

The Mary Baker Eddy Science Institute

July 2010

This month, we present the last three chapters of THE BIBLE FOR EVERYMAN by Rosalie Maas. Next month, will begin Gordon Brown's "Christian Science Non-Sectarian".

Enjoy!

CHAPTER FIVE

ISAAC and JACOB

MORE and more one appreciates the Bible as a teacher and guide and friend. It never loses the standpoint seven days of creation, which begins the Bible, we have something beyond all price: that which brings an understanding of God, the infinite, within our reach and so enables us to "take up serpents." Those "serpents" are the poisonous beliefs which bind all mankind so harshly to unhappiness, ill-health, fear of humanity. It never forgets the plight of man in a world which seems painfully contradictory, but shows him in a way he can grasp—that is, through illustration—how to educate himself out of that plight through understanding God.

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Eternal Law

The Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." The story of the days of creation might be called "the law of the Lord,"—the law of spiritual fact as it appears to humanity. If we are to meditate on that law "day and night," we have to ask ourselves constantly, "What do these seven symbols teach me about the nature of the infinite? What do they mean to me in my daily life? What tyrannical false laws do they annul?" Isaiah says, "And the Lord shall utterly destroy the

tongue of the Egyptian [materialistic] sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod." In proportion as we use the "mighty wind" of the seven days of creation to smite the "seven streams" of materialism, we can go forward unmolested.

The symbol of the first day of creation is light,—the light of wisdom. Why is it that we can let wisdom guide our thoughts and actions? Because the infinite is intelligence. As we ponder this fact in humility, we no longer let the darkness fool us into believing that some huge Goliath of a difficulty is holding us at its mercy; and instead of relying upon our limited human faculties to help us, we appeal to the one source of intelligence, with the result that wisdom makes itself heard. When one switches on the light in a room, the instrument receives and radiates light at once and without effort; Isaiah says, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come,"—we have only to let the light use our thinking. First, then, we have the law of wisdom, counteracting ignorance and belief in the brain.

The symbol of the second day of creation is the firmament between the waters above and beneath, representing that which separates between the Godlike and the un-Godlike. Why is it that we can have the strength to choose between that which is good and that which is less good or not good at all? Because of the absolute purity of spiritual reality, entirely un-contaminated by the material, the evil, the self-destructive. As we reflect upon this fact, we find ourselves increasingly choosing to be patient rather than impatient, refraining from frittering and criticizing, refusing to be taken in by the apparent substance and reality of some evil. In this way we become better men and women; we don't try to force our way fanatically towards the pure spiritual status which we know to be ours divinely, but we let our developing understanding of that status bring about our decontamination step by step and show us what is nearest good under the circumstances. Secondly, then, we have the law of discernment, of abiding good, nullifying the confusion of good and evil.

The symbol of the third day of creation is the dry land appearing and bringing forth, representing that which is definite and which grows up within us. Why is it that we never doubt that we have our own identity? Because of the definiteness of the infinite, which is always appearing in beautiful spiritual forms. As we think this out, we see that that which is essentially "us" must be permanent and lovely.

The result is that we become less and less absorbed in the physical body,—how it feels and how it looks; we become less self-centered, freer from either self-love or self-condemnation. We begin to see that the motley collection of beliefs which is labeled "us" is nothing more than a garment which no longer fits us or pleases us, and so we cast it aside for the "beautiful garments" which we are divinely entitled to enjoy. They are made up of the unique blending of spiritual qualities which forms the real "us." Thirdly, then, we have the law of definite spiritual identity, superseding corporeal selfhood.

The symbol of the fourth day of creation is the solar system, representing the one universal harmony. Why is it that we can understand anything of the infinite? Because there is only one infinite, which is perfectly systematic and always makes itself clear to the systematic seeker. The despotic so-called systems of the world, on the other hand, inculcate blind belief in and blind obedience to some personal authority. Again, why is it that we can enjoy happy relationships? Because there is one central Principle governing all its ideas in harmony. As we consider this carefully and humbly, we see that we are all "but parts of one stupendous whole." Then we stop trying to make things or people work together harmoniously; instead we try to harmonize our own individual understanding with the one Principle, and this brings about right adjustment. Fourthly, then, we have the law of system and harmony, disproving false authority and unhappy relationship.

The symbols of the fifth day of creation are the birds and fishes, representing the outsoaring of limitations. Why is it that we have a sense of existence at all? Why is it that we can have a sense of vitality and abundance? Because of the infinite I AM. When we let this fact inspire us, we see that we "live, and move, and have our being" in that I AM, and therefore we can go forward unburdened by fear of the future or regret for the past, and enjoying abundance of good here and now. Then life no longer descends pathetically into impoverishment of health and interest, but becomes enriched in every direction. Fifthly, then, we have the law of life, invalidating decay and deprivation.

The symbol of the sixth day of creation is man created in the image and likeness of God and given dominion over all the earth. Why is it that we can achieve anything worthwhile—whether it be in art, engineering, or character? Because of the fact that the infinite made man like itself and the infinite is conscious of all that is true. When we recognize this, however faintly, we begin to

have dominion, because we begin to be more conscious of the fundamental truth of things. That means that we can become masters of the situation, instead of victims of circumstances. The only way we can become masters is by using a full consciousness of God to quash, however much the resistance, everything which wars against the standard of man. Most of us let laziness prevent us from getting down to this work, but sooner or later we find ourselves forced to do it, and constantly. Sixthly, then, we have the law of dominion, setting at naught all subjection.

The symbol of the seventh day of creation is God resting, having fulfilled His purpose. Why is it that we manage to have moments of peace and entire satisfaction? Because of the completeness and perfection of the infinite. Whenever we have any gratitude for this fact, we have relief from fear. Instead of imagining that anything might happen and that it will probably be unpleasant or cruel, we rest in the fact that nothing can ever separate us from the infinite motherhood and that that motherhood will take care of every situation. Finally, then, we have the law of peace and perfection, forestalling fear.

These laws are eternal facts; we already catch glimpses of them in human experience, but we can bring them consistently into operation through "prayer and fasting,"—through affirming their truth and also rejecting the illegal beliefs which would oppose them by seeing their fundamental powerlessness. That is what Jesus did throughout his mission.

The Key to the Bible

The meaning of the seven days of creation is fresher than young leaves uncurling in the spring; more irresistible than a mighty waterfall; warmer than the sun ripening fruit on a garden wall; more firmly based than mountains. When we have a real understanding of it, we can use it as the key to the whole Bible. If we make no effort to think it out and assimilate it, we fail to recognize the illustrations of those seven days throughout the Scriptures, and we run the risk of being capricious and inconsistent in interpreting the various stories. When the fundamentals are clear to us, they enrich our understanding of everything we read in the Bible, and everything we read in the Bible enriches our understanding of those fundamentals.

A great deal of valuable and interesting research is being done into the historical aspect of the Old Testament. The more research there is, the more it is found that the Old Testament is a highly untrustworthy chronicle of historical events. But this only emphasizes the fact that when the prophets in captivity edited all the sacred writings of their nation, they regarded moral and spiritual truths as vastly more important than historical accuracy. Undoubtedly they were concerned with the history of their own nation, but their primary aim was to produce a textbook of life, not a historical textbook.

The Stories of Isaac and Jacob

Bible history is divided up into distinct thousand-year periods, each one illustrating its respective day of creation. The first four chapters of this book have given an outline of the first thousand-year period, where the "light" of the seven days of creation exposed the mistiness of the common notions of man's origin; the second thousand-year period, where the "firmament" enabled Noah to separate himself from the flood of disaster by building an ark; and the beginning of the third thousand-year period, where Abraham began to see the "dry land" appearing in his own experience and giving him a definite purpose. Now, in the stories of Isaac and Jacob, we see more of the third day sense of things. We begin to see something of the meaning of the verse in Genesis which describes what happens when the dry land has appeared: "And God called the dry land Earth;. . . and God saw that it was good." We begin to see that our essential selfhood is not only definite, but definitely good. Often we have as hard a struggle to prove this as Isaac and Jacob did, because good and evil seem so intermingled in our make-up. Jacob, for instance, was two-faced and sensual, and he suffered in consequence, but because he appreciated spiritual values he was blessed again and again. That is true of all of us, and the story shows quite plainly how we can bring into our lives more blessing and less suffering,—in other words, how we can stop sinning.

A Bride for Isaac

In Genesis 24 is told the story of how Abraham decided that a wife must be found for his son Isaac. He was determined that Isaac should on no account marry a woman of the Canaanites, who were idolaters, so he sent his eldest servant to the country from which he himself came, with instructions to bring back a bride for Isaac. Abraham said that God would send an angel before the servant to prosper his way.

The Abraham in each one of us is the fatherhood sense which wants the good that it has already achieved (symbolized by Isaac) to be carried even further, and it knows that the only way to ensure this is to find a bride for that Isaac. The "bride" is a sense of our ideal selfhood so beautiful that we never want to be without it. We therefore send out a servant to find that ideal selfhood, a servant who is willing to follow the definite leadings of the divine intelligence, without intruding human will.

Abraham's servant agreed to go on this mission and left with ten camels for Nahor. "And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water." This is one of those Biblical verses wonderfully rich in symbolic meaning. The ten camels symbolize a practical sense of spiritual fact; one's practicality is often measured by the amount one can do with one's ten fingers, and "ten" symbolizes a practical sense of things throughout the Bible, notably in the Ten Commandments. So we have to let our desire to improve our present sense of ourselves kneel down beyond the impatient hubbub of human demands ("without the city") and by "a well of water," whence we can draw fresh ideas of God; the time to do this is in "the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water,"—when thought is calm and quiet and ready to be refreshed and inspired.

The servant then prayed that of all the women who came out to draw water, the one who agreed to give him water to drink and also to give drink to his camels, should be the one destined to be Isaac's bride. "Before he had done speaking," Rebekah appeared. Rebekah was Abraham's great-niece; she was "very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her," and she agreed at once to let him and his camels drink of the water she had drawn from the well. When with real humility we wait on our understanding of God for a higher sense of ourselves as being like God, that higher sense comes to us spontaneously in all its beauty, bounty, and purity.

The servant then presented Rebekah with earrings and bracelets and asked if there was room for him and the camels and his men to lodge in her father's house. She said, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." The servant was full of wonder at the divine provision, and when, on arriving at the house, he had told his mission and Rebekah's brother and father had said,

"The thing proceedeth from the Lord ... Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken," he was even more overjoyed at the certainty of God's workings. Rebekah's mother and brother wanted her to wait a few days before going with Abraham's servant, but when he said, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way," they agreed to let the decision rest with Rebekah herself; she immediately said, "I will go."

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. . . she took a veil, and covered herself... And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Isaiah says, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

"Bride" is used in the Bible as a symbol of joy and gladness, the very opposite of sorrow and desolation, and as a symbol of virginity and loveliness; fine raiment and jewels are often mentioned in connection with the bride. Isaiah writes, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, ... as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Our spiritual self, the truth about us, is "altogether lovely," and "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." So, like Isaac, we can always lift up our eyes to behold the charms of our true being coming to meet us and to remain with us, bringing us tender comfort where before there has been a sense of emptiness. Rebekah never stops to wonder if Isaac is worthy of her— she comes in spite of every human deficiency. She comes to bring us "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Was ever symbolism so beautiful and so clear as that of the Scriptures?

The Birth of Jacob and Esau and the Selling of the Birthright

Genesis 25 records that Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac and then died and was buried with Sarah. "And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac." Rebekah was at first barren, but when Isaac entreated the Lord for her, she conceived, and bore twins. Before they were born, she felt them struggling together in her womb— struggling is a great feature of this story of Jacob—and the Lord told her, "Two nations are in thy

womb." When Rebekah first came to Isaac, she was veiled; our ideal self is often veiled to us, and that is why we seem to have "two nations"—good and evil—in our composition.

The first to be born was Esau, who emerged red and "all over like an hairy garment." Jacob was the second, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel. Esau stands for the Adam-man (made out of the red dust) with animal propensities—passion, revenge, fear, anger, hatred; Jacob for that which tries to hold them in check. The story goes on to bring out more of the contrast between the two brothers: Esau was "a cunning hunter, a man of the field," whereas Jacob was "a plain man, dwelling in tents;" Isaac loved Esau because he was fond of venison, whereas Rebekah loved Jacob. The Jacob in us is the progressive thinker, interested in the things of God; Esau is the lust for something to quench animal longings.

One day when Esau was faint with hunger and on the point of death, he agreed to sell his birthright to Jacob for the sake of some red stew; "thus Esau despised his birthright." The son who had the birthright was the son destined to fulfill the promise to Eve that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and the promise to Abraham that all the earth should be blessed through his seed. The Esau element never can be permanently satisfied and it sets no store by a spiritual mission. It may appear to be satisfied, because momentarily it exchanges a belief of emptiness for a belief of something which feeds its hunger, but it can never enjoy the lasting satisfaction of fulfilling a spiritual mission. If we look for satisfaction outside that, we never escape for long the aching emptiness which is hell. When the Jacob sees that the Esau has a greedy hunger which can only be an agony and a self-destroying thing, it wrests from it the "birthright." For instance, we can begin to see that some fierce appetite for physical possession—for sex, power, money, or whatever it may be—is not the "firstborn" in us, is not native to our essential selfhood, because the only permanent and developing thing about us is our spiritual longings and tendencies. In proportion as we see that, we have dominion over the animal element until it is completely supplanted.

Ezekiel emphasizes the same point when he writes of a prince of Israel, "Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same:"—Esau is not to be left with the birthright:— "exalt him that is low,"—

our little sense of spiritual things, our Jacob,— "and abase him that is high"—the Esau. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." If we are in earnest, our spiritual selfhood is forever revolutionizing our present sense of ourselves and impelling it to come into line, till there is no longer any gap between what we eternally are and what we seem to be at the moment.

Isaac Blesses Jacob

Chapter 26 tells of how the promise which God made to Abraham was confirmed to Isaac, and also of how Isaac began well-digging; he re-dug his father's wells which had been stopped up, and he dug four of his own —the first two amid opposition from the Philistines, the second two without opposition and with joy. There again we have a symbolic digest of the whole story of Isaac and Jacob, showing how the strife of opposing elements finally yields to unity, satisfaction, and harmony.

The story in Genesis 27 of how Rebekah tricked Isaac into conferring his blessing on Jacob, instead of on Esau, is very well known. But what concerns us is what it signifies to us to-day.

It is the dim-sightedness of the Isaac which makes it want Esau to have the blessing; it is so absorbed in the physical senses and their short-lived pleasures that it cannot see beyond them to spiritual values. The Rebekah, on the other hand, knows that spiritual vision is all that enjoys perpetuity and blessing, and realizes that at all costs Esau must be prevented from having the blessing. The Esau feels that it deserves something positive in return for its frantic pursuit of physical satisfaction, and so its rage and bitterness is intense when it finds itself deprived of blessing. But that is the inevitable fate of the Esau element: it can never find either blessing or satisfaction.

In Numbers 22-24 is told the story of how Balak asked the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites for him, because they were about to invade his kingdom. Balaam agreed to come to Balak, but said, "The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak;" the result was that three times he blessed the Israelites instead of cursing them. He said, "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he [God] hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the

Lord his God is with him." So not only do we have to acknowledge a sense of spiritual things as "firstborn" in us, but also that that sense is the only source of blessing. Nothing can reverse this.

Jacob's duplicity—symbolized in Isaac's remark, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau"—was punished by Esau's murderous hate of him, from which Rebekah told him to escape. Like Rebekah and Jacob, we often turn the Esau into an enemy to dread and fear and avoid because we try to wrench it violently out of our lives instead of letting a higher sense of ourselves render the Esau quite inoffensive. Jacob put first things first, but his human character fell far short of the ideal. He was a combination of good and evil elements, and throughout the story we find that the good elements prevailed, but at a price, because the evil elements brought fear and struggle and strife. Jacob's spiritual vision finally had to be wedded to a practical moral sense, instead of divorced from it. Jesus was trying to wed Peter's spiritual vision (which had enabled him to proclaim "Thou art the Christ") to a practical moral sense when he rebuked him for cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant.

Jacob's Ladder

Rebekah persuaded Isaac that it would be a good thing to send Jacob to her brother's house to find himself a wife, so Jacob set off for Haran. On his way he spent the night at Bethel with a stone for his pillow, and he dreamt that he saw a ladder set up on the earth and reaching up to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending on it. "And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; . . . and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest... I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." When Jacob awoke, he felt the presence of God as a living thing, but it made him afraid; he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Then he took the stone which he had used as a pillow, set it up as a pillar, poured oil on the top of it, and made a covenant with God.

Every time we flee from a condition of strife and hatred, we can turn that "stone," that stumbling-block, into a pillow,—something we can rest upon,—when we see that there is a "ladder" between heaven and earth, and therefore that the

sorriest conditions can be transformed. Our upward strivings are always met by the downward-coming impulses from the infinite, and then we see that they bring us abundant blessing and guide us through "the wilderness of this world." The Psalmist says, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

John tells in Chapter 6 of his Gospel of how Jesus came to his disciples walking on the sea. They were in a ship and it was dark, and the wind was raising the waves to great heights; then suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the sea towards them, and they were afraid. But he said, "It is I; be not afraid." "Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." What a wonderful symbolic picture of the operation of salvation as it appeared to Jacob and as it can appear to us whenever we set up the ladder of intelligent thinking about God and man. The answer comes to us, walking over the sea of trouble; we receive its blessing and it stays with us to revolutionize the situation; and finally we make it a pillar in our experience,—a pillar of demonstrated eternal fact.

Rachel and Leah

Jacob eventually reached Haran; Chapter 29 describes how he came to a well with a great stone upon its mouth which had to be rolled away before the sheep could be watered. He inquired after Laban, his uncle, and was told, "behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep." As soon as he saw her, Jacob rolled away the stone (in spite of the fact that it usually required several men to move it) and watered her sheep. Then he kissed Rachel and wept for joy, and Laban brought him to his house. No wonder Jacob could roll away the stone and release the waiting water of inspiration, after his vision at Bethel and when he beheld Rachel, his bride. When manhood finds womanhood,—when strength finds grace and acceptance in itself,—nothing can prevent the flow of the inspiration which is needed.

As his wages for serving Laban, Jacob asked for Rachel, and he said that he would work for seven years to gain her; "and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." One always has to work to win Rachel, and the way to win her is through the "seven years,"— through thinking out the spiritual meaning of the seven days of creation and trying to live in accordance with it,— but that is always a joy if we love Rachel.

On his wedding night, however, Jacob was tricked by Laban into lying with Leah, Rachel's older and less beautiful sister. Laban excused himself by saying that it was the custom of the country that the firstborn must be married before a younger sister. The result was that Jacob had to work another seven years for Rachel. Leah and Rachel are yet another symbol of the contention which haunted Jacob, for they were constantly jealous of each other.

Genesis 29:31-30:24 tells of eleven sons whom Leah and Rachel and their handmaids bore for Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons in all, but the twelfth, Benjamin, was not born until later. Some of his sons were good, others bad or even vile. They formed the twelve tribes of Israel, which constitute one of the main themes of the Scriptures. They symbolize the intermingled good and evil elements in each one of us and in the world; in proportion as the operation of God's nature is understood, the evil elements pass away, to make way for the perfect "twelve," symbolized in Revelation by the twelve gates of the city foursquare which were twelve pearls of pure perfection, with the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written on them.

Jacob and Laban

Laban not only tricked Jacob into accepting Leah before Rachel, but also tried to take advantage of him whenever he could. Jacob undoubtedly suffered at his hands, although he succeeded in outdoing him when he had made a characteristically mean bargain over some cattle. So once again Jacob's spiritual vision, his sense that God was always with him, preserved him in a situation rife with greed and envy and suspicion.

In the account of the relations between Jacob and Laban are indicated profound truths as to the nature of sin. To sin is really to indulge any sense of that which is not of the divine nature. Because Jacob had by no means proved his own selfhood to be sinless, he constantly suffered for the evil elements not eradicated in himself by finding them very apparent in his experience with others. That is always so. If we allow meanness, for instance, to flourish unchecked in ourselves, we soon find meanness in those around us and find ourselves the victim of it. Eventually we cannot evade getting down to the job of realizing that the eternal law of infinite satisfaction forever precludes meanness and forbids it to attach itself to man. Mortals are so educated to accept the evidence of

material personality as solid fact—they believe, for instance, that someone is selfish or cruel—that it takes a great deal of patience to learn to untangle the poor sinner from the sin. That is only the first step, though, because the responsibility on us is always to go further and see the nature of sin itself as a mere spider's web; it vanishes at the touch of that divine law which allows only sinlessness to be permanent fact and shows that anything else is no more than a shifting label. Jesus said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed,"—any understanding of the third day of creation, in which the seed first appears, showing that we can see reproduced within ourselves all that is divine,—"ye might say unto this sycamine tree,"—any deep-rooted sin,—"Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea;*"—the opposite of the dry land, and a name for the home of all evil;—"and it should obey you." We never get rid of sin by merely denying its possibility and trying to gloss over it, or by forgiving it in a rush of emotion, but only by specifically reversing it in particular instances and exchanging the sense of sin for some definite sense of God's nature. This always brings about genuine reformation. There was nothing superficial about the way Jesus forgave sin; when he said to the woman taken in adultery, "go, and sin no more," he knew that the sense of satisfaction he had introduced had shown her the pointlessness of sin.

The penalty for sin is really no more than the indulgence of sin, although theology has inculcated in most of us some such theory as that sinning on Monday is punished by suffering on Wednesday and Thursday! If you hate somebody, you are filled with feelings of disgust and irritation, and that dirt in your conscious being is the price you pay for hating. Immediately you lose the sense of disgust and irritation, because you learn to love, you no longer suffer. The suffering goes on only so long as we believe that anything which is not Godlike has definite identity. $2 + 2 = 5$ has no identity in arithmetic, and we pay no penalty for having allowed it into our calculations once we have corrected it with $2 + 2 = 4$.

In II Samuel 12 it is recorded that when Bathsheba bore a son by David, who arranged her husband's death in order to have her for himself, the prophet Nathan told David that the child would die, as a punishment. While the child was still alive, David fasted and wept; but immediately it died, he "arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and

when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat." The moment we have thoroughly expelled from consciousness all the uncleanness and misery of sin, we can anoint ourselves with the sweetness of being in God's presence again; with relief we can exchange our sin-filled sense for the "garments" in which we feel divinely at ease. Thus we are restored to the heaven of normality which is what sinlessness is. If we are wise, we never leave that heaven.

To return to the story of Jacob and Laban: when the tension between them was at its height, the Lord told Jacob, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." Rachel and Leah agreed that Jacob must do as God directed, and in any case they felt themselves strangers to their father by then. They all left secretly, for fear of Laban, and Rachel (unknown to Jacob) stole her father's images. After three days Laban realized that Jacob had fled, and after seven days he overtook him. But God appeared to Laban in a dream and told him, "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad," and so when he reached Jacob his main concern was with his stolen images; but he never found them, because Rachel sat on them. Finally, he and Jacob made a covenant not to harm each other.

Even the weeds of the relationship between Jacob and Laban could finally be rooted up, because Laban lost his false gods and Jacob lost his fear. They both saw that their real interests were the same, and not different, and that nothing was gained by trying to harm each other. It is basically the inferiority complex which produces division among mortals, because each wants to snatch as much as possible for himself and thinks he can fill his own bucket only by emptying someone else's, as it were. But that is all superseded when we learn to look away from materialistic reckonings and find our satisfaction in enjoying the things of God as free to all.

Jacob's Struggle

Jacob was now faced with the prospect of meeting Esau, and sent messengers to him to say that he hoped to find favour with him. But when the messengers returned, they announced that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, and so Jacob was "greatly afraid and distressed." He decided on a policy of appeasement by gifts. Often when we have some condition to meet which is full of terror for us, because we feel sure it will get the better of us, we adopt short-term conciliatory measures out of desperation. But the situation is never

fundamentally dealt with until we work it out alone with God,—until we face the issue in all honesty, alone with our understanding of the divine Principle. After that, but not before, we can always take the right step to meet the human situation. Jesus could meet the crucifixion with dignity and calm because he had already worked out the whole issue alone with God in the garden of Gethsemane; after wrestling with himself in the garden he could finally say, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

So at this point in the story of Jacob we have one of the greatest passages of Scripture: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." We have a sense of wrestling with evil only because materialism would tempt us to resist the coming of a divine idea to our consciousness. The thing which breaks down resistance is that this divine idea causes us to feel the weakness and helplessness of that which is in opposition to it. Spiritual truth is inherently unopposable,—a fact which shows our folly in resisting it. If we are sincere, the "day" always breaks, but it would break much sooner if we didn't fight it for so long. When the light had begun to break on him, Jacob determined to get hold so definitely of the divine idea he needed that its blessing would always be with him. It is always the first step when we see the weakness of some mortal belief, but we have to go on to accept a specific spiritual fact in exchange and to make this a permanent blessing.

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." "Jacob" means "supplanter" or "contender;" "Israel" means "ruling with God." After grappling with the belief in something opposed to the divine nature, we at last feel that our own identity is not basically a mixture of good and evil, and we feel that Godlikeness is that which holds sure sway in us. This gives us a divine poise which can withstand any storm.

"And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And

Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." When a spiritual idea blesses us, and we feel the balm of it, we can never fully put our finger on it humanly, because it is something which cannot be confined in any way, being of the nature of infinitude. All we know is that we have "seen God face to face," that we have known ourselves "even as also [we are] known" by God. The Psalmist says, "And as for me, thou [that is, God] beholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever."

Jacob's Meeting with Esau

When it came to the actual meeting with Esau (recorded in Genesis 33), Jacob could face it with dominion and find great joy in it. He "bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." From his hard-won new understanding, Jacob could look out and behold even Esau in God's likeness; he said, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me."

When we have seen the nature of God as definitely as Jacob did, and felt the satisfaction of seeing ourselves aligned with that nature, then we see that the only truth about anyone we come into contact with is that he is like God and can only afford us joy, and moreover, we can prove it. Esau was transformed till he was no longer the old Esau; greedy animality gave way to "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself" —the old Esau could never have felt that. Jacob had to urge him to accept a present—"because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So both Jacob and Esau felt "abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." Jesus said, "whosoever hath,"—in this case, whosoever hath a sense of divine satisfaction,— "to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

The Rape of Dinah

In Chapter 34 follows the story of how Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped by Shechem, the son of Hamor, who was prince of the country. When Hamor asked Jacob to give her to Shechem as his wife, Jacob's sons agreed, on condition that all the men of the city of Shechem were circumcised. But instead of keeping their side of the bargain, two of Jacob's sons by Leah, Simeon and Levi, slew all the men of the city while they were still physically unfit after being circumcised. When

he heard of the outrage, Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land."

Simeon and Levi were two of Jacob's vicious sons. When he came to review their characteristics on his death-bed, he emphasized their cruelty and exclusiveness, their anger and self-will. Simeon and Levi come into operation every time we hotly resent someone else's sins and demand revenge. Our sense of superiority is entirely without any justification whatever, because at the moment when we are gloating over the nastiness of the sin, and feeling self-righteous about it, we are infected with sin ourselves and inevitably suffer in the process. Resentment means the retaining of feelings about something unpleasant. What we need is to lose those feelings, instead of letting them continue to chafe us. The only way to get rid of resentment is to exchange the unpleasant feelings for sensitiveness to the spiritual fact of which the sin is a reversal.

The Birth of Benjamin

Chapter 35 records that God told Jacob to make an altar at Bethel, where God had already appeared to him; so Jacob told all his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean,, and change your garments:"—remove the "stink" of Simeon and Levi:—"and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." When Jacob had made this altar, and they left Bethel, Rachel's second son, Benjamin, was born. Rachel died in bearing him, but before she died she called him "Ben-oni," which means "son of my sorrow." His father, on the other hand, called him "Benjamin," which means "son of the right hand." The sense of sorrow and struggling and suffering passed away, and the sense of power was left to grow and prosper.

A Summary

At this point Joseph begins to take the stage, and the dramatic illustration of the third day of creation is carried even further. The Abraham sense of definite purpose,—the "dry land" appearing,—leads on to the Isaac and Jacob sense of finding one's essential selfhood to be sinless,—the "dry land" being called Earth and seen by God to be good. All the conflict of opposing elements is resolved into a sense of sinlessness and satisfaction. We shall find this in ourselves and

become to us the "food" which we love above all and which we find the most sustaining.

On their journey out of Egypt God went before the children of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. To-day this means to us that a scientific understanding of God acts as a guide and assurance both in the "day" of unimpeded advance and in the "night" of difficulty and doubt. It never leaves us unattended, whether things appear to be going well or badly.

The Crossing of the Red Sea

Chapter 14 tells the very well-known story of the crossing of the Red Sea. Pharaoh soon began to repent of having let the Israelites go, and so he hurried after them with horses and chariots and a large army, and overtook them just as they were encamped by the Red Sea. The children of Israel were "sore afraid," and complained bitterly to Moses: "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Moses' reply was magnificent: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

When some form of slavery from which we thought we were finally free makes its last stand, our only course is to stand firm by the divine facts which we have accepted, but which fear has temporarily blurred for us. Those facts do the fighting, and not we ourselves. God then said to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." What does this mighty command signify to us when we are trying to cross the "Red Sea" from a situation from which there is no escape except in going forward through spiritual understanding? It points to the process epitomized in the first three days of creation. It demands that we appeal to the power of divine ideas—"lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea;" that we use our understanding of the second day of creation to discern the supremacy of those ideas over all material conditions—"and divide it;" and that we allow those ideas to become absolutely definite to us—"and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground

through the midst of the sea." When that happens, the waters become "a wall" to us on both sides—they serve only to intensify our sense of safety.

The Egyptians pursued the Israelites into the midst of the sea, but the waters came rolling back on them at the divine command, and they were all drowned—"there remained not so much as one of them."

So if we really use our understanding of God in some situation, however formidable it appears, we shall see the destruction of the whole "Egyptian army," for the same power which gives us a safe passage also destroys utterly all that would impede our freedom. Then like Moses and the children of Israel we shall "sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

Spiritual Education

Moses' achievement of the spiritual education of the children of Israel is of vital interest to us, because the only thing which can effectually help humanity is education in spiritual facts. Many responsible people to-day proclaim that the answer to the world's problems lies in the realm of the spiritual, but very few understand what they mean, because "the spiritual" is a vague concept to them. Yet the Bible has shown for centuries beyond a doubt that spiritual things are not vague, but orderly and systematic, and that they can be learned and proved.

What Moses had to get rid of was the indoctrination of the children of Israel by "Pharaoh," and our task is essentially the same. Jesus' prayer was: "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"—before the misconception of being temporarily gained the stage. Our "glory" is that we are the sons of God divinely, but we have to prove, as Jesus did, that "the prince of this world hath nothing" in us. This we can do only through a positive process of education in the eternal truths of God and man,—truths more wonderful and more powerful than anything which mortality can possibly offer.