

Chapter 28: Joseph.

The father of the Israelites, from the land of Canaan which he inhabited, could smell the clothes of Joseph when he was in Egypt, being a prophet; and thus he knew that his son was alive. He was asked how it was that he divined nothing when his beloved son was cast into the pit by his brothers, and sold to the Ishmaelites. He replied that the prophetic power is sudden, like a lightning flash, piercing sometimes to the height of heaven; it is not permanent in its intensity, but leaves at times those favored with it in such darkness that they do not know what is at their feet.

The Arabs say that Jacob, much afflicted with sciatica, was healed by abstaining from the meat he most loved, and that was the flesh of the camel. At Jerusalem, say the Arabs, is preserved the stone on which Jacob laid his head when he slept on his way to Haran!

The custom of saying "God bless you!" when a person sneezes, dates from Jacob. The Rabbis say that, before the time that Jacob lived, men sneezed once, and that was the end of them the shock slew them; but the patriarch, by his intercession, obtained a relaxation of this law, subject to the condition that, in all nations, a sneeze should be consecrated by a sacred aspiration.

the child so dearly, that she could not endure the thought of parting with him. Therefore, she took the family girdle, which she as the eldest retained as an heirloom, the girdle which Abraham had worn when he prepared to sacrifice his son, and she strapped it round Joseph's waist.

Then she drew him before the judge, and accused him of theft, and claimed that he should be made over to her as a slave to expiate his theft. And it was done so. Thus the child Joseph grew up in her house, and it was not till after her death that he returned to his father Jacob.

One morning Joseph related to his father a dream that he had dreamt; he said that he and his brothers had planted twigs in the earth, but all the twigs of his brothers had withered, whereas his own twig had brought forth leaves, and flourished. Jacob was so immersed in thought over the dream, that he allowed a poor man who came begging to go away unrelieved, because unnoticed. And this act of forgetfulness brought upon him some trouble, as we shall see.

One morning Joseph related to him another dream; he saw the sun, the moon, and the stars bow down before him. Jacob could no longer doubt the significance of these dreams, which showed him how great Joseph would be, but he cautioned him on no account to let his brothers know about them, lest they should envy him.

He was so beautiful that he was called the Moon of Canaan, and he had on one of his shoulders a luminous point like a star, a token that the spirit of prophecy rested upon him. The brothers of Joseph, however, heard of the dreams, and they were greatly enraged, and they said, "Joseph and Benjamin are more loved of their father than we ten; let us kill Joseph, or drive him out of the country, and when we have done this, we will repent at our leisure, and God will forgive us."

One day the brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. Then Israel said to Joseph, "Do not thy brethren feed in Shechem? I am afraid lest the Hivite come upon them and smite them, and repay on me what Simeon and Levi did to Shechem and Hamor, because of Dinah their sister. I will send thee to them to caution them to go elsewhere."

And he said, "I am ready " So Joseph arose, and went to Shechem; and Gabriel, in the likeness of a man, found him wandering in the field. And he said to him, "Thy brethren have journeyed hence. I heard of them, when I was in the presence of God, behind the veil, and that, from this day, the bondage of Egypt begins." '

When Joseph came in sight, the brothers conspired to slay him, but Judah said, "Slay not Joseph, for to slay is a crime; but cast him into a well on the way that the caravans pass, that he may be found by a caravan, and be drawn out." Joseph was then aged seventeen.

His brethren fell on him and stripped him, and were about to cast him into the well which was by the wayside to Jerusalem, when he said, "O my brothers, wherewith shall I cover my nakedness in this pit?"

They replied, "Bid the sun, the moon, and the stars, which adored thee, bring thee clothes to cover thy nakedness."

Having thus mocked him, they let him down into the well. There was much water in it; and a stone had fallen into it: on this Joseph stood, and was above the surface of

the water.' Not so, say the Rabbis, it was dry, but it was full of scorpions and adders.

Judah, according to the Mussulman account, had not consented to this, he being absent; and when he had learned what had been done, he took food and let it down into the well, and told Joseph to be of good cheer, his brothers' anger would turn away, and then he would bring him back to them.. But the Jews say that Reuben was absent, as he was fasting on a mountain, because he had incurred his father's anger, and was in disgrace, and he hoped, by restoring Joseph to Israel, to re cover his father's favor.

The sons of Jacob then slew a lamb and dipped the garment of Joseph in the blood, and brought it to their father, and said, "We left Joseph in charge of our clothes, and a wolf has fallen upon him, and has devoured him."

But Jacob looked at the garment and said, " I see that it is bloody, but I see no rents; the wolf was merciful to my son Joseph, for he ate him and left his garment whole! "

Then Jacob went to commune with God, and the spirit of prophecy came upon him, and he said, "No wolf, no enemy has slain him, but a bad woman is against him."

Now Joseph was three days and three, nights in the pit, but it was not dark, for the angel Gabriel hung in it a precious stone to give him light.

The brethren of Joseph, seeing that their father mistrusted them, said to him, " We will go and catch the wolf that slew Joseph."

He said, "Go and do so."

So they went and chased and caught a monstrous wolf, and they brought him to their father and said, " This is the beast whereof we spoke to thee, that it had slain Joseph."

But God opened the mouth of the wolf, and he said, "Son of Isaac, believe not the words of thy envious sons. I am a wolf out of a foreign land; I one morning lost my young one when I woke up. and I have been straying in all directions to find it; -is it likely that I, mourning over the loss of a wild cub, should attack and kill a young prophet?"

Jacob released the wolf out of the hands of his sons, and he dismissed his sons, for he abhorred the sight of their faces; only Benjamin, the brother of Joseph, and the youngest child of Rachel, did he retain near him.

On the third morning, a party of Arabs passed near the well, and were thirsty Now the chief of these Arabs was Melek-ben-Dohar; the second, who accompanied Melek, was an India-n, a freed man of Melek, and his name was Buschra.

Melek reached the well carrying a bucket and a rope, and let down the bucket into the well. Then Joseph put his hand on it, and, however much Melek and Buschra pulled, they could not raise the bucket Then Melek looked down into the pit, and exclaimed: "O Buschra, the bucket was heavy because a young man has hold of it."

Now the face of Joseph illumined the well like a lamp: Buschra and Melek tried to raise Joseph, but they could not

Then Melek asked, "What is thy name, and whence art thou?"

Joseph answered, "I am a young man of Canaan; my brothers have cast me into this cistern, but I am not guilty."

Melek said to his companions, "If we tell the rest of the caravan that we have drawn this youth out of the well, they will demand a share in the price he will fetch. Now I can sell this youth for a large sum in Egypt. I will therefore tell my comrades that I have bought him from some people who were at the well. Do thou say the same thing, and we will share the money between us."

Next day, being the fourth day, the brethren, finding that their father's face was turned against them, went to the cistern to draw forth Joseph, and when they found him not, they went to the caravan, and they saw Joseph among the Arabs.

Then they asked, "Whose is this lad?"

Melek-ben-Dohar replied, "He his mine."

They answered, "He belongs to us; he ran away from us."

Melek replied, "Well, I will give you money for him." '

So he bought him for twenty pieces of silver; thus each of the brothers obtained two drachmae, and therewith they bought shoes. 3 To this the prophet Amos refers in two places (ii. 6 ; viii. 6), and in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, which is received as canonical by the Armenian

Church, Zebulun relates the same circumstance, that the brethren supplied themselves with sandals from the money which they got by the sale of Joseph.

Joseph went along with the Ishmaelites till they passed his mother's tomb; then his grief overcame him, and he burst forth into bitter tears and cried, "O mother, mother! I am an outcast and a slave, I the child of the wife Jacob loved. When thou wast dying, thou didst show me to my father, and bade him look on me, and be comforted for my loss. O mother, mother I hast thou no thought of thy son? Awake and see the miserable condition of thy child; shake off thy sleep; be my defense against my brethren, and comfort my father. Awake and stand up to judge my quarrel, awake and plead my cause with God! awake and look upon the desolation of the soul of my father who cherished thee,' and who for fourteen years served a hard bondage for his beloved Rachel I Console him, I pray thee, and by the voice that he loves, soothe the grief of his last days."

It was moonlight, and the caravan was resting.

A low voice issued from the tomb, "My son! my son Joseph! my child! I have heard the voice of thy crying. I know all thou hast suffered, my son, and my grief is as deep as the sea. But put thy trust in God, who is the help of thy countenance and thy God! Rise, my child, and have patience. If thou knewest the future, thou wouldst be comforted.

One of the chiefs of the caravan, wearied with the cries of Joseph, came to drive him from the tomb, but suddenly a