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THE BLESSING OF JACOB

OUR BIBLE STORY by the "Highly-Respected" Franchiser (A Vision Between the Lines of God's Inspired Word.)

Scripture Authority:—"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped."—Heb. 11:21. Read also Gen. 48.

HE had made up his mind. The boys must decide the matter for themselves. Manasseh was now nearly 20 and Ephraim, his brother, was but a little over two years his junior, and both were quite old enough to say whether they would enter the priesthood. Upon the last visit of her father, Potiphar, the priest of On, when he had pressed her for a decision, she had promised that he should have a final answer that day, and as she awaited his coming the mother nervously toyed with the golden circlets about her wrists and wondered what her father would say.

She knew he was anxious, yea determined, that his two grandsons should follow him in the priestly profession, and he expected her to decide the matter for them, but she understood her boys and the temperament of her husband too well to attempt anything of the kind, much as her natural sympathies and inbred convictions prompted.

Notwithstanding the influence of her husband upon her, and the fact that the God he worshipped was not the god of the Egyptians, she still clung to the faith of her fathers. She was content to let her husband alone in the worship and service of his God, excusing him, as did her father and the rest of the priesthood from the worship and service in the Egyptian temples, but she hoped and expected that her two boys would grow up true Egyptians, loyal and devoted to the great god Osiris. She had neglected no opportunity of impressing them with the Egyptian religion, and her father had taken especial delight and care in acquainting them with all the details of the temple worship and had taught them from the sacred writings of the priesthood.

But counter influences had been at work upon their lives. They idolized their father, and his thought and conduct had the greatest weight with them. He had told them of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. He had told them the stories of God's dealings with the Hebrew people, and of the promises which had been given to them. And when the old man Jacob, their grandfather, had told them the stories over and over again they had come to know them by heart, and unconsciously to themselves they were being greatly influenced by them.

But if ever any doubts had come into their minds in regard to the gods of the Egyptians they never spoke of them to their mother, but somehow, instinctively, she felt uncertain as to just what decision the boys would make now that they were face to face with the all-important question. More than once she had been upon the point of pleading with them to pledge themselves to the priesthood, when something held her back and told her that it would be better to wait and let her father broach the matter to them. And so she had waited.

"Let me call the boys and you speak to them at once," she said to her father after his arrival and she had explained all to him. "I am sure your words will have great weight with them."

It was plain to see that Potiphar was disappointed, and he sat some minutes in silence.

"No," at last he said, "If the decision of this matter must be left to the boys it were better, I think, that they visit me in the temple. There, surrounded by the sacred tokens of our religion and under the very shadow of Osiris' presence, I shall be in better mood to press my plea, and it will be easier for them to choose."

"Very well," responded Asenath, "but I cannot help feeling that it would be wiser to see them now. Might it not be that I could reinforce thy words and help Manasseh and Ephraim to a decision?"

"Nay, my daughter, the temple is the place for me to speak to the boys, but you may plead with them before they come; yea, I charge thee to do this thing which thou hast already neglected too long. I shall expect the boys this afternoon," he added, as he took his departure.

As soon as her father had gone Asenath called her boys to her and frankly told them all that was in her heart, and the desire of their grandfather, the priest of On, that they should enter the sacred and powerful calling of the priesthood.

"He will be waiting you in the inner court of the temple this afternoon for your answer, and I am sure that my boys, in whose veins the blood of the priestly caste flows, will be true to the ancient religion of the Egyptians."

The boys were silent for some few minutes, seemingly deeply impressed with their mother's words. Then Ephraim, the keener and more thoughtful of the two notwithstanding he was the younger, looked up with a troubled expression on his face and asked:

"But what of the God of our father Joseph? Is He not a mighty God?"

"It may be so," replied the mother, impatiently, "but He is as nothing before the great gods of the Egyptians. Remember what they have done for thy country and thy people."

"But the gods of the Egyptians could not reveal to the king his dream, but the God of our father Joseph was able to do so, and we know that all came to pass as He said," persisted the boy.

"Enough," sharply rejoined the mother, "thy grandfather will be able to make all these things clear to thee. Is

he not older and wiser than thy father? Is not the learning and wisdom of the world within the keeping of the priests of the temple? Seek them. Hear them. Obey and follow them."

The entrance of a servant breathless with running interrupted further conversation. He came with an imperative message from Joseph for the boys to prepare at once to go with him to Goshen, word having just reached him that his aged father was dying. And as Asenath watched her two boys hasten off it was with inward forebodings.

"Oh, if father had only talked with the boys this morning and won their consent," she exclaimed. "Now I feel that it is too late."

At Goshen that afternoon, instead of the somber temple, with its great, awe-inspiring courts, its impressive ceremonies and its learned, persuasive priests, the boys and their father bowed before the couch of the patriarch of God, the man who had talked and walked with God, the man who had seen visions and dreamed dreams and who in faith had obeyed God and claimed for himself and his seed the promise given unto Abraham and Isaac.

And well was it so, for had the priest of On, instead of Israel the prince of God, spoken to the sons of Joseph that day it might have changed their whole course in life, winning them for the gods of Egypt instead of the true God, and shutting them out of the place and blessing with God's people. But God shapes the course of events and often as the untoward elements of the world are drawing close about one He suddenly opens the gateway of opportunity through which one may pass if he will to a life and a destiny with Him. And so it was to be with Manasseh and Ephraim that day.

Before Jacob instead of the priest of On, before their grandfather Potiphar, who was versed in all the learning of the Egyptians and knew many gods that were no gods at all, these two young men stood, and instead of their names being lost and forgotten amidst the ruins of the tombs and monuments of Egypt, they were to come down through the centuries laden with the promises and blessings of God.

The old man rouses himself as they enter. A new and celestial light plays over his wrinkled features. The enfolding mind again feels the thrill of God's presence. His voice drops from the thin, piping, querulous tones to the fuller, stronger voice of one with a message. He stretches forth his trembling hands and exclaims with a note of triumph in his voice:

"God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me: 'Behold, I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.'"

The old man paused. It almost seemed to the boys that they were in the presence of the God Almighty, about whom their grandfather had just been speaking, and the words sank deep into their hearts as they again heard what had been told them so often by their father that the Hebrew people were to become a great nation and into the heart of each there stole a yearning to share in this promised blessing. But now the old man begins again and they are aroused from their inward musings by hearing their own names spoken.

"Thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."

They hardly knew way their hearts leaped within them at the words, but they did, even as the soul sometimes responds to the inner voice of God while yet the mind does not grasp or understand the full meaning of the message. And in that moment they knew that it was not to be the priest-hood of Egypt, but identification with the Hebrew people and part in the promised blessing.

And Israel said unto Joseph: "I had not thought to see thy face; and lo! God hath shewed me also thy seed."

And he took the two boys and embraced them and kissed them, and stretching forth his right hand he placed it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly, and said:

"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; and he held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head, saying at the same time:

"Not so, my father; for this is the first born; put thy right hand upon his head."

But his father refused, saying: "I know it, my son, I know it. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. But, truly, thy younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

During the days which followed Ephraim pondered deeply over the words of blessing spoken over him and his brother, but after the days of mourning and Jacob had been carried back and placed in the cave of Machpelah, as he had requested, the boy found opportunity to question his father, who responded as follows:

"My son, God has promised thee blessing according as He has seen the possibilities in thee. See that thou fall not short of His requirements."

"I will not, father," spoke up the boy, earnestly. "The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and thy God, shall be my God, and His people shall be my people, and Manasseh shall be one with me in this pledge; won't you, Manasseh?"

The brother reached out and took the hand extended and exclaimed: "That I will, for the blessing of God has been spoken upon me, too."

WASHINGTON LETTER

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE A MOST IMPORTANT ONE.

RAILWAY RATE PROMINENT

Diminishing Number Ex-Confederates in Congress—Passing of Distinct Southern Type—Home Spirit in Middle West.

WASHINGTON.—President Roosevelt has his annual message completed, a finely engrossed copy ready for filing away and carefully typewritten copies, tied with ribbon, to be presented to the house and senate and read before those bodies and for distribution as soon as the important document has been read in congress. This is probably the most important message the president has ever sent to congress and is the longest. It contains from 20,000 to 25,000 words, which is an unusually lengthy communication for an executive to send to congress.

As the country knows pretty generally, Mr. Roosevelt makes railway legislation the chief feature of his message. When congress adjourned last winter without doing anything on this subject the president announced that he would take every opportunity to keep it alive and he has done so. In his own speeches he has told very clearly what he will ask congress to do and Secretary of War Taft and Senator Knox, of Pennsylvania, former attorney general, have aided in promulgating the administration policy. The president proposes that congress authorize the interstate commerce commission or some other governmental body to declare when a railroad rate is unreasonable and then to fix a rate which is reasonable. The railroads are to be given recourse to the federal courts if they are not satisfied.

The president will treat of a great number of subjects in his message in addition to railroad matters, prominent among them being federal control of insurance companies, the Santo Domingo treaty, the Panama canal, preserving the Niagara falls, our relations with foreign governments, but it is said he will not have any observations to make on the tariff.

Retirement of Senator Blackburn.—ONE of the results of the recent elections, it is said, will be the retirement of Senator Jo Blackburn, of Kentucky. His term expires in 1907, but the contest this fall has shown that the control of the legislature is in danger of passing away from his friends. Senator Blackburn is one of the old-time southern orators and a man of unique character and manners. He will be greatly missed if the wheel of politics should throw him out of public life.

Blackburn served for ten years in the house and most of his reputation he made for oratory was achieved in that body. He was then in the prime of life and vigor and his fine resonant voice was frequently heard in debate. He was never known for the profundity of his arguments, but he had a way of speaking that was impressive. He is one of those orators who can take a self-evident proposition and restate it in complex sentences so as to make it appear as an entirely new discovery and something of wonderful meaning and depth. He could argue on the floor of the senate for five minutes that two and two make four and to the ordinary listener it would sound as though he were demonstrating a most abstruse problem.

The Kentucky senator is one of the diminishing number of ex-confederates now in congress. He served all through the war in the confederate army and has an excellent record for bravery. He served two terms in the senate, beginning in '85 and then was retired for four years when the republicans controlled the legislature, but in 1900 succeeded former Senator William Lindsay, who had turned gold democrat in '96 and refused to support Bryan in 1900. New leaders have sprung up in Kentucky, however, and Mr. Blackburn is said to be slated for retirement. He will have reached within one year of the scriptural limit of life of three score and ten when his term expires.

The Old Southerners.—THE retirement of Senator Blackburn reduces still further the group of senators from the south who have in these modern days retained many of the characteristics and mannerisms ante-bellum days. The death of Senator Tate, of Tennessee, last spring, removed an old-time and old-style southerner from public life. There are not a great many of this type left. Money, of Mississippi; Morgan and Pettus, of Alabama; Berry, of Arkansas; McCreary, of Kentucky; and McEnery, of Louisiana, are about all who could now be classed as typical southerners in dress and manners, with the exception of Bailey, of Texas, a comparatively young man, who affects even more than his neighbors the old-style southern dress. This uniform is the long-skirted black coat, low-cut vest and black slouch hat.

The other senators from the south cannot be distinguished from their northern colleagues and look for the most part, like prosperous business men and usually attend the sessions of the senate dressed in business clothes. On state occasions the whole senate dresses in the black Prince Albert coat, although the cut of the gar-

ments worn by the old southerners is not so stylish as that of the other members. This uniformity of black, closely-buttoned frock coat adds very much to the appearance of the senate and the body seems to lose some of its dignity when in every day routine of work senators appear in sack coats, cutaways and other styles of garments of various colors.

Another decade will probably see the last of the ante-bellum type of southerner in Washington. The numerous railroads that bind the south to the north and the interchange of commerce has done wonders in amalgamating the sections and destroying the distinctive types of citizens. This is nowhere so apparent as in the congress of the United States, where men from the most remote sections of the south and west meet.

Our "Home" Country.—THE great Mississippi valley and the middle west is becoming the section of American homes," said Mr. Babcock, of Wisconsin, the other day in commenting on the changes that are being worked by the increasing population of the country. It had been suggested that the American people were not a home people. The ancestral homes of England, about which poets have sung, do not abound in this country, and even in the old settlements of the east comparatively few homesteads are found where more than one generation has lived. On this point Mr. Babcock declared that the middle west, the great states of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and others, were now the great home country of America.

"Out in this delightful section," said Mr. Babcock, "you find the home spirit more deeply established than in the rich and prosperous east. In many of these states you find a strong German element, and wherever that is you find the love of home and the ambition to found a home that will remain in the same family for generations. Of course the country is too new to show any very long established homesteads, but I can point to you in my own state and in adjoining states scores and hundreds of places where the head of the household established himself 30, 40 and 50 years ago and where the original estate has been preserved, a substantial house built and occupied first by the original owner and then by his oldest son, while surrounding the homestead are the homes of other children of the family. There are many of these patriarchal establishments and in them I think you will find the hope for the stability and conservatism necessary to a safe government."

It is not known whether Mr. Babcock has followed the example of the good people whom he describes, but he has purchased enough homes in Washington to insure places for all his heirs if they wish to locate here. He will probably, however, locate his real homestead in his district in Wisconsin and be enabled to add thereto from the nice little profit he will get when he is ready to sell his Washington property. He has very shrewdly invested in houses adjoining the capitol grounds on the theory that some day the government must enlarge its reservations and when the government wants any property it always stands ready to pay a top-notch price for it.

"Wise Man of the East."—WASHINGTON has within its borders this winter a very distinguished East Indian in the person of Mr. Ramanathan, his Britannic majesty's solicitor general of the island of Ceylon. In the religious life of India Mr. Ramanathan is classified as a Juanaa or a "wise man of the east." This title will insure him great consideration at the national capital and as he comes surrounded with the romance of the east and steeped in the mysteries of oriental religion, it is thought that he will become quite the "fad" in society.

This distinguished personage, lawyer, statesman and philosopher, was invited to this country by a number of American scholars and students who are interested in the religion and philosophy of the orient. He expects to deliver a few public and a number of private lectures while here. He comes from a long line of high-caste Hindus and his family for many generations have been the leaders of Ceylon in wealth, education and social requirements. He is reputed to be the best equipped Hindu lawyer in southern India.

The position of Mr. Ramanathan and his family in the religious life of Ceylon has been even more important than in the secular. His father erected the chief temple or cathedral of Colombo in which six daily services are performed, besides the monthly festivities. He has made a life study of various religions, with a view of reaching a harmony of the eastern and western religious ideals. He has made a critical and expensive study of the Christian Scriptures in addition to the sacred books of the Hindu religion. While in Washington this winter he will endeavor to find time to translate into English the original Sanscrit and Tamil, the celebrated Indian epics, known as "The Maha-Bharata" and the "Ramayana," which are considered the gems of the spiritual literature of the Aryan race.

Helpful Medicine.—"Doctor, I want to thank you for your valuable medicine." "It helped you, did it?" asked the doctor, very much pleased. "It helped me wonderfully." "How many bottles did you find it necessary to take?" "Oh, I didn't take any of it. My uncle took one bottle, and I am his sole heir."—The Bita.

No Use Trying.—It is so hard for a single man to save money that most married men seem to think there is no use trying when there are two to keep instead of one.

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