

ANAH ... who chased dokeys

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(GENESIS 36:24)

Anah was a stay-at-home boy who resisted the desire to go forth in search of independence and fame. His name should be printed in letters of gold. Names can be most uninteresting, and the long lists in this chapter of Genesis frighten the casual reader. ". . . Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these are the dukes of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom. And the children of Lotan were Hori and Hemam, and . . ." If names were sandhills, Genesis 36 would be a desert. Names, names, lots of names; a desert indeed: but in the midst of barrenness stands an oasis. ". . . this was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father." The Revised Version sheds increased light upon the text, for the word translated " mules " should be hot springs.

Some Great Decisions

Anah lived in days when a far-reaching world offered amazing opportunities. Beyond the horizons were unclaimed expanses of virgin soil, where cattle increased and men became dukes in their own right. Sites for cities were offered free of charge; and the challenge of the unknown was almost irresistible. Fathers were never surprised when their sons went forth to stake claims to greatness. The number of dukes increased a hundredfold, and the little stay-at-home boy seemed either a coward or a fool. Undoubtedly he knew all about the mighty exploits of his valiant brethren, and he too would have loved to be the head of a great people. Yet he bowed at another altar—the altar of duty; and when he arose, went in search of his father's asses. Instead of erecting a great city, he reared stubborn donkeys; instead of making money, he spread out fodder. A commendable young fool!

Some Glamourless Duties

One day he had to seek further than was usual; the stupid donkeys had wandered. He followed their trail through the bush into strange territory. He called, but they would not respond. He continued to search; and when he saw the animals peacefully grazing beside bubbling springs in the wilderness, poor Anah probably wondered if he were suffering from sunstroke. Springs in the wilderness; an oasis in the desert-impossible! He rubbed his eyes; but when he looked again the scene was unaltered. It was unbelievable. Anah was thrilled by a new excitement. This was no mirage, but a glorious reality; he had found hot springs in the wilderness. This discovery would revolutionize his family's future. He would be famous, wealthy, envied. Surely he felt like kissing his donkeys—the stubborn little darlings. They were the loveliest of all animals; they were angels in disguise. They had led him to a gold-mine. How providential that he had preferred their company to that of the mighty dukes of the Horites!

Some Glorious Discoveries

Anah's wilderness is all around us; his asses are wonderfully familiar. (i) Teaching naughty boys in a difficult Sunday-school class. The modern Anah sometimes has to choose between the weekly duty and a wonderful picnic on the warm_ inviting sands at the seashore. The glamour of the one is as great as the boredom of the other. Boys-rude,

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unappreciative young hooligans-my Father's asses! If one of them became a medical missionary, I too would have found hot springs in a wilderness. (ii) Nursing grumbling patients in a hospital ward. My Father's asses resemble the people who constantly cry, " Nurse, Nurse, Nurse! " Hard work and continuous attention are rewarded by increasing complaint's which fray one's temper and irritate one's soul. Why should I stay when I could double my wages elsewhere? Some nurses do it for Christ's sake, and thereby discover hot springs of healing for their deepest need. (iii) Cooking for irritable people in a selfish household. Perhaps the most difficult of all tasks is that of the mother whose value is seldom realized until her hands cease to minister. One meal ends as another approaches; one complaint has hardly died before another is born. Cooking, darning, cleaning, washing, loving, enduring; and sometimes it seems so fruitless. Some mothers, some wives, have given up the struggle, and homes have crashed; others have lingered, to find hot springs in a wilderness-a boy has been won for Christ and sent into the ministry. (iv) Preaching to critics in a dead church. This is a desert indeed. These donkeys are unique! Poor Anah! Another church-or even a secular job, and he would become a duke! Sunday is coming, and he will be required to feed his Father's asses; and some will not even be there to be fed! Should he give up? No. There are Spurgeons and Wesleys still to be won. Even the wilderness may blossom as the rose if I know how to do things " for my Father's sake."

The Saviour's Apple Tree

One of the most entrancing booklets I have ever seen is entitled Our Daily Bread. It is published by the coeditors, M. R. De Haan and H. G. Bosch, in connection with the Radio Bible Class, at Grand Rapids, Michigan. These servants of God have a gift for gathering together the most charming illustrations, and their publication must bring immeasurable happiness to all their readers. In the September, 1958, edition, H. G. Bosch re-tells three short but vital stories, which illustrate the basic facts of the account where Anah chased his donkeys.

" Mother," said a sweet Christian girl one evening, " I want you to give me a little apple tree in our orchard." "Why, my child, they are all yours, for they belong to our family." "Yes, but I mean something different. I should like to have a little tree for my very own; and the apples which it bears, I would like to give as a present to the Lord." The child was allowed to choose a tree. Laying her hand on the trunk, she said, "Little tree, now you belong to the Lord Jean.%" " Some time later the mother sent a gift to some missionaries, and after relating the above incident, continued, " Our little one was suddenly taken home to be with the Lord. She has now been a year in heaven, and this year the tree bore fruit for the first time. I am enclosing what we received from the sale of the apples." This little child was no great preacher going forth to move and conquer cities; she stayed in her orchard, from which her actions sent fragrance around the world.

Ministering Hands

The Rev. Ira Gillett, missionary to Portuguese East Africa, tells of a group of natives who made a long journey, walking past a nearby Government hospital, to come to his mission station for treatment. When asked why they had travelled

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the extra miles to reach the mission hospital, when the same medicines were available at the Government institution, they replied, "The medicines may be the same, but the hands are different." This statement is most illuminating; it reflects the quality of the service rendered by God's servants on the mission field. The love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts, and patients from near and far were quick to recognize the fact. Perhaps some of those missionaries felt their work was difficult and mediocre. There was neither glamour nor the financial gains offered in other spheres of labour; yet these wonderful people continued to work faithfully for the Master, and as a result found "hot springs in the wilderness."

Ruining the Clock

There was once an old "Grandfather" clock that had stood for three generations in the same corner, faithfully ticking off the minutes, hours, and days. In it was a heavy weight, which was pulled to the top each night in order to keep the clock running. "Too bad," thought the new owner, "that such an old clock should have to bear so great a load." So he took the heavy weight off the hook, and removed it from the clock. At once the old clock stopped ticking. "Why did you do that?" asked the clock. "I wanted to lighten your load," answered the man. "Please," said the clock, "put it back. That is what keeps me going." British readers will undoubtedly recall the famous radio show in which Mrs. Mopp, after regularly announcing her grumbles and complaints, came to a triumphant conclusion by saying, with a queer little laugh, "It's being so cheerful that keeps me going." Mrs. Mopp was very near to reality, for oftentimes the things which promote complaints keep us near to God. The path of life may abound with obstacles; the usual day-today routine of life may be monotonous and dreary; yet when these things are endured and conquered for the Lord's sake, any man is capable of finding hot springs in a desert.

God Sent Her to Hospital

Years ago a charming young Christian woman contracted tuberculosis, and was sent to the Sully Hospital, in South Wales. At first she was heart-broken, and her faith was sorely tested. I was asked to visit her, and with God's help, tried to reassure her that "all things work together for good to those who love the Lord." She smiled and tried to believe the text. Within weeks, her requests to the authorities, and my willingness to help, gained permission for Sunday services to be held in that magnificent hospital. Soon I was leading patients to Christ, and a welcome awaited me whenever I found time to visit the wards. When the widening circles of my ministry took me out of Great Britain, others stepped in to continue the work, and for sixteen years the Gospel has been preached regularly in that institution. The Christian girl soon returned to her home completely cured; but before she went she found hot springs in the wilderness.

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