

circumstances it then came to pass that Jacob was compelled to go down into Egypt, where his children were destined to remain long, to suffer much, and to be prepared for their great destiny.

THE YOUNGEST:

And he sojourned there.

LEADER:

Jacob had intended to remain in Egypt but a short time. But Providence had intended it differently. The children of Israel were to be divinely educated for their high calling by long years of suffering.

THE YOUNGEST:

With few persons.

LEADER:

Our forefathers went down into Egypt only seventy persons in number. Who should have thought that this small family of shepherds was destined to become in time the teacher of the nations, leading them onward on the road to God!

THE YOUNGEST:

And he became there a nation.

LEADER:

It was the high purpose of God to make the descendants of the patriarchs, His faithful servants, a people, that should keep in their midst, as an abiding treasure, the teachings of the fear of God,

and pure morality for the salvation of the human race. In the seclusion of Egypt the children of Israel were to be blest to grow up into a great people of God.

THE YOUNGEST:

Great, mighty, and populous.

LEADER:

The descendants of Jacob were kindly treated, and highly esteemed in the land, as long as the services of Joseph were remembered.

Yet alas, soon the envy of the inhabitants of the country was aroused against them, and grew in proportion as the Israelites became more numerous. With an envious eye did the Egyptians notice the prosperity and the increasing numbers of the strangers; envy led to suspicion, suspicion to injustice.

THE YOUNGEST:

And the Egyptians evil entreated us.

LEADER:

And thus spoke the new king, who in his ingratitude pretended to know nothing of Joseph: "Come, now, let us overpower this foreign people with cunning, lest if they multiply, and it come to pass that there be any war, they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so become the masters of the land."

THE YOUNGEST:

And they afflicted us.

LEADER:

To deprive the strangers of every power of resistance, they sought to subdue their natural courage, to keep down their independent spirit, showing itself in their lives. They forced the people away from their herds, and they did set over them taskmasters to crush them with heavy labor. Thus was Israel soon broken in body and soul, stooping under the burden of unaccustomed toil and cruel oppression.

THE YOUNGEST:

And they laid upon us hard bondage.

LEADER:

Doubly heavy does hard labor weigh upon a people, feeling the humiliation of bearing unjust burdens. And, oh! how often did such undeserved oppression rest upon the shoulders of our forefathers! How often was there no other reason for the ill treatment accorded to them, for the abuse they were compelled to suffer, than that they were defenceless! O, poor Israel, how often was he like the innocent lamb led unto the slaughter, unable to give utterance to his pain save by its bleatings, which do not move the slaughterer.

THE YOUNGEST:

Then we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers.

LEADER:

When all earthly help failed them, the Israelites sought help from God, from whom alone can help come.

THE YOUNGEST:

And the Lord heard our voice.

LEADER:

Men often become so hardened by their malicious abuse of others, that cruelty gradually becomes a habit with them, and at last seems to them an act of justice. But the sun of God's love ever shines behind the clouds of misfortune, which He in His wisdom sends over individuals and nations. When the time comes, He takes pity upon His children; the voice of the unfortunate pierces the clouds, our heavenly Father looks down with compassion upon the sufferer and sends him comfort.

THE YOUNGEST:

And He looked upon our affliction.

LEADER:

Great, indeed, was the affliction of our forefathers in Egypt. Their hearts were, no doubt, filled with deep pain, when their God-given strength was perverted by the whim of the tyrant. They went to their humiliating work with the most bitter of feelings, followed by derision and general contempt. Gloom and despair settled down upon all relations of life; the present full of sadness, the future without hope.

*(The Mother of the house says:)*

And oh, how void of comfort was the lot of the loving wives and mothers in Israel. While the men went out to their heavy task, they were waiting

at home with fear in their hearts, lest their loved ones should never return, and they become widowed and childless!

LEADER:

And this—alas—was the sad lot of our fathers and mothers not only in Egypt, but, for a long time, in all countries where they took up their abode. They were covered with shame; mockery followed them; misfortune threatened them, affliction overtook them everywhere.

And God saw their affliction,  
And He determined to help them.

THE YOUNGEST:

And He saw our labor.

LEADER:

This condition of our forefathers in Egypt increased with the increasing oppression. Thicker and thicker the clouds of their misfortune became and darkened their horizon, until like unto a lightning-dart, revealing by its glare the terrors of night, shot forth the terrible decree of the tyrant to utterly destroy the people of Israel. The inhuman command was given to mercilessly drown in the waves of the Nile all newly born male children. Nor was this the painful lot of our fathers and mothers in Egypt alone, but in all countries of their sojourn during a long series of centuries, the sons of Israel were born to meet, worse than physical death, to suffer social and political death during their entire life on earth.

And God saw their labor,  
And He determined to help them.

## THE YOUNGEST:

And He looked upon our oppression.

## LEADER:

The just and merciful God saw with indignation  
how men oppressed, tortured, and crushed men;  
how they insulted their fellow-men; how they  
humiliated and defaced His image in man;—this  
the Judge of the world could suffer no longer.

And God saw their oppression,  
And He determined to help them.

And He did help them.

## ALL:

Indeed, God did help!

*HYMN.*

**F**REEDOM, freedom, blessed boon,  
Which the Lord has given;  
Israel's courage wavered soon:  
For them the Lord has striven.  
And to save  
Free He gave,  
Whom despair had driven,  
Rescue from the grave.

And this is the holy night  
Which He had selected  
Down to break oppressor's might,  
Blessing His elected.  
Free their days,  
Hear them raise,  
Heavenward directed,  
Israel's songs of praise.