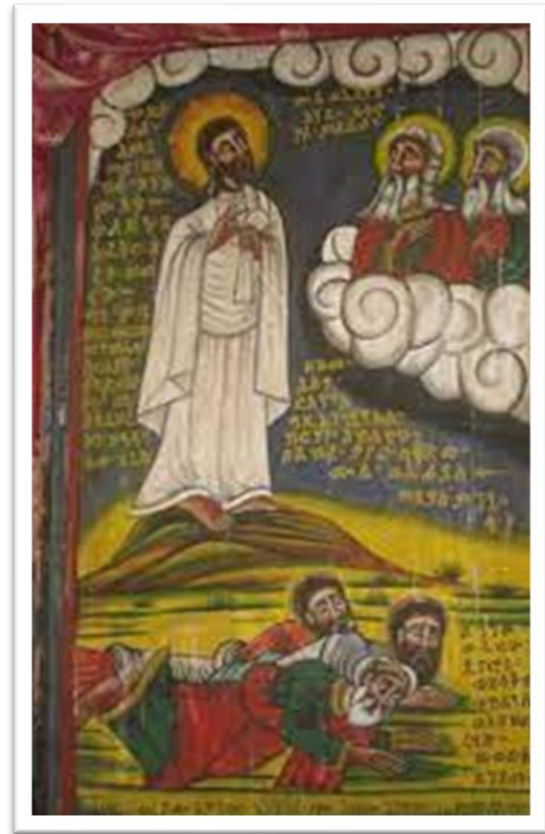


Jesus in Abetz and Dabereth on Thabor

Jesus and the disciples now went through the valley to a beautiful well, about a quarter of an hour east of Abetz. Several women were standing by it, having come out of the city to draw water. When they saw Jesus coming, some of them hurried into the neighboring houses and soon came back accompanied by several men and women. They brought basins and towels, bread and small fruits in baskets; they washed His feet, and gave Him and the disciples to eat. Many others had joined the little group, and Jesus delivered to them an instruction. Then they conducted Him into the city where He was met at the gate by children, little girls and boys, bearing wreaths and festoons of flowers. They surrounded Him in triumph, and at every step, at every street corner their numbers increased. The disciples, thinking the throng too great, wanted to send the children away. But Jesus exclaimed: "Do ye fall back, and let the little ones come forward!" At these words the children pressed around Him more closely than before. He embraced them, pressed them to His Heart, and blessed them. The mothers and fathers were looking on from the doors and vestibules of their courtyards. At last He reached the synagogue, where He preached to a crowded assembly. That evening He cured some invalids at their own homes. A repast was laid under an arbor still standing from the Feast of Tabernacles, and of it many people of the city partook.

Thomas had gone back from Endor to Apheca, I saw here in Abetz some women afflicted with an issue of blood. They mingled with the crowd, slipped behind Jesus, kissed the hem of His robe, and were cured. In large cities such women would have remained at a distance; in smaller places they were not so punctilious.

A messenger from Cana came to Jesus in Abetz. The chief magistrate of the city implored Him to come to see his son, who was seriously sick. Jesus tranquilized him and told him to wait yet a little while. Then two Jewish messengers arrived from Capharnaum. They had been dispatched to Him by a pagan who had already, through the disciples, implored Jesus' aid in behalf of his sick servant. They begged Him earnestly to return at once with them to



Capharnaum, for the servant was nigh unto death. Jesus replied that He would go in His own good time, that the man was not dying. The messengers, hearing this, remained for the instruction.

The inhabitants of Abez were chiefly Galaadites of Jabes. They had settled here in the time of the High Priest Heli in consequence of a struggle that had arisen among the people of Galaad. The Judge ruling at that time was consulted in the affair, and he decided that some of the Galaadites should remove to Abez. Saul was wounded near the well of Abez and, on one of the heights to the south, breathed his last. From this circumstance the well was called Saul's Well. The people of Abez belonged to the middle class of society. They made baskets and mats of reeds that grew abundantly in the neighboring morasses formed by the streams running down from the mountains. They prepared also wicker work for putting light huts together, and gave some attention to agriculture and grazing.

Saul and the Witch of Endor

The Israelites were drawn up before Endor near Jezrael, and the Philistines were marching against them from Sunem. The struggle had already begun when Saul, with two companions—all three in the garb of prophets—went in the darkness of evening to the witch of Endor, who dwelt in some old ruins outside the city. She was a poor, despised creature still somewhat young. Her husband went around the country with a puppet show upon his back, practicing sorcery and exhibiting his wonders to the soldiers of the garrisons and other idlers. When Saul resolved to consult the witch, he was already half desperate. The witch at first was unwilling to satisfy his desire. She was afraid of its coming to the ears of King Saul, who had strictly prohibited all dealing in witchcraft. But Saul assured her with a solemn oath that that should not happen. Then she led him from the room in which they were, and which had nothing extraordinary in its appearance, to an obscure cellar. Saul demanded that Samuel's spirit should be evoked. The witch drew a circle around Saul and his companions, traced signs around the circle, and spun threads of colored wool in all sorts of figures before and around Saul. She stood at some distance in front of him, a basin of water on the ground before her, and plates like metallic mirrors in her hands. These latter she waved toward each other and over the water, muttering some words and at times calling something aloud. She had previously directed Saul through which part of the crossed threads he was to gaze. By her diabolical skill, she was able to bring up before the eyes of her interrogators scenes of whole campaigns, battles, and the figures of those engaged in them. Such a delusion she was now preparing to evoke for Saul, when suddenly she beheld near her an apparition. Out of herself with astonishment and dread, she let the mirror

fall into the basin and cried out: "Thou hast deceived me! Thou art Saul!" Saul bade her fear nothing, but say to him what she then saw. She replied: "I see a saint rising out of the earth." Saul beheld nothing, and again he questioned: "What does he look like?" The woman, trembling with fear, answered: "An old man in priestly robes!" and with these words she rushed past Saul and out of the cave. When Saul beheld Samuel, he fell prostrate on his face. Samuel spoke: "Why hast thou troubled my repose? The chastisement of God will soon fall upon thee! Tomorrow thou wilt be with me among the dead, the Philistines shall conquer Israel, and David will be king." At these words Saul, overcome by grief and horror, lay on the ground like one dead. His companions raised him and placed him leaning against the wall. They tried to rouse him, the woman brought bread and meat, but he refused to eat. The witch advised him not to engage in the battle, but to retire to Abez where the inhabitants, being Galaadites, would give him a good reception. Saul went thither next morning at dawn. The Israelites were routed beyond Mount Gelboe. Saul was attacked not by the whole army of Philistines, but only by a roving party. He was at the moment seated in his chariot, with an officer standing behind him. The Philistines, rushing by, shot spears and arrows at him, though not dreaming that it was Saul himself. He was grievously wounded, and his attendants led the chariot to the plain south of the valley and out of the road upon which Jesus had yesterday been with His relatives. When Saul felt himself mortally wounded, he requested his officer to kill him at once, but the latter refused. Then Saul, supporting himself in the chariot, which had a railing in front, tried to fall on the point of his own sword, but he could not succeed. The officer, seeing his determination, opened that swinging railing in front of the chariot, thus enabling Saul to fall on his sword, while at the same instant he pierced himself with his own. An Amalecite passing at the moment recognized Saul, possessed himself of his regal ornament, and carried it to David. After the battle, Saul's body was laid beside his sons, who had fallen to the east of the scene of slaughter. They had been killed before their father's death. The Philistines used to hack the bodies of their enemies to pieces.

The brook flowing through this valley was called Kadumin. (5:21). It is mentioned in Deborah's Canticle. The Prophet Malachias once sojourned here for a time and prophesied. Abez was about three hours from the pagan city Scythopolis.

On leaving the well, Jesus and the disciples proceeded some distance to the east, then turning, pursued their journey northward. He crossed the height that closed in the valley on the north and, after about three hours, reached another at the foot of Mount Tabor to the east. The brook Cison, which rises

to the north of the mountain, here flowed around it and off to the Plain of Esdrelon. Here lay the city Dabereth in an angle of the first plateau of Thabor. The view from the city takes in the high plain of Saron and extends to the region in which the Jordan flows from the lake of Genesareth. The brook Cison ran through the whole of this quarter.

Jesus remained at an inn outside the city until the following day, when He went into Dabereth. A crowd instantly pressed around Him. He cured some sick, of whom, however, there were not many, as the air of this place was very pure.

The city of Dabereth was very beautifully built. I still remember one of the houses. It was surrounded by a large courtyard and porticos, from which two flights of steps led up to the roof. Behind the city rose an eminence projecting from the foot of Thabor, and around it wound serpentine paths. It took about two hours to reach the top. All along inside the city walls dwelt Roman soldiers. Dabereth was one of the cities named for the collection of taxes. It had five large streets, each of which was occupied by the workmen belonging to one trade. It was not exactly on the highroad, for the nearest was at a distance of half an hour; nevertheless, all kinds of business were carried on in it. It was a Levitical city, and the imposts raised in it were devoted to the support of sacred worship. The boundary posts that marked the limits of the tribe of Issachar were scarcely a quarter of an hour distant. The synagogue stood upon an open space, also that house mentioned above. Jesus went into the latter, for its occupant was a nephew of His foster father, Joseph.

Joseph's brother, the father of this nephew, was called Elia. He had had five sons—of whom one named Jesse, now an old man, dwelt in that house. His wife was still living, and they had a family of six children, three sons and three daughters. Two of the sons were already between eighteen and twenty years old. Their names were Kaleb and Aaron. Their father begged Jesus to receive them as disciples, which He did. They were to join the band when He should again pass through that part of the country. Jesse collected the taxes destined for the support of the Levites. He superintended also a cloth factory in which the wool that he purchased was cleansed, spun, and woven. Fine cloth was manufactured there, and a whole street was in Jesse's employ. He had also, in a long building, a machine for expressing the juice from various herbs, some of which were found on Thabor, and others were brought hither from a distance. The juice of some was used in dyeing; others, for beverages; and others, again, were made into perfumery. I saw hollow cylinders standing in troughs, in which by means of a heavy pounder the herbs were pressed. The pipes through which the expressed juice flowed ran outside of

the building and were provided with spigots. When the pounders were not in use, they were kept in place by means of wedges. They prepared also the oil of myrrh. Jesse and his whole family were very pious. His children went daily, and he often accompanied them, to pray on Tabor, Jesus and the disciples made their home with them while at Dabereth.

There were both Pharisees and Sadducees in this city. They formed a kind of consistory, and held council together as to how they could contradict Jesus. That evening Jesus went with the disciples to Mount Tabor, whither a multitude had preceded Him. There He taught by moonlight until far into the night.

On the southeastern side of Tabor lay a cave with a little garden in front. There the Prophet Malachias had often sojourned. Farther up the mountain were another cave and garden where Elias and his disciples sometimes lived retired, as upon Carmel. These caves were now held as shrines by pious Jews, and thither they used to go to pray. To the north of Mount Tabor was situated the city of Tabor, whence the mountain derived its name, and about an hour westward in the direction of Sephoris was another fortified place. Casaloth was in the valley on the south side of the mountain, northward from Naim, and in the direction of Apeca. The tribe of Zabulon extends farthest to the north on this side. I have heard a more modern name given to this place, and I saw that relatives of Jesus once dwelt there, namely, a sister of Elizabeth, who, like the maid servant of Mary Marcus, bore the name of Rhoda. She had three daughters and two sons. One of the daughters was one of the three widows, friends of Mary, and her two sons were among the disciples. One of Rhoda's sons married Maroni, and died without issue. His widow, in obedience to the Law, entered into a second marriage with one of her first husband's family named Eliud, a nephew of Mother Anne. She lived at Naim and by her second husband had one son, who was called Martial. She was now a widow for the second time, and she is the so-called widow of Naim whose son Martial was raised from the dead by the Lord.

Jesus taught on the open space in front of the synagogue. Numerous sick had collected there from the neighborhood around, and the Pharisees were greatly irritated. There was a rich woman in Dabereth named Noemi. She had been unfaithful to her husband, and he had died of grief. For a long time she had promised to marry the agent that attended to her business, but he, too, was being deceived by her. Noemi had heard Jesus' instructions in Dothain and had been, in consequence, very much changed. She was full of repentance and desired only to beg of Him pardon and penance. She attended Jesus' teaching here in Dabereth, was present at the cures He

wrought, and tried by every means to approach Him, but He always turned away from her. She was a person of distinction and well-known in the city, and as her disorders were not public, she had not fallen into general disesteem. While she was trying to approach Jesus, she encountered the Pharisees, who asked her whether she was not ashamed of herself and bade her return to her home. Their words, however, did not restrain her; she was as if out of herself in her eager desire for pardon. At last she succeeded in breaking through the crowd. She threw herself down on the ground before Jesus, crying out: "Lord, is there grace, is there pardon still for me? Lord, I can no longer live so! I sinned grievously against my husband, and I have deceived the man that now has charge of my affairs!" And thus she confessed her sins before all. All, however, did not hear her, for Jesus had stepped aside, and the Pharisees pressing forward had made a great uproar. Jesus said to Noemi: "Arise! Thy sins are forgiven thee!" She obeyed, begging at the same time for a penance, but Jesus put her off till another time. Then she divested herself of her rich ornaments: the strings of pearls around her headdress, her rings, her bracelets, and the golden cords around her arms and neck. She handed them all over to the Pharisees with the request that they should be given to the poor, and then she drew her veil closely around her.

Jesus now went into the synagogue, for the Sabbath had begun. The infuriated Pharisees and Sadducees followed Him. The reading for the day was about Jacob and Esau. (25:19-34 and). Jesus applied the details connected with the birth of the two brothers to His own time. Esau and Jacob struggled in their mother's womb, thus did the synagogue struggle against the piously disposed. The Law was harsh and severe, the firstborn like Esau, but it had sold its birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage, for the redolent odors arising from all kinds of unimportant usages and exterior ceremonies. Jacob, who had now received the Blessing, would become a great nation whom Esau would have to serve. The whole explanation was very beautiful, and the Pharisees could bring nothing forward against it, although they disputed long with Jesus. They reproached Him upon several heads: that He attached to Himself followers, that He established private inns throughout the country, employing for the same the money and property of rich widows which should have been given for the use of the synagogue and the Doctors. And so, they said, would it now be with Noemi; besides, how could He forgive her her sins?

Next morning Jesus did not go to the synagogue, but to the school for the boys and girls. The children followed Him even into Jesse's court while He was taking dinner there, and Jesus instructed and blessed them again. The

woman lately converted was likewise there with her steward. Jesus spoke with each alone and then to both together. On account of her present sentiments, Jesus advised the woman not to marry again, especially as her suitor was of low origin. She was to deliver to him a part of her fortune and, after reserving sufficient for her own support, distribute the rest to the poor. After the Sabbath day repast, when the Jews were taking their customary promenade, some Jewish women came to visit Jesse's wife. There, in Jesus' presence, they engaged in an instructive game such as was usual on the Sabbath. The converted Noemi was present. The game consisted of a combination of parables, enigmas, or questions, calculated to instruct and edify. For example, such questions as the following were proposed: Where had each one her treasure? Did she put it out at high interest? Did she hide it? Did she share it with her husband? Did she leave it to her domestics? Did she carry it with her to the synagogue? Was her heart attached to it? Many of these questions turned upon the care of children and servants, etc. Jesus spoke also of oil and the lamp, of the burning of a well-filled lamp, of the spilling of the oil, applying all these things in a spiritual sense. One of the women was questioned on one of these points. She answered promptly and graciously: "Yes, Master! I take great care that the Sabbath lamp is always of the best." Her neighbors were very much amused at her words. They laughed at her, for she had not caught Jesus' meaning. He always gave a very striking explanation, and whoever made a wrong answer was obliged to give a present to the poor as a fine. The woman of whom I have spoken gave a piece of cloth.

Jesus wrote also, before each one, an enigma in the sand with a reed, the answer to which had likewise to be written in the same way by the one to whom it was addressed. In this manner He revealed to each her evil inclinations and defects, so that she trembled with fear, though without the necessity of blushing before her neighbor. He advised them especially of the faults of which they were guilty at the last Feast of Tabernacles, for in the greater liberty they enjoyed at that time and the merrymaking then customary, they may easily have sinned. Several of these women afterward spoke in private to Jesus, confessed their transgressions, and begged for penance and forgiveness. Jesus consoled them and reconciled them to God. During this instruction the women were ranged in a semicircle under the portico of the courtyard. They sat on rugs and cushions, their backs resting against the stone benches. The disciples and friends of the family were standing on either side at some distance. There was no loud speaking, since the loiterers on the street could, by climbing the wall, have created disturbance, for they were all out in the open air. The women had brought

with them as presents for Jesus all kinds of spices, comfits, and perfumes. He gave them to the disciples with directions to distribute them to the sick poor who never could get such luxuries.

Before Jesus returned to the synagogue for the closing services of the Sabbath, the Herodians sent messengers to request Him to meet them at a certain place in the city, since they wanted to speak with Him. Jesus replied to the messengers with a severe expression: "Say to those hypocrites that they may open their double-tongued mouths against Me in the synagogue, for there shall I answer them and others." He added other hard names, and then went to the school.

The Sabbath reading again treated of Jacob and Esau, of grace and the Law, and of the children and servants of the Father. Jesus inveighed so vehemently against the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians, that their fury increased at each moment. The necessity in which Isaac had been of removing from place to place and the filling up of the wells by the Philistines, Jesus applied to His own teaching mission and the persecution He endured from the Pharisees. Passing then to Malachias, He announced the fulfillment of his Prophecy: "My Name shall be magnified upon the border of Israel. From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the Gentiles." (1:5,6,11). Then He made known to them all the ways He had traversed on either side of the Jordan, in order to glorify the Name of the Lord. He declared that He would continue His course to the end, and in severe language He quoted against them these other words of the Prophet: "The son shall honor the father, and the servant his master." (1:5, 6, 11). His enemies were confounded, and had nothing to reply.

When the crowd had left the synagogue and Jesus likewise had withdrawn with the disciples, He suddenly found His way blockaded in one of the courts by the Pharisees. They surrounded Him in one of the halls and demanded that He should answer some questions. It was not necessary, they said, for the people to hear all that they had to say. And then they proposed to Him all kinds of captious questions, especially upon their relations to the Romans who were here stationed. Jesus' answer reduced them to silence. When at last, with flattery and menaces, they demanded that He should give up travelling around with disciples, desist from preaching and curing, else they would denounce and punish Him as a disturber of the peace, as a seditious character, He replied: "Until the end shall ye find upon My footsteps the ignorant, the sinful, the poor, the sick, and My own disciples—those whom ye have abandoned to their ignorance and sinfulness, whom ye have left in their poverty and misery." Seeing that they could gain nothing by their artful words, they left the synagogue with Him. Outwardly they assumed a

courteous demeanor, but inwardly they were full of rage, though not unmixed with admiration.