

**EARLY OLD TESTAMENT
NARRATIVE.
THIRTY-SIX LESSONS
FOR ADVANCED CLASSES**

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Early Old Testament Narrative. Thirty-six lessons for advanced classes by W. Hanson
Pulsford

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W. HANSON PULSFORD

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BY
W. HANSON PULSFORD.

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PREFACE.

The plan of this course of Advanced Lessons was determined by Mrs. Jaynes's most excellent Old Testament Lessons for Primary Classes. While some such conformity was absolutely essential to a uniform graded scheme, it has of course entailed certain shortcomings in matters of arrangement and scope which could only have been avoided by an independent treatment of the subject. The following list of books of reference may prove useful: On the whole subject, "The Bible for Young People" is, perhaps, the best. On the origin of the various elements which are combined in the Old Testament stories, Bissell's "Genesis in Colors," Bacon's "Genesis of Genesis," and "Exodus," and Addis's reprint of JE in "The Documents the of Hexateuch" will be found invaluable. The articles "Bible," "Pentateuch," and "Israel" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" are, of course, standard authorities.

W. H. P.

LESSON I. THE STORY OF THE CREATION.

(Genesis, chapters i., ii., iii.)

LESSON TEXT.—“The invisible things of God . . . are clearly seen . . . through the things that are made.”—ROM. i. 20.

STUDY SPECIALLY the story in Gen. ii. 4-25 and compare it with the account in Gen. i. 1-ii. 3.

I. ORIGIN OF THE STORIES.

The first six books of the Bible are made up of two distinct histories, a portion from one of which follows or is even interwoven with a portion from the other. This was the work of a compiler who attempted to combine previous accounts into one whole. The *first* of the stories before us was the opening chapter of the *later* of those two histories, written less than five hundred years before the time of Christ. The *second* was the opening chapter of the *earlier*, which was written nearly as far back as the time of Solomon. The first chapter of Genesis was thus written probably more than four hundred years after the second.

II. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM.

1. The story in chapter one is carefully and systematically arranged. The second account, while more full of color and life, is without careful arrangement.

2. The style of the first is reverent and dignified. That of the second is easy and familiar.

3. The careful paragraphs of chapter one, each beginning and ending with a set phrase, and the final statement as to the origin of the Sabbath, find no parallel in the less formal chapter two.

4. The vivid pictures of the early account (Gen. ~~ii. 4-25~~^{ii. 4-9})—the making of the garden; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; man's formation from the dust; the naming of the animals; man's deep sleep and woman's being made from one of his ribs—are all utterly foreign to the later story (Gen. ~~ii. 4-25~~^{ii. 4-9}).

5. Each narrative gives us a different account not only of the mode but also of the order in which things were created.

These differences ought to make it at once impossible for any one to look on either of these pictures as an accurate account of what really took place. They are poem pictures, similar to those of other nations, which help us to understand what men thought long ago and how that thought grew.

NOTE.—For other creation stories see Clodd's "Childhood of Religions," chapter two.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. The earth is thought of as a flat surface. Over it rises the firmament like a great dome or roof, above which the rain water is stored. When rain is needed it is let down by the open-

STORY OF THE CREATION.

ing of some of the windows in the firmament, as we see from Gen. vii. 11. Similarly the Norsemen thought the thunder was the rolling of Odin's chariot on the floor of heaven. The lightning flash was but the brightness beyond flashing through sudden cracks in the floor where the chariot bumped.

2. The prominence given to the Sabbath in chapter one suggests a special religious motive in the writer. It is one of the indications which confirm the modern opinion that the later history to which Gen. i. is the introduction was written by one of those who in the spirit of Ezekiel brought about the elaborate ceremonial of the second temple.

3. The picture of the golden age before man fell, which the early writer (author of Gen. ii.) draws for us in the "Garden of Loveliness" (Eden), shows how, as Tennyson says,

"The past will always win
A glory from its being far,
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we walked therein."

The golden age of King Arthur, and much modern talk about the "good old days," illustrate the same tendency. The reverse, however, is the case. The golden age lies in the future.

4. The first story calls the deity "God." The second calls him "Jahweh God," translated "The Lord God." Jahweh was God's proper name in Israel.

IV. HOW WE THINK OF CREATION NOW.

We to-day have outgrown these pictures of man's childhood.

1. We know that the earth slowly formed through countless ages. We no longer think of God as a kind of omnipotent man "creating" it long ago. He is rather to us the never-ceasing life and power and meaning of which it is the evolution. As we understand our world and learn its lessons we "think God's thoughts after him." 2. The world is the living visible speech of God. Its story is the writing in which God is being gradually revealed to us. 3. God's work is not finished, for the world is still imperfect. The perfect day, which every noble life helps to realize, has only begun to dawn. 4. But when we ask what the first beginning was we can only say with these beautiful stories that it all comes from God.

V. QUESTIONS.

1. Wherein do these stories differ with respect to:—*a.* The order of creation? *b.* The way in which they are told? *c.* The making of man and of woman? *d.* The Sabbath?
2. How did these differences arise?
3. Which story was written first? Would anything in the stories themselves suggest your answer?
4. What do you know about the "evolution" or "unfolding" of the earth?
5. Can you think of any figure which may suggest to us God's relation to the universe?
6. Has man fallen from the perfect life or is he rising toward it?
7. What was the condition of primitive man?
8. Does scientific knowledge help or hurt religious thought?

NOTE.—For the history of the growth and composition of the first six books of the Bible see the article "Pentateuch," in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, or Canon Driver's "Introduction."

LESSON II. CAIN AND ABEL.

(Genesis, chapter iv. 1-15.)

LESSON TEXT.—“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”—GAL. vi. 7.

READ Gen. iv. 1-15, noting specially verses 7, 8, 14, and 15.

I. ORIGIN OF THE STORY.

The use of the name Jahweh (the Lord) for God, the familiar, graphic style, and the primitive ideas of this story remind us at once of the creation story in Gen. ii. 4-25, and both belong to the earliest history book of Israel, from which so much of the book of Genesis is taken. Like the stories of creation and of the Garden of Eden, it cannot be looked upon as sober history. Its whole atmosphere is that of the primitive traditions which come down to us from the earliest times of all nations.

II. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. We cannot quite certainly say why Jahweh is represented as preferring the animal sacrifice of Abel to Cain's offering of fruits. The religion of Jahweh arose amongst the Israelites when they were roving herdsmen, and when the only possible sacrifice was a sacrifice of animals. Throughout its history Israel recognized no other kind. Possibly, also, a sacrifice of the fruits of the earth was associated by the writer with the licentious, and to him idolatrous, worship of some of the Canaanitish festivals. It seems unlikely that a distinction between the tempers in which the offerings were made was intended by the writer.

2. The Hebrew of verses 7 and 8 is untranslatable. Some early copyist has made a mistake, and those who followed him have added to it, so that the text as we have it gives us little clue to what was originally written. The original may have said something like this: (Verse 7): “If thou doest well shall thy countenance not be lifted up? If thou doest not well sin lieth in wait by the door, and to master thee is his desire; but thou shouldest rule over him.” (Verse 8): “But Cain followed secretly after Abel his brother. And it came to pass,” etc.

3. Note in verse 14 that the writer believes that Jahweh's presence is confined to Eden. Cain is condemned to wander where he is hid from Jahweh's face. In later times we find the thought that Jahweh's presence is limited to the promised land where his holy places are. One of the terrors of exile was that it meant departure from Jahweh's land. When our story was written men had not learned to think of God as the author of Psalm cxxxix. does. But the writer of that psalm lived long after the exile, when men like the authors of Job and the second part of Isaiah had brought in a larger and truer thought.

4. In verse 15 “set a mark upon Cain” should be “appointed a sign for Cain” (Revised Version). Jahweh has a certain power outside of Eden. The sudden snapping of a twig, the cry