
CHAPTER 9.

Concerning the afflictions that befell the Hebrews in Egypt, during four hundred years. (21)

1. NOW it happened that the Egyptians grew delicate and lazy, as to pains-taking; and gave themselves up to other pleasures, and in particular to the love of gain. They also became very ill affected towards the Hebrews, as touched with envy at their prosperity. For when they saw how the nation of the Israelites flourished, and were become eminent already in plenty of wealth, which they had acquired by their virtue, and natural love of labor, they thought their increase was to their own detriment. And having in length of time forgotten the benefits they had received from Joseph; particularly the crown being now come into another family; they became very abusive to the Israelites; and contrived many ways of afflicting them: for they enjoined them to cut a great number of channels for the river, and to build walls for their cities, and ramparts, that they might restrain the river, and hinder its waters from stagnating, upon its running over its own banks: they set them also to build pyramids: (22) and by all this wore them out, and forced them to learn all sorts of mechanical arts, and to accustom themselves to hard labor. And four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions: for they strove one against the other which should get the mastery. The Egyptians desiring to destroy the Israelites by these labors; and the Israelites desiring to hold out to the end under them.

2. [About An. 1620] While the affairs of the Hebrews were in this condition, there was this occasion offered itself to the Egyptians, which made them more solicitous for the extinction of our nation. One of those sacred Scribes, (23) who are very sagacious in foretelling future events truly, told the King, that about this time there would a child be born to the Israelites, who, if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian dominion low; and would raise the Israelites: that he would excel all men in virtue; and obtain a glory that would be remembered through all ages. Which thing was so feared by the King, that, according to this man's opinion, he commanded that they should cast every male child, which was born to the Israelites, into the river, and destroy it: that besides this, the Egyptian midwives (24) should watch the labors of the Hebrew women, and observe what is born: for those were the women who were enjoined to do the office of mid-wives to them: and by reason of their relation to the King would not transgress his commands. He enjoined also, that if any parents should disobey him, and venture to save their male children alive, (25) they and their families should be destroyed. This was a severe affliction indeed to those that suffered it: not only as they were deprived of their sons; and while they were the parents themselves, they were obliged to be subservient to the destruction of their own children, but as it was to be supposed to tend to the extirpation of their nation: while upon the destruction of their children and their own gradual dissolution, the calamity would become very hard, and inconsolable to them. And this was the ill state they were in. But no one can be too hard for the purpose of God, though he contrive ten thousand subtle devices for that end. For this child, whom the sacred scribe foretold, was brought up and concealed from the observers appointed by the King: and he that foretold him did not mistake in the consequences of his preservation, which were brought to pass after the manner following.

3. A man, whose name was Amram, one of the nobler sort of the Hebrews, was afraid for his whole nation, lest it should fail, by the want of young men to be brought up hereafter: and was very uneasy at it; his wife being then with child; and he knew not what to do. Hereupon he betook himself to

prayer to God; and entreated him to have compassion on those men who had nowise transgressed the laws of his worship: and to afford them deliverance from the miseries they at that time endured, and to render abortive their enemies hopes of the destruction of their nation. Accordingly God had mercy on him; and was moved by his supplication. He stood by him in his sleep, and exhorted him not to despair of his future favors. He said farther, that he did not forget their piety towards him; and would always reward them for it: as he had formerly granted his favor to their fore-fathers, and made them increase from a few, to so great a multitude. He put him in mind, that when Abraham was come alone out of Mesopotamia into Canaan, he had been made happy, not only in other respects, but that when his wife was at first barren, she was afterwards by him enabled to conceive seed, and bare him sons. That he left to Ishmael, and to his posterity, the country of Arabia; as also to his sons by Keturah, Troglodytis; and to Isaac, Canaan. That by my assistance, said he, he did great exploits in war; which, unless you be your selves impious, you must still remember. As for Jacob, he became well known to strangers also, by the greatness of that prosperity in which he lived, and left to his sons; who came into Egypt with no more than seventy souls; while you are now become above six hundred thousand. Know therefore that I shall provide for you all in common what is for your good; and particularly for thy self what shall make thee famous. For that child, out of dread of whose nativity the Egyptians have doomed the Israelite children to destruction, shall be this child of thine: and shall be concealed from those who watch to destroy him. And when he is brought up, in a surprising way, he shall deliver the Hebrew nation from the distress they are under from the Egyptians. His memory shall be famous while the world lasts; and this not only among the Hebrews, but foreigners also. All which shall be the effect of my favor to thee, and to thy posterity. He shall also have such a brother, that he shall himself obtain my priesthood, and his posterity shall have it after him to the end of the world.

4. When the vision had informed him of these things, Amram awaked, and told it to Jochebed, who was his wife. And now the fear increased upon them, on account of the prediction in Amram's dream; for they were under concern, not only for the child, but on account of the great happiness that was to come to him also. [An. 1612] However, the mother's labor was such as afforded a confirmation to what was foretold by God: for it was not known to those that watched her, by the easiness of her pains; and because the throes of her delivery did not fall upon her with violence. And now they nourished the child at home privately for three months. But after that time Amram, fearing he should be discovered; and by falling under the King's displeasure both he and his child should perish; and so he should make the promise of God of none effect; he determined rather to entrust the safety and care of the child to God, than to depend on his own concealment of him, which he looked upon as a thing uncertain; and whereby both the child, so privately to be nourished, and himself, would be in imminent danger. But he believed that God would some way for certain procure the safety of the child, in order to secure the truth of his own predictions. When they had thus determined, they made an ark of bulrushes, after the manner of a cradle, and of a bigness sufficient for an infant to be laid in, without being too straitened. They then daubed it over with slime, which would naturally keep out the water from entering between the bulrushes, and put the infant into it; and setting it afloat upon the river, they left its preservation to God: so the river received the child, and carried him along. But Miriam, the child's sister, passed along upon the bank over against him, as her mother had bid her, to see whither the ark would be carried. Where God demonstrated that human wisdom was nothing; but that the Supreme Being is able to do whatsoever he pleases: that those, who, in order to their own security, condemn others to destruction, and use great endeavors about it, fail of their purpose: but that others are, in a surprising manner, preserved, and obtain a prosperous condition, almost from the

very midst of their calamities: those I mean whose dangers arise by the appointment of God. And indeed such a providence was exercised in the case of this child, as shewed the power of God.

5. Thermuthis was the King's daughter. She was now diverting herself by the banks of the river: and seeing a cradle born along by the current, she sent some that could swim, and bid them bring the cradle to her. When those that were sent on this errand came to her with the cradle, and she saw the little child, she was greatly in love with it, on account of its largeness and beauty: for God had taken such great care in the formation of Moses, that he caused him to be thought worthy of bringing up and provided for by all those that had taken the most fatal resolutions, on account of the dread of his nativity, for the destruction of the rest of the Hebrew nation. Thermuthis bid them bring her a woman that might afford her breast to the child; yet would not the child admit of her breast, but turned away from it; and did the like to many other women. Now Miriam was by when this happened; not to appear to be there on purpose, but only as staying to see the child: and she said, "It is in vain that thou, O Queen, callest for these women for the nourishing of the child, who are no way of kin to it. But still, if thou wilt order one of the Hebrew women to be brought, perhaps it may admit the breast of one of its own nation." Now, since she seemed to speak well, Thermuthis bid her procure such an one, and to bring one of those Hebrew women that gave suck. So when she had such authority given her, she came back, and brought the mother, who was known to no body there. And now the child gladly admitted the breast, and seemed to stick close to it. And so it was that at the Queen's desire the nursing of the child was entirely entrusted to the mother.

6. Hereupon it was that Thermuthis imposed this name *Moiises* upon him, from what had happened when he was put into the river: for the Egyptians call *water* by the name of *Mo*; and such as are *saved out of it* by the name of *Uses*. So by putting these two words together, they imposed this name upon him. And he was by the confession of all, according to God's prediction, as well for his greatness of mind, as for his contempt of difficulties, the best of all the Hebrews. For Abraham was his ancestor, of the seventh generation. For Moses was the son of Amram: who was the son of Caath: whose father Levi, was the son of Jacob: who was the son of Isaac: who was the son of Abraham. Now Moses's understanding became superior to his age; nay far beyond that standard: and when he was taught, he discovered greater quickness of apprehension than was usual at his age: and his actions at that time promised greater, when he should come to the age of a man. [An. 1609] God did also give him that tallness, when he was but three years old, as was wonderful. And as for his beauty, there was no body so unpolite, as when they saw Moses they were not greatly surprised at the beauty of his countenance. Nay it happened frequently, that those that met him, as he was carried along the road, were obliged to turn again upon seeing the child; that they left what they were about, and stood still a great while to look on him: for the beauty of the child was so remarkable and natural to him, on many accounts, that it detained the spectators, and made them stay longer to look upon him.

7. Thermuthis therefore perceiving him to be so remarkable a child, adopted him for her son, having no child of her own. And when one time she had carried Moses to her father; she shewed him to him, and said, she thought to make him her father's successor, if it should please God she should have no legitimate child of her own: and said to him, "I have brought up a child who is of a divine form, (26) and of a generous mind: and as I have received him from the bounty of the river, in a wonderful manner, I thought proper to adopt him for my son, and the heir of thy Kingdom." And when she had said this, she put the infant into her father's hands: so he took him and hugged him close to his breast: and, on his daughter's account, in a pleasant way, put his diadem upon his head: but Moses threw it down to the ground; and, in a puerile mood, he wreathed it round, and tread upon

it with his feet; which seemed to bring along with it an evil presage concerning the Kingdom of Egypt. But when the sacred Scribe saw this, (he was the person who foretold that his nativity would bring the dominion of that Kingdom low,) he made a violent attempt to kill him; and crying out in a frightful manner, he said, "This, O King! this child is he of whom God foretold, that if we kill him we shall be in no danger: he himself affords an attestation to the prediction of the same thing, by his trampling upon thy government, and treading upon thy diadem. Take him therefore out of thy way, and deliver the Egyptians from the fear they are in about him; and deprive the Hebrews of the hope they have of being encouraged by him." But Thermuthis prevented him, and snatched the child away. And the King was not hasty to slay him; God himself, whose providence protected Moses, inclining the King to spare him. He was therefore educated with great care: so the Hebrews depended on him, and were of good hopes that great things would be done by him. But the Egyptians were suspicious of what would follow such his education. Yet because if Moses had been slain, there was no one, neither akin or adopted, that had any oracle on his side, for pretending to the crown of Egypt, and likely to be of greater advantage to them, they abstained from killing him.

CHAPTER 10.

How Moses made war with the Ethiopians.

1. [About An. 1582] MOSES therefore, when he was born, and brought up in the foregoing manner, and came to the age of maturity, made his virtue manifest to the Egyptians; and shewed that he was born for the bringing them down and raising the Israelites. And the occasion he laid hold on was this; the Ethiopians, who are next neighbors to the Egyptians, made an inroad into their country, which they seized upon, and carried off the effects of the Egyptians: who, in their rage, fought against them, and revenged the affronts they had received from them: but being overcome in battle, some of them were slain, and the rest ran away in a shameful manner, and by that means saved themselves. Whereupon the Ethiopians followed after them in the pursuit, and thinking that it would be a mark of cowardice if they did not subdue all Egypt, they went on to subdue the rest with greater vehemence: and when they had tasted the sweets of the country, they never left off the prosecution of the war. And as the nearest parts had not courage enough at first to fight with them, they proceeded as far as Memphis, and the sea itself: while not one of the cities were able to oppose them. The Egyptians, under this sad oppression, betook themselves to their oracles and prophecies; and when God had given them this counsel, to make use of Moses the Hebrew, and take his assistance: the King commanded his daughter to produce him, that he might be the General of their army. Upon which, when she had made him swear he would do him no harm, she delivered him to the King, and supposed his assistance would be of great advantage to them. She withal reproached the Priest, who when they had before admonished the Egyptians to kill him, were not ashamed now to own their want of his help.

2. So Moses, at the persuasion both of Thermuthis and the King himself, cheerfully undertook the business. (27) And the sacred Scribes of both nations were glad. Those of the Egyptians, that they should at once overcome their enemies by his valor and that by the same piece of management Moses would be slain. But those of the Hebrews, that they should escape from the Egyptians, because Moses was to be their General. But Moses prevented the enemies, and took and led his army before those

enemies were apprised of his attacking them. For he did not march by the river, but by land; where he gave a wonderful demonstration of his sagacity. For when the ground was difficult to be passed over, because of the multitude of serpents, which it produces in vast numbers; and indeed is singular in some of those productions, which other countries do not breed; and yet such as are worse than others in power and mischief, and an unusual fierceness of sight: some of which ascend out of the ground unseen, and also fly in the air, and so come upon men at unawares, and do them a mischief; Moses invented a wonderful stratagem to preserve the army safe, and without hurt. For he made baskets, like unto arks of sedge, and filled them with *Ibes*, (28) and carried them along with them: which animal is the greatest enemy to serpents imaginable; for they fly from them, when they come near them, and as they fly they are caught and devoured by them; as if it were done by the harts. But the *Ibes* are tame creatures, and only enemies to the serpentine kind. But about these *Ibes* I say no more at present, since the Greeks are not themselves unacquainted with this sort of bird. As soon therefore as Moses was come to the land which was the breeder of these serpents, he let loose the *Ibes*; and by their means repelled the serpentine kind, and used them for his assistants before the army came upon that ground. When he had therefore proceeded thus on his journey, he came upon the Ethiopians, before they expected him; and joining battel with them, he beat them, and deprived them of the hopes they had of success against the Egyptians: and went on in overthrowing their cities, and indeed made a great slaughter of these Ethiopians. Now when the Egyptian army had once tasted of this prosperous success, by the means of Moses, they did not slacken their diligence; insomuch that the Ethiopians were in danger of being reduced to slavery, and all sorts of destruction. And at length they retired to *Saba*, which was a royal city of Ethiopia, which Cambyses afterwards named *Meroe*, after the name of his own sister. The place was to be besieged with very great difficulty, since it was both encompassed by the Nile quite round; and the other rivers *Astapus* and *Astaboras* made it a very difficult thing for such as attempted to pass over them. For the city was situate in a retired place, and was inhabited after the manner of an island; being encompassed with a strong wall, and having the rivers to guard them from their enemies; and having great ramparts between the wall and the rivers; insomuch, that when the waters come with the greatest violence it can never be drowned: which ramparts make it next to impossible for, even such as are gotten over the rivers, to take the city. However, while Moses was uneasy at the army's lying idle, (for the enemies durst not come to a battel,) this accident happened; *Tharbis* was the daughter of the King of the Ethiopians: she happened to see Moses, as he led the army near to the walls, and fought with great courage: and admiring the subtilty of his undertakings, and believing him to be the author of the Egyptian success, when they had before despaired of recovering their liberty; and to be the occasion of the great danger the Ethiopians were in, when they had before boasted of their great achievements, she fell deeply in love with him: and upon the prevalence of that passion, sent to him the most faithful of all her servants to discourse with him upon their marriage. He thereupon accepted the offer, on condition she would procure the delivering up of the city; and gave her the assurance of an oath to take her to his wife: and that when he had once taken possession of the city he would not break his oath to her. No sooner was the agreement made, but it took effect immediately: and when Moses had cut off the Ethiopians, he gave thanks to God, and consummated his marriage, and led the Egyptians back to their own land.

CHAPTER 11.

How Moses fled out of Egypt, unto Midian.

1. [About An. 1582] NOW the Egyptians, after they had been preserved by Moses, entertained an hatred to him; and were very eager in compassing their designs against him: as suspecting that he would take occasion, from his good success, to raise a sedition, and bring innovations into Egypt; and told the King, he ought to be slain. The King had also some intentions of himself to the same purpose: and this as well out of envy at his glorious expedition at the head of his army, as out of fear of being brought low by him: and, being instigated by the sacred Scribes, he was ready to undertake to kill Moses. But when he had learned beforehand what plots there were against him, he went away privately; and because the public roads were watched, he took his flight through the deserts, and where his enemies could not suspect he would travel: and though he was destitute of food, he went on, and despised that difficulty courageously. And when he came to the city of Midian, which lay upon the Red Sea, and was so denominated from one of Abraham's sons by Keturah; he sat upon a certain well, and rested himself there after his laborious journey, and the affliction he had been in. It was not far from the city: and the time of the day was noon. Where he had an occasion offered him, by the custom of the country, of doing what recommended his virtue, and afforded him an opportunity of bettering his circumstances.

2. For that country having but little water, the shepherds used to seize on the wells before others came; lest their flocks should want water; and lest it should be spent by others before they came. There were now come therefore to this well, seven sisters, that were virgins, the daughters of Raguel a Priest; and one thought worthy by the people of the country of great honor: these virgins, who took care of their father's flocks; which sort of work it was customary, and very familiar for women to do in the country of the Troglodytes: they came first of all, and drew water out of the well in a quantity sufficient for their flocks, into troughs; which were made for the reception of that water. But when the shepherds came upon the maidens, and drove them away, that they might have the command of the waters themselves, Moses, thinking it would be a terrible reproach upon him if he overlooked the young women under unjust oppression; and should suffer the violence of the men to prevail over the right of the maidens, he drove away the men, who had a mind to more than their share; and afforded a proper assistance to the women: who when they had received such a benefit from him, came to their father, and told him, how they had been affronted by the shepherds, and assisted by a stranger; and entreated that he would not let this generous action be done in vain, nor go without a reward. Now the father took it well from his daughters that they were so desirous to reward their benefactor; and bid them bring Moses into his presence, that he might be rewarded as he deserved. And when Moses came, he told him what testimony his daughters bare to him, that he had assisted them; and that, as he admired him for his virtue, he said, that Moses had bestowed such his assistance on persons not insensible of benefits, but where they were both able and willing to return the kindness, and even to exceed the measure of his generosity; so he made him his son, and gave him one of his daughters in marriage; and appointed him to be the guardian and superintendent over his cattle: for of old all the wealth of the barbarians was in those cattle.