

Then King Pharaoh sent in haste to the prison for Joseph; and Joseph was taken out, and he was dressed in new garments, and was led in to Pharaoh in the palace. And Pharaoh said to Joseph: “I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can tell what it means. And I have been told that you have power to understand dreams and what they mean.”

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

And Joseph answered Pharaoh: "The power is not in me; but God will give Pharaoh a good answer. What is the dream that the king has dreamed?"

"In my first dream," said Pharaoh, "I was standing by the river; and I saw seven fat and handsome cows come up from the river to feed in the grass. And while they were feeding, seven other cows followed them up from the river, very thin, and poor, and lean, such miserable creatures as I had never seen. And the seven lean cows ate up the seven fat cows; and after they had eaten them, they were as lean and miserable as before. Then I awoke.

"And I fell asleep again, and dreamed again. In my second dream, I saw seven heads of grain growing upon one stalk, large, and strong, and good. And then seven heads came up after them, that were thin, and poor, and withered. And the seven thin heads swallowed up the seven good heads, and afterward were as poor and withered as before.

"And I told these two dreams to all the wise men, and there is no one who can tell me their meaning. Can you tell me what these dreams mean?"

And Joseph said to the king:

"The two dreams have the same meaning. God has been showing to King Pharaoh what he will do in this land. The seven good cows mean seven years, and the seven good heads of grain mean the same seven years. The seven lean cows, and the seven thin heads of grain also mean seven years. The good cows and the good grain mean seven years of plenty, and the seven thin cows and thin heads of grain mean seven poor years. There are coming upon the land of Egypt seven years of such plenty as have never been seen; when the fields shall bring greater crops than ever before; and after those years shall come seven years when the fields shall bring no crops at all. And then for seven years there shall be such need, that the years of plenty will be forgotten, for the people will have nothing to eat.

"Now, let King Pharaoh find some man who is able and wise, and let him set this man to rule over the land. And during the

FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE

seven years of plenty, let a part of the crops be put away for the years of need. If this shall be done, then when the years of need come there will be plenty of food for all the people, and no one will suffer, and all will have enough.”

And King Pharaoh said to Joseph:

“Since God has shown you all this; there is no other man as wise as you. I will appoint you to do this work, and to rule over the land of Egypt. All the people shall be under you; only on the throne of Egypt, I will be above you.”

And Pharaoh took from his own hand the ring which held his seal, and put it on Joseph’s hand, so that he could sign for the king, and seal in the king’s place. And he dressed Joseph in robes of fine linen, and put around his neck a gold chain. And he made Joseph ride in a chariot which was next in rank to his own. And they cried out before Joseph, “Bow the knee.” And thus Joseph was ruler over all the land of Egypt.

So the slave boy, who was sent to prison without deserving it, came out of prison to be a prince and a master over all the land. You see that God had not forgotten Joseph, even when he seemed to have left him to suffer.

STORY 17

HOW JOSEPH’S DREAM CAME TRUE

Genesis xli: 46, to xlii: 38.

WHEN Joseph was made ruler over the land of Egypt, he did just as he had always done. It was not Joseph’s way to sit down and rest, and enjoy himself, and make others wait on him. He found his work

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

at once, and began to do it faithfully and thoroughly. He went out over all the land of Egypt, and saw how rich and abundant were the fields of grain, giving much more than the people could use for their own needs. He told the people not to waste it, but to save it for the coming time of need.

And he called upon the people to give him for the king, one bushel of grain out of every five, to be stored up. The people brought their grain, after taking for themselves as much as they needed; and Joseph stored it up in great store-houses in the cities; so much at last that no one could keep account of it.

The king of Egypt gave a wife to Joseph from the noble young women of his kingdom. Her name was Asenath; and to Joseph and his wife God gave two sons. The oldest son he named Manasseh, a word which means, "making to forget."

"For," said Joseph, "God has made me forget all my troubles, and my toil as a slave."

The second son he named Ephraim, a word that means, "fruitful."

"Because," said Joseph, "God has not only made the land fruitful, but he has made me fruitful in the land of my troubles."

The seven years of plenty soon passed by, and then came the years of need. In all the lands around people were hungry, and there was no food for them to eat; but in the land of Egypt everybody had enough. Most of the people soon used up the grain that they had saved: many had saved none at all, and they all cried to the king to help them.

"Go to Joseph," said King Pharaoh, "and do whatever he tells you to do."

Then the people came to Joseph, and Joseph opened the store-houses, and sold to the people all the grain that they wished to buy. And not only the people of Egypt came to buy grain, but people of all the lands around as well, for there was great need and famine everywhere.

HOW JOSEPH'S DREAM CAME TRUE

And the need was as great in the land of Canaan, where Jacob lived, as in other lands. Jacob was rich in flocks and cattle, and gold and silver; but his fields gave no grain, and there was danger that his family and his people would starve. And Jacob,—who was now called Israel also,—heard that there was food in Egypt, and he said to his sons:

“Why do you look at each other, asking what to do to find food? I have been told that there is grain in Egypt. Go down to that land, and take money with you, and buy grain, so that we may have bread, and may live.”

Then the ten older brothers of Joseph went down to the land of Egypt. They rode upon asses, for horses were not much used in those times, and they brought money with them. But Jacob would not let Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother, go with them, for he was all the more dear to his father, now that Joseph was no longer with him; and Jacob feared that harm might come to him.

Then Joseph's brothers came to Joseph to buy food. They did not know him, grown up to be a man, dressed as a prince, and seated on a throne. Joseph was now nearly forty years old, and it had been almost twenty-three years since they had sold him. But Joseph knew them all, as soon as he saw them. He resolved to be sharp and stern with them, not because he hated them, but because he wished to see what their spirit was, and whether they were as selfish, and cruel, and wicked as they had been in other days.

They came before him, and bowed, and with their faces to the ground. Then, no doubt, Joseph thought of the dream that had come to him while he was a boy, of his brothers' sheaves bending down around his sheaf. He spoke to them as a stranger, as if he did not understand their language, and he had their words explained to him in the language of Egypt.

“Who are you? And from what place do you come?” said Joseph, in a harsh, stern manner.

They answered him, very meekly, “We have come from the land of Canaan to buy food.”

THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE

“No,” said Joseph, “I know what you have come for. You have come as spies, to see how helpless the land is, so that you can bring an army against us, and make war on us.”

“No, no,” said Joseph’s ten brothers, “we are no spies, we are the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan; and we have come for food, because we have none at home.”

“You say you are the sons of one man, who is your father? Is he living? Have you any more brothers? Tell me all about yourselves.”

And they said, “Our father is an old man in Canaan. We did have a younger brother, but he was lost; and we have one brother still, who is the youngest of all, but his father could not spare him to come with us.”

“No,” said Joseph, “you are not good, honest men. You are spies. I shall put you all in prison, except one of you; and he shall go and bring that youngest brother of yours; and when I see him, then I will believe that you tell the truth.”

So Joseph put all the ten men in prison, and kept them under guard for three days; then he sent for them again. They did not know that he could understand their language, and they said to each other, while Joseph heard, but pretended not to hear:

“This has come upon us because of the wrong that we did to our brother Joseph, more than twenty years ago. We heard him cry, and plead with us, when we threw him into the pit, and we would not have mercy on him. God is giving us only what we have deserved.”

And Reuben, who had tried to save Joseph, said, “Did I not tell you not to harm the boy? And you would not listen to me. God is bringing our brother’s blood upon us all.”

When Joseph heard this, his heart was touched, for he saw that his brothers were really sorry for the wrong that they had done him. He turned away from them, so that they could not see his face, and he wept. Then he turned again to them, and spoke roughly as before, and said:

HOW JOSEPH'S DREAM CAME TRUE

“This I will do, for I serve God, I will let you all go home, except one man. One of you I will shut up in prison; but the rest of you can go home, and take food for your people. And you must come back, and bring your youngest brother with you, and I shall know then that you have spoken the truth.”

Then Joseph gave orders, and his servants seized one of his brothers, whose name was Simeon, and bound him in their sight, and took him away to prison. And he ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, and to put every man's money back into the sack before it was tied up, so that they would find the money as soon as they opened the sack. Then the men loaded their asses with the sacks of grain, and started to go home, leaving their brother Simeon a prisoner.

When they stopped on the way to feed their asses, one of the brothers opened his sack, and there he found his money lying on the top of the grain. He called out to his brothers, “See, here is my money given again to me!” And they were frightened; but they did not dare to go back to Egypt, and meet the stern ruler of the land. They went home, and told their old father all that had happened to them; and how their brother Simeon was in prison, and must stay there until they should return, bringing Benjamin with them.

When they opened their sacks of grain, there, in the mouth of each sack, was the money that they had given; and they were filled with fear. Then they spoke of going again to Egypt, and taking Benjamin, but Jacob said to them:

“You are taking my sons away from me. Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone, and now you would take Benjamin away. All these things are against me!”

Reuben said, “Here are my own two boys. You may kill them, if you wish, in case I do not bring Benjamin back to you.”

But Jacob said, “My youngest son shall not go with you. His brother is dead, and he alone is left to me. If harm should come to him, it would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”