

THE MESSAGES OF THE BIBLE - VOLUME 1

by Charles Foster Kent

Kent's study of biblical prophecy designed to make prophetic writings accessible to general readers through chronological rearrangement and paraphrases that clarify meaning while preserving spiritual power.

99 Chapters

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001. Volume 1: The Messages Of The Earlier Prophets

The Messages of the Bible THE MESSAGES OF THE EARLIERPROPHETS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF TIME, ANALYZED, AND FREELY RENDERED IN PARAPHRASE, BY FRANK KNIGHT SANDERS, PH.D.

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002. Preface

PREFACE The statement has become almost proverbial that the Bible is the “plain man’s book,” a book that can be understood and used by those who lay no claim to scholarship. True as this may be of the Gospels and the historical books of the Bible, its application is not universal. There are not a few passages, and even whole sections, of the Bible, which, because of obscurities of style and arrangement, convey no intelligible idea to many readers. For these reasons, no part of the Scriptures suffers more neglect and misapprehension than the prophetic writings. Their choicest thought lies deep, and rewards none but the patient and careful student. One who merely reads in course a certain number of chapters each day is largely cut off from a true appreciation of the part that the prophet played in the progress of revelation. Even the eager student, if he lack the clue to the prophetic labyrinth, is forced to wander aimlessly and without result through its mazes. To seek to introduce to this fair and fruitful domain of revelation the multitudes of zealous Bible students who lack the time or the opportunity for gaining entrance for themselves, is the privilege and duty of the Christian scholar. His task is not a difficult one. By rearranging the prophetic writings in a truly chronological order, and by indicating their interpretation through a paraphrase, he can enable the general student to grasp their meaning and their force. He can at the same time clear up many incidental obscurities, can indicate the definite results of active and sober scholarship in the past, and can arouse a real enthusiasm for the detailed mastery of these sublime products of inspired religious thought. The present volume is offered to the public as an attempt to meet these needs of the Bible reader. The limitations inherent in such work have not been overlooked. It is clearly impossible to reproduce the beauty and vigor of the language of the prophets, or to represent the wealth of poetic and oratorical embellishment which is so characteristic a feature of it. A paraphrase must chiefly aim at clearness. Whoever has once caught the real spirit of prophetic thought will not fail to study it in detail, and thus will acquire for himself an appreciation of its remarkable quality.

Brackets are used to indicate passages which are generally regarded as later additions to the original text.

FRANK KNIGHT SANDERS.

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September, 1898.

003. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

004. The Beginnings Of Hebrew Prophecy

THE BEGINNINGS OF HEBREW PROPHECY With Amos and Hosea, in the middle of the eighth century before Christ, began that notable succession of religious thinkers whose utterances have been given permanent form in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. As we know from their writings, they were men of remarkable breadth, insight, and power. While their greatest service to the world of their day, or of ours, was in the sphere of constructive religious thought, they were interested in the practical problems of human life, and touched it at many points. Their conviction that righteousness and sincerity were the fundamental elements of true life made them unsparing critics of social wrongs, idolatry, formalism, and worldliness, preachers of faith in God and love to man, and statesmanlike advisers on questions of public policy. Their chief distinction was their modest boldness. They spoke in the name of God, and claimed to give expression to his will. They looked at life from the standpoint of the Divine, approving or denouncing its varied phases according to their harmony with the ideal revealed to them.

These men were called by their contemporaries “prophets,” or occasionally “seers.” Another favorite term was “men of God.” “Prophet,” the most frequently recurring term, literally meant “the speaker” (Exodus 7:1), and suggested that the one to whom it was applied was commissioned to proclaim the will of God. The prophets themselves claimed that they spoke with the sanction and support of Jehovah. In the consciousness of this support they dared “to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.” The number of prophets whom we know through their published utterances is strangely small. Between the middle of the eighth century and the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.) only eight or nine can be enumerated. Even these appeared in two groups separated by nearly a century of silence. The student of to-day is therefore tempted to consider the prophet an isolated phenomenon, called into existence by God to serve as his mouthpiece at a time of especial need, when his people required reassurance, guidance, comfort, or criticism. To the men of that era, however, the prophet was a familiar sight. Those to whom the title was freely given were numbered by scores and hundreds. They formed an important class in Hebrew society, to which the people at large paid constant deference. So marked was this respect that many adopted prophecy as a profession who were morally and spiritually incapable of apprehending and of interpreting the will of God, and were unwilling to meet the social consequences of proclaiming his austere commands. For such as these the real prophets had a profound contempt; with them they held many a bitter dispute; from them they not infrequently met with the most exasperating opposition, because the people of Israel, not unlike other peoples, often followed the advice of the prophets who echoed the popular desire. The honor thus wrongly bestowed is a proof, however, that the prophetic order was recognized as a permanent national institution. For centuries before the days of Amos, prophets had been ardent champions of popular rights, zealous advocates of devotion to God, and champions of patriotism and other true ideals. Even Amos and Hosea were merely unusual types of their class, with ideas that were startling. They appealed to the popular conscience; they were not revolutionists, but reformers. Their right to speak in God’s name was not seriously questioned, for this was in the line of a prophet’s duty.

We can trace the history of the prophetic order as an organization back to the times of Samuel. There are indications that, before his day, there were individuals here and there who were regarded as having the power to determine the will of God. They were called “seers” (1 Samuel 9:9), and held in high respect by the people, but their isolation prevented their wider effectiveness. Samuel was a sort of link between the old and the new. He was himself a “seer,” but his practical mind created a new sphere of influence. Apparently enlisting those who were ready to give themselves to loyal service for God, he organized a permanent order of religious patriots, whose first duty was to kindle a sense of loyalty among the people. These men may well be described as enthusiasts, and they used methods of arousing themselves to religious fervor that to-day seem crude and even objectionable. Yet it was a decided advance in religious history when such enthusiasts submitted to leadership. Their devotion and energy gradually found expression in worthier ways.

We cannot definitely trace the history of the order between the days of Samuel and the time of Elijah, although we know that it had an unbroken record. The biblical historians of these centuries direct our attention to a few of Samuel’s successors, such as Gad, Nathan, Ahijah, and Jehu. These leaders were, no doubt, the ones who dignified and developed the function of the prophet as an active member of society. The patriotism of these men led them to become the annalists and historians of the nation; their farsightedness and moral earnestness made them the valued advisers of kings and people; their honesty led them to expose that which was wrong or unworthy; their constant thought of God in his relations to mankind developed a simple but profound philosophy of history, to illustrate which they studied their past experiences as a nation. Since they represented the Almighty they were not afraid to defy any human power. Repeatedly they rebuked the king himself for forgetting his duty or his right. The growing influence of the order became in itself a danger, for it attracted many recruits who were of little value. It is probable that voluntary association as well as such a selection by a recognized prophet as that of Elisha by Elijah, increased the membership of the prophetic bands. These bands formed little communities, sometimes living together, having many interests in common. Ahab had no difficulty in summoning before him four hundred at one time (1 Kings 22). Their support came, in part, from the gifts of those who sought their advice. Inevitably there were members of the order whose motives were mercenary. Micah’s sarcastic reference (Micah 3:5) to the prophets, who “bite with their teeth and cry, Peace; and whoso putteth not into their mouths, they even sanctify war against him,” is paralleled by the evident lack of confidence of Jehoshaphat in the four hundred prophets who unhesitatingly predicted the victory which Ahab desired (1 Kings 22:7). In the days of Ahab and Jezebel a test was applied to the prophetic organization which at once made prominent a true representative of its noblest aims, and emphasized the difference between the spurious prophet, who was merely a member of the order, and the real prophet to whom Jehovah revealed himself. The zeal of Queen Jezebel for her ancestral faith caused her to determine to introduce the worship of Baal throughout all Israel, as well as in Samaria, the capital, where a magnificent temple had been erected for her use. To the king and to many of the people this mattered little. To the true prophets it meant treason to Jehovah, the God of Israel. In order to overawe all opposition, Jezebel began a persistent persecution of the prophets and their sympathizers, which seemed to be successful (1 Kings 19:14). Those who remained loyal to Jehovah were forced to hide or keep their opinions a secret. This supreme crisis produced the man to meet it. The prophet Elijah, after announcing by the prediction of the drought and famine that Jehovah was displeased with his

people, dared to challenge the representatives of Baalism to a test, and to demand from the people absolute loyalty to Jehovah. He was only in part successful; but his policy of determined resistance to Baalism, and all that it fostered, was continued by his disciple and servant, the prophet Elisha, to whose zeal and influence was due the ultimate expulsion of the hated worship and its votaries from Israel. Through their influence the nation fully acknowledged Jehovah as its God. With that declaration of loyalty there was renewed a consciousness that he had chosen them to be his peculiar people, with a unique destiny which they could not define, but in which they firmly believed. The next half-century seemed to justify this spirit of faithfulness. It was a time of prosperity and peace in both kingdoms under able rulers. Each nation grew strong, secure, and wealthy. The ensuing commercial development revolutionized social conditions. The ruling classes used their power unscrupulously to acquire riches. Greed, violence, injustice, fraud, became so common that they excited little remark. Even prophets and priests were found who shared in this carnival of selfish greed. In the face of it all was a complacency which tried the souls of the truly upright. The people were proud of their history, scrupulous about their religious duties, and confident that Jehovah their God was loading them with blessings, and would bestow yet greater ones. Their theory of religion made it a system of observances, the hearty fulfilment of which would ensure the protection and favor of God. That he would measure the quality as well as the quantity of such worship they hardly seemed to realize.

Under these conditions, the advance of the conquering nation of Assyria produced another momentous crisis in Israel's religious life. This nation seemed invincible, its intentions clear. Would Jehovah protect his people? If he failed to do so, was it not because the gods of the invader were stronger? Was it worth while to be loyal to him? Upon a true answer hung the faith of the Hebrews. None but a prophet could give it. At this juncture, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah saved Israel's faith by broadening it. They showed that the nation was guilty in the sight of God, that he was going to make use of the Assyrian world-power as an instrument of scourging, but that his ultimate intention was to purify the nation, and use it for his gracious purpose. By this clear-cut assertion of the supremacy of the moral element in the character of God the prophets revolutionized religious thinking. They had to restate the true conception of Jehovah, his purpose and methods, and to reinterpret human experiences in their light. An era of constructive thought ensued which is hardly to be surpassed in the world's history. To explain it as the mere achievement of logical and earnest minds is impossible. The only satisfactory explanation is that God was leading and teaching mankind through his chosen messengers.

005. Characteristics Of The Prophetic Writings

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS

One of the first facts impressed upon the student of prophetic literature is that the prophetic books in the Bible are arranged on quite another principle than that of historical order. Whether the ruling motive was that of size or relative excellence is not clear. At all events, the prophet Isaiah was the third prophet in order, not the first; Jeremiah was the seventh, not the second, while Amos was probably the first to utter a public sermon. Since the prophetic writings can best be understood and appreciated in connection with the events to which they allude, and out of which they sprang, it is necessary for the student of biblical history and literature to rearrange them in the order of time. It will be noticed, also, that the earlier prophetic books belong in two distinct groups, three-fourths of a century apart,—the first group of four, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, belonging to the latter half of the eighth century; the second group of four, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, covering the half-century after 627 B. C. No less obvious is the fact that these prophetic books contain a number of separate utterances arranged in an order which is frequently not chronological. Some interpreters think that the Book of Amos contains not less than ten or eleven distinct sermons, and the Book of Micah almost as many. So far as it is possible to determine the principle in accordance with which these passages are arranged in the Old Testament, it seems to be topical. The prophets of the sixth century, such as Jeremiah or Ezekiel, were in the habit of dating their oracles, so that it is comparatively easy to arrange them in the order of utterance. The earlier prophets almost never indicated the date of a sermon, so that the determination of this fact is less certain. Such a rearrangement of prophetic addresses into their probable historical order is essential before the student of prophecy can enter completely into the heart of his subject. Without it no one can intelligently grasp the changing phases of Isaiah's preaching during the forty years or more of his active life, nor the increasing hopelessness of the utterances of Jeremiah. Such a rearrangement is adopted in this volume, in order that a clear conception of the development of prophecy may be gained. When the student calls to mind the long period of years during which we know that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah were active, and notes the compact report of the prophetic addresses of all those years, he is forced to conclude that the writings to which we have access are but a representative digest of the actual utterances. The words were not probably taken down on the spot as spoken, but reproduced from memory either by the prophet himself or by a faithful disciple. The writing is an accurate reproduction of the force and tenor of the original saying, but not necessarily a word-for-word repetition of it. What Jeremiah did, as related in the thirty-sixth chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, throws much light upon this question. He was told to write down upon a roll "all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day;" that is, for twenty-three years. In the present Book of Jeremiah that roll would be represented by about a dozen chapters which in turn record the sermons of twice as many years. Manifestly, one discourse will often sum up the distinctive ideas of a whole season of active preaching.

Closely allied to the preceding characteristic of the prophetic writings is another. Many a paragraph in a prophetic book is a fragment of an independent discourse. Isaiah 14:24-27, or Isaiah 14:29-32, or the three sections of chapter 21, are obvious examples of such fragments. Such passages as Micah 2:12-13, or Hosea 1:10 to Hosea 2:1, which are evidently out of their original connection, are most readily explained in this way. Much of the disjointedness of the Book of Hosea may be due to the fragmentary character of the utterances there collected. The curious alternation of threats and promises in Micah 4, 5 is explained by Nowack as the combination, by an editor, of extracts from two entirely different discourses, uttered at separated periods. To adopt all these views is far from necessary, but the student of prophetic literature must expect the records of the utterances of the prophets to be more or less fragmentary as well as condensed. From a literary standpoint the student of prophecy is impressed by the artistic finish given to many an oracle. The prophet was often both poet and orator. He was anxious to persuade, and utilized any means which would contribute to his purpose. Every rhetorical artifice was used by him. The overstatement, "there is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1); the threat intensified by indefiniteness, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12); the play upon words, "the houses of Achzib shall be an achzab unto the kings of Israel" (Micah 1:14); the metaphor, the epithet, the rhapsody, the apostrophe, and many other legitimate devices for enlivening and emphasizing speech, all illustrate the prophet's remarkable skill in the presentation of truth.

Still another prominent element in prophecy is its practical character. The prophet was a preacher to his own generation. Nearly every word he uttered had a practical relation to the life of his day. If he referred to the distant future, it was usually a word of hope to a people who were facing disappointment or disaster; if he portrayed the universal acceptance of Jehovah as God, it was in order to confirm his declaration that Jehovah was the ruler, not of Israel alone, but of the world. His greatest predictions were expressed in forms well adapted to the thought of his time. The triumph of God's kingdom, for instance, is pictured as a rallying of worshipers from all quarters of the earth to Jerusalem, the holy city. The Messianic blessedness is described as an era of plenty and peace. The student of the Old Testament does not need to literalize such declarations any more than the saying of our Lord about the heavenly banquet with the patriarchs (Matthew 8:11).

It is enough to add that he who interprets the prophetic writings must expect to apply to them all the usual literary tests before he can obtain a true appreciation of their beauty of form and strength of thought.

006. How To Make Use Of A Paraphrase

HOW TO MAKE USE OF A PARAPHRASE The following pages contain an analysis and paraphrase of the prophetic writings in the order of their original appearance. A paraphrase is a restatement of a passage in literature which gives the exact sense of the original in other words, for the sake of making it clearly understood. To one who desires to grasp with clearness the thought of these books of the Bible, and lacks the time or training or tools for making a painstaking study of each, a paraphrase may be invaluable. The prophetic books are obscure for a variety of reasons. The reader who takes up the Bible and turns to the Book of Isaiah cannot easily put himself into the situation which occasioned the message he may begin to read. In the absence of this historical context, however, the passage will probably fail to awaken his interest, or to suggest a distinctive and helpful idea. It is more than possible that the thought suggested to the reader's mind will be one entirely foreign to the mind of the prophet when he spoke. The terse and technical language of the prophet is another cause for obscurity. The Old Testament makes free use of a vocabulary which requires explanation to one not accustomed to it. "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites; . . . but ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'Prophesy not;'" "The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee;" "The remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward." Such passages as these convey but a faint impression to the average reader. A third source of obscurity is the necessity for the rearrangement of prophetic passages before a student can perceive the true connection and sequence of ideas. Without this perception no comprehension of the constructive thought of the prophet is attainable. For all these reasons a paraphrase may be of supreme service as an introduction to the study of prophecy. It prepares the way by placing each prophetic utterance in its proper setting, and by indicating its exact meaning. It does not become a substitute for the Bible, but may be used to make the Bible more intelligible. The following suggestions may promote its use. The rapid reading of a paraphrase of a prophecy will afford a correct and forcible impression of the prophet's thought. It emphasizes his theme, and outlines his treatment of it, and thus ensures an intelligent reading of the passage in the Bible. The paraphrase can then be carefully compared with the original prophecy, paragraph by paragraph, until the student has obtained a fairly clear idea of what the prophet said, and his manner of saying it. The paraphrase will facilitate this by explaining in advance many puzzling phrases. A paraphrase is necessarily an interpretation. It often chooses one out of several possible renderings, a choice which the independent student may not ratify. The decision is not made carelessly in the first place, but should not be considered as final. The great value of the paraphrase is the short cut which it affords to independence in the reading and interpretation of Scripture. A paraphrase opens the way to the busy man or woman to enter upon the most interesting phase of Bible study, the comparison of prophet with prophet in surroundings, method, distinctive ideas, and outlook, and their arrangement in a developing series. The prophets were independent thinkers, each putting in his own way the divine message with which he had been entrusted; yet their teachings possess fundamental unity, and a continuity which can be traced

through every chapter. They struggled with problems which confront the human mind in every age, and possess perennial attraction. When the student becomes able to state to himself the ideas which they held in common, and the questions which they aimed to answer; to determine each prophet's contribution to the discussion, and to realize how God led them step by step to the discovery of the broadest and most fundamental truth regarding God and man and the universe,—he has discovered the secret of making his reading of the whole Old Testament a never-ending delight.

007. The Message Of Amos The Judean To Northern Israel

THE MESSAGE OF AMOS THE JUDEAN TO NORTHERN ISRAEL

008. I. The Prophet, And The People To Whom He Spoke

I THE PROPHET, AND THE PEOPLE TO WHOM HE SPOKE

It was an eventful moment in the history of mankind, as well as in that of the Hebrew race, when Amos, the Judean shepherd, stood up at Bethel, the great royal sanctuary of the northern kingdom, to preach, in the name of Jehovah, to the assembled Israelites. The date was about the middle of the eighth century B. C., the opening days of which had been characterized by a remarkable increase in the political and material prosperity of the two Hebrew kingdoms, and the closing years of which were destined to witness the deep humiliation of Judah and the complete annihilation of Israel. Assyria, the cause of these mighty changes, had not yet laid her iron hand upon the petty states of Palestine, although she had already given them repeated warnings. Their fate was delayed only until the reins of power should fall into the hands of strong and ambitious monarchs who would turn westward the invincible legions of the great empire. The more thoughtful of the Israelites could not shut their eyes to the fact that Assyria, who in crippling their old foe, the Arameans, had proved a savior to them (1 Kings 13:5), was a dangerous neighbor. The majority of the princes and people, however, trusting to their military equipment, and to the protection of Jehovah, which they confidently hoped to gain through the wealth of their offerings, had succeeded in completely blinding their eyes to the perils of the situation. The tribute and products of foreign art, which, as a result of the conquests and commercial policy of the reigning king, Jeroboam II, for the first time since the age of Solomon came to the Israelites in rich abundance, aroused new ambitions and tastes. The mutual regard for each other's interests which had existed between rulers and people while they were struggling together against common want and adversity, had disappeared. In the new-born desire to gratify their love of display and luxury, the ruling classes were cruelly wronging those who were dependent upon them. The mass of the people still conceived of Jehovah very much as their neighbors the Moabites, or Edomites, conceived of their national gods. While they faithfully bore to his sanctuaries rich offerings, and abstained from the worship of rival deities, they felt confident that he would protect their interests as far as he was able. The readiness with which the Hebrews in succeeding generations from time to time paid homage to other gods is but one of the many indications that the conception of Jehovah as the one and the supreme God in the universe was not yet a tenet in their popular faith. The Hebrew race had only learned their alphabet in the great school of divine revelation. In accordance with the purpose of the Eternal, great political transformations were soon to take place. These were destined to open the minds of certain humble consecrated men to the appreciation of new and revolutionizing truths. Made prophets by virtue of the possession of this broader conception of Jehovah's character and demands, they came before their contemporaries to proclaim a nobler ideal of life and service. In contrast with the imperfect old, it was an almost new religion. The mass of the people clung tenaciously to the ancient half-truths of the past, which, in the light of the fuller revelation, figured only as superstitions and fallacies. Assyria's victorious advance shook their faith in Jehovah's willingness and power to deliver his people. The prophets alone, whose souls were open to the influence of his divine spirit, realized that he was the

supreme God of the universe, and that the calamity, which was soon to overtake their nation, came not because he was unable to avert it, but because the sins of his people rendered such a judgment necessary. Here is found the explanation of the popular indifference and contempt with which the messages of the pre-exilic prophets were greeted. Their break with the past was too abrupt, their ideal was too lofty, their teaching was too pure, to gain general acceptance. Not until bitter national experiences had prepared the way, did the people begin to heed the warnings and the counsels of their enlightened leaders. The task which confronted Amos, therefore, was not inviting. As he observed the injustice, the oppression, the self-indulgent luxury, the indifference and immorality, which characterized the northern kingdom, he found little encouragement that his word of denunciation would be heeded. The fact that he was a humble shepherd, who gained his living by following the lowliest pursuit which poverty-stricken Judah offered, was anything but a favorable introduction to the opulent northerners. His solemn face, his rude attire, and, above all, his accent, which indicated that he was a native of insignificant Judah, must have aroused at once a violent prejudice against him in the minds of that gay throng which streamed up to celebrate a great feast-day at the wealthy and popular shrine at Bethel. His message also was one of uncompromising denunciation; for while, on the barren uplands which extend from Tekoah, his home, eastward toward the Dead Sea, he had watched the patient sheep, and meditated long and deeply upon the evils and dangers of the present situation, Jehovah had revealed to him an ideal of justice which threw into startling relief the injustice rampant in Israel. Simple, straightforward, fearless man that he was, with no attempt at palliation he laid bare all its social and religious corruption, and declared that, as sure as Jehovah was a God of justice, he must and would destroy that corrupt northern kingdom. The effect upon the rulers, who were the especial object of his attack, can be imagined. The fact that his charge was true only increased their rage. The seventh chapter tells us that the moment he referred to the approaching overthrow of the reigning house, and thus gave an occasion for an accusation of treason, Amaziah, the chief priest at Bethel, reported to the king that Amos had conspired against him, and that for the peace of the kingdom this rebellious prophet must be suppressed. "The land is not able to hear his words," was his suggestive confession. Apparently not waiting for an order from Jeroboam, Amaziah forthwith commanded Amos to flee back to Judah, and there gain a living by prophesying, if he could, but never again to open his mouth at the royal sanctuary of Bethel. "I am not a professional prophet, as your sneering words imply," was Amos's response, "nor do I belong to any of the prophetic guilds; but I am a plain man who earns his daily bread by honest toil. From my lowly tasks Jehovah called and commanded me to deliver a message to the northern kingdom. In silencing me you are defying Jehovah. Upon you, who represent the class I came to denounce, and upon your family, shall be visited all the miseries of conquest and captivity." It is not improbable that that act of tyranny, which brought the mission of Amos to an abrupt end, led him to preach with the pen when his lips were silenced, and thus rendered his words immortal.

He certainly is the first of that remarkable group of prophets who speak to us through their writings almost as clearly to-day as they did to the surging, impatient, curious crowds of Hebrews who gathered about them twenty-six centuries ago. In imagination, taking our place in one of these audiences, we may listen to the stern message of Amos, and follow his thought, even though in translating it into nineteenth-century phraseology we lose much of the beauty and force of the rugged, poetical Hebrew in which he wrapped his ideas as he hurled them at his hearers.

009. II. The Opening Address At Bethel (1:2 to 2:16)

II THE OPENING ADDRESS AT BETHEL (Amos 1:2toAmos 2:16) 1. The Text (Amos 1:2)

Jehovah, justly indignant because of the crimes of the nations, is about to send upon the earth a destructive judgment, so severe that the most fertile spots shall become utterly barren and desolate.

2. Introduction. The Sins and Condemnation of Israel's Neighbors (Amos 1:3 to Amos 2:5)

Guilt of the Arameans and the doom which awaits them (Amos 1:3-5). Are you enraged, O Israelites, at the suggestion, contained in my text, that upon you judgment is soon to be visited? Listen a moment before you turn your backs upon me. I come to declare that, although Jehovah has repeatedly overlooked the offenses of your hated enemies, the Arameans, their cup of transgression is at last filled to overflowing. No longer will he withhold well-merited punishment. An utter disregard of the obligations, recognized by heathen nations even in time of war, such as appeared, for example, in their inhuman treatment of the conquered Gileadites, your brethren, is a crime which cannot be condoned. Jehovah, whose sway is not limited to the land of Canaan (as some of you in your ignorance still suppose), will avenge those awful deeds of cruelty. The family of the merciless conqueror Hazael shall be hurled from the throne of Damascus; the defenses of that proud city shall be broken down, and the inhabitants of the land shall be slain. Those of the condemned race who survive shall be carried away into distant captivity.

Retribution for the Philistines (Amos 1:6-8). Not the Arameans only, but those uncircumcised Philistines, whom you hate so intensely, have sinned until Jehovah cannot forgive. Heathen though they were, they knew that it was a crime to sell remorselessly into galling slavery old men, women, children,—all, whether friends or foes, who fell into their hands. Jehovah, who rules the nations, will visit their guilt upon their heads. Destroyed shall be their great cities, slain shall be king and people.

Retribution for the Tyrians (Amos 1:9-10). For similar acts of cruelty the Tyrians shall receive like recompense at the hands of Jehovah. Remorseless fire shall consume their proud city with its palaces.

Retribution for the Edomites (Amos 1:11-12). Naturally, in the same connection you think of the Edomites. Their hour of retribution likewise is at hand. These unnatural kinsmen of yours lost no opportunity in your time of weakness to give you a mortal thrust. They showed no mercy; neither will Jehovah spare them.

Retribution for the Ammonites (Amos 1:13-15). The Ammonites also belong to that accursed circle of cruel, implacable foes who have tried to drag you down and drink your life-blood. No longer will Jehovah overlook the deeds of brutality to which their thirst for conquest has led them. At his command their cities and palaces shall fall before a tempest of war and destruction, and their rulers shall be carried into captivity.

Retribution for the Moabites (Amos 2:1-3). Moreover, Jehovah declares that the Moabites have transgressed beyond the possibility of forgiveness. True, you have succeeded in subduing them, and therefore their most atrocious sins are not those of cruelty. You all recall how, prompted by bitter hatred for their treacherous southern foes, disregarding the sanctity of the dead,—held inviolable even by savages,—they dragged forth the bones of an Edomite king, and burned them. Upon their cities and rulers, therefore, shall be visited the same bitter woes of war and conquest.

Retribution for the Judeans (Amos 2:4-5). I can see by your approval, O Israelites, that you welcome the news of the judgment which Jehovah is about to execute upon these heathen peoples. In so doing you accept the great truth that he rules, not only over Israel, but also over these nations, and that, although he is long-suffering, there comes a time when he must punish unchecked evils. You also acknowledge the principle that, as responsibility is proportionate to enlightenment, so likewise is the punishment, if the responsibility is rejected. Hence, you will agree that Jehovah is just in sending retribution upon the Judeans, who, knowing his will far better than those other nations, have treacherously failed to comply with his laws. They, like their heathen neighbors, shall experience the horrors of conquest.

3. The Sins and Condemnation of Israel (Amos 2:6-16).

Crimes which preclude pardon (Amos 2:6-8). Hear now, O Israelites, the painful message that Jehovah has sent me to declare. Your cup of transgression also is full to overflowing, so that just punishment can no longer be withheld. Like the royal culprit David, you stand condemned in accordance with the same principles which you have so readily accepted in the case of others. The only difference between you and your barbarian neighbors is that your sins are more heinous. If you question this, behold the injustice and the inhuman cruelty of your rulers. They do not hesitate to sacrifice an honest man, if they think that they can themselves gain a farthing thereby. Their insatiable greed has exhausted every spark of mercy in their hearts. The most shameless immorality is openly practised. Worst of all, like the Canaanites, they gratify their lust under the guise of religion; and, to make their guilt complete, in satiating their unholy appetites, they use, as accessories, the possessions which they have unjustly extorted from their needy dependents.

What Jehovah has done for this people (Amos 2:9-11). Compare with their base ingratitude all that Jehovah has done for them. When they were a disorganized nation of serfs, he delivered them from bondage in Egypt; he led them through the perils of the wilderness; he enabled them to subdue this land of Canaan, possessed though it was by powerful peoples. For their spiritual nurture, he sent to them prophets to teach, by word of mouth, his will, and Nazirites to illustrate, by their lives, the ideals of purity and of consecration. Their base return (Amos 2:12). Instead of learning the lesson which Jehovah sought to inculcate, they silenced his prophets and induced the Nazirites to break their holy vows of abstinence.

Dire retribution for Israel (Amos 2:13-16). National annihilation awaits them at the hand of Jehovah. In the coming day of judgment, neither the strongest, nor the swiftest, nor the best equipped, nor the most courageous, shall escape the overwhelming destruction.

010. III. No Excuse Or Pardon For The Crimes Of Israel's Leaders (Amos 3, 4)

III NO EXCUSE OR PARDON FOR THE CRIMES OF ISRAEL'S LEADERS (Amos 3, 4)

Responsibility proportionate to opportunity (Amos 3:1-2). Give heed, O Israelites, to the solemn message which Jehovah sends to you, his favored people. "True, you of all nations stand in a peculiarly intimate relation to me. Do not deceive yourselves, however, by thinking that for that reason you will be exempted from punishment. On the contrary, greater privilege brings with it greater responsibility, and therefore, in the light of your base betrayal of the trust, severer judgment." The prophet's vindication of his right to prophesy (Amos 3:3-8). Some of you question my right thus to address you in the name of Jehovah. Consider: Does anything come to pass in the natural world without a sufficient cause? Conversely, does not a sufficient cause produce a corresponding effect? The fact that I stand here preaching to you, although so doing endangers my life, implies a cause, namely, that Jehovah has given me a revelation concerning you. When he commands, his prophet must obey.

Israel guilty even in the eyes of the heathen (Amos 3:9-10). You are the chosen people of Jehovah! Let proclamation be made, and your heathen neighbors summoned to witness the state of anarchy within your capital, and the crimes of oppression and of legalized robbery which your nobles are committing.

Fate awaiting the corrupt rulers (Amos 3:11-15). While such enormities exist, think not for a moment that your land, and those greedy rulers who are betraying you, shall escape the common judgment. Worthless shall be that which is left of all these princely palaces, with their luxurious appointments; overthrown shall be the royal sanctuary here at Bethel, when the rapacious world-conqueror who is advancing has completed his work of destruction.

Guilt of the wives of the Nobles (Amos 4:1-3). Voluptuous, thoughtless women of Samaria, who have so completely lost all sense of pity for the afflicted that you are constantly urging on your husbands to grind their dependents the more, that, with the blood-money thus secured, they may pander to your vile appetites, listen to your sentence. As surely as a God of justice lives, brutal conquerors shall soon come to drag you forth as captives.

Vanity of the ceremonial worship (Amos 4:4-5). Do you urge, O Israelites, that you are punctilious in bringing to Jehovah rich offerings, and that, therefore, he cannot think of inflicting upon you a judgment such as I predict? Deluded fools! Go on with your round of ceremonies, regulated so as to conduce to your personal pleasure. In the eyes of Jehovah it is mere mockery.

Jehovah's plain warnings unheeded (Amos 4:6-11). All this ritualistic service has only lulled your consciences to rest, so that you have been insensible to the most obvious indications of divine displeasure. As you must all remember, he has sent upon you famine, drought, insect plagues, pestilence, and earthquake in their most hideous forms, and yet you have not learned the lesson

he would teach and turned to him in penitence.

Inevitable doom impending (Amos 4:12-13). You stand convicted of the most heinous charges ever brought against a nation; the fatuity of the defense which you have urged has been conclusively demonstrated; you have persistently refused to heed Jehovah's plain and repeated warnings; therefore, prepare to meet the awful and inevitable judgment, which Jehovah, the all-powerful creator and just ruler of the universe, is soon to execute upon you.

011. IV. Extracts From Sermons Of Exhortation And Warning (5)

IV EXTRACTS FROM SERMONS OF EXHORTATION AND WARNING 1. Ritual Useless to Deliver from the Consequences of Moral Guilt (Amos 5) A lament (Amos 5:1-3). Let ring in your ears, O Israelites, the sad dirge which shall soon be sung over your nation:

Fallen, never again to rise, Is the virgin Israel;

Prostrate upon her soil she lies;

There is none to raise her.[1]

[1] Here the prophet introduces the peculiar rhythmic parallelism consisting of an alternating long and short member, which was regularly employed in the Hebrew elegy.

Repentance, not ritual, will save (Amos 5:4-9). For grim war shall speedily do its devastating work, and only a small fraction of your population shall survive. Would you escape your doom? Then do not resort to the public shrines with offerings in your hand. There is no salvation in so doing. Those sanctuaries, with their corrupt services, are themselves objects of divine wrath. Gilgal shall drink to her fill the gall of exile; Bethel, house of God, shall become a house of perdition.[2]The only and sufficient way to secure deliverance is to go directly to Jehovah with the earnest prayer of contrition. Lose no time, O perverters of justice! lest his vengeance overwhelm the northern kingdom, and it be too late to appeal for mercy to him who, meting out judgment to the strong as well as to the weak, rules supreme in nature and in human affairs.

[2] A rude attempt is here made to reproduce the play on words contained in the Hebrew, "Ha-Gilgal g■h yigleh."

Depravity of the leaders (Amos 5:10-12). Alas! you, who are Israel's leaders, give no evidence of repentance. Your attitude toward one who denounces your crimes is that of bitter hostility. Intent only upon building palaces for yourselves, and upon gratifying your luxurious desires, you extort from the poor; you persecute an honest man in the courts; you grant the decision to the one who gives you the largest bribe. So completely is evil in the ascendancy that a wise man submits to injustice without a protest. I warn you solemnly that you will never enjoy the fruits of your iniquitous conduct.

Advice and encouragement for the few faithful (Amos 5:14-15). To whomsoever my words appeal I repeat, persevere in your efforts to do that which is right in the sight of God, and he, the all-powerful and just, will not fail you. Undauntedly strive to put down public evil, and to purify the law courts; perchance a faithful few may yet survive the approaching destruction to enjoy Jehovah's blessings and favor. The national disaster impending (Amos 5:16-20). For Israel as a whole the immediate future has nothing but woe. Instead of the present mad revels, wails of lamentation shall rise from every class. Deluded are those who long for the time when Jehovah will interpose in human history. "The day of Jehovah" shall bring no joy to this guilty people, but only misfortune and retribution.

Ceremonial offerings, without righteous conduct, a mockery (Amos 5:21-27). Hold not up your ceremonial services as a cloak to cover your crimes, for Jehovah takes no pleasure in empty forms. Put them away, for they are utterly repugnant to him. The multitude of your burnt and your meal offerings, and your elaborate ritual, are meaningless when not accompanied with righteous deeds. Would you win his favor? Then let your every act be governed by the laws of justice. During the years of your wilderness wanderings you could bring him no sacrifices, and yet was he not pleased with you? Conformity, not to ceremonial laws, but to those of right, is the essence of true service. Since justice is completely lacking in your national character, you shall be carried into captivity, bearing the heathen gods with whom you are now sharing the homage due Jehovah.

2. Israel's Blind, Selfish Rulers Leading their Nation to Certain Ruin (Amos 6)

Heartless self-indulgence of the rulers (Amos 6:1-6). A curse on you, voluptuous, careless rulers, upon whom devolves the direction of these two powerful Hebrew kingdoms! Shutting your eyes to the grave dangers which threaten, you enthrone injustice, and devote your whole attention to gratifying your love of ease and luxury. As if life were only one long revel, you sing foolish songs, drinking yourselves drunk, anointing yourselves with costly perfumes, wholly indifferent to the ruin which hangs over this goodly land of Israel.

Sentence upon the rulers and nation (Amos 6:7-11). Therefore, when the foreign conqueror comes, these dissolute leaders, who have betrayed their trust, will be among the first to taste the woes of captivity. Jehovah, disgusted with all this vain show and criminal luxury, has determined to bring upon Israel all the horrors of war. Pestilence shall complete the direful work of the sword, so that the few panic-stricken survivors shall not dare to utter the name of Jehovah, lest still further judgment be called down upon them. In the general collapse, together shall crumble palace and hovel.

Israel's conquest by Assyria inevitable (Amos 6:12-14). Think not for a moment that you will realize the impossible. You cannot persist in your course of injustice and expect to enjoy the rewards of equity. Trust not in your military strength and powers to save you; for already Jehovah is arousing an invincible nation, which will devastate your land, O Israelites, from your northern to your southernmost border.

012. V. Symbolic Visions Of Impending Judgment (7:1-9, 8:1-9:6)

V SYMBOLIC VISIONS OF IMPENDING JUDGMENT (Amos 7:1-9;Amos 8:1toAmos 9:6) The lesson of the locust plague (Amos 7:1-3). If you do not apprehend the full significance of my plain statements, O Israel, I will present the same truths to you in pictures, so that, with the aid of memory and of imagination, you may see as well as hear, and thus perchance be led to profit by my message. During those troublesome days through which you have passed,[3] my eyes, enlightened by Jehovah, beheld the dread sight of a vast army of locusts sweeping over the land, devastating all before them. The calamity was the greater because it came just as the people were about to reap their spring crops, upon which they depended for subsistence. Recognizing that it was sent as a judgment, I besought Jehovah to pardon, not because the punishment was unmerited, but because Israel was so unprepared to survive it. Infinitely compassionate, he granted my petition, and spared.

[3]Cf.Amos 4:6-11.

Fiery judgment averted (Amos 7:4-6). Again the Almighty opened my eyes, not only to see, but to understand, the significance of a consuming drought, which like a mighty conflagration dried up the great source of all waters, and threatened to burn up the parched earth. Knowing that it was sent in judgment, I besought him to spare, and again he answered me.

Israel measured by the plummet and found wanting (Amos 7:7-9). Still a third time Jehovah presented to my mind a vision of himself standing with a plummet in his hand. When I understood the meaning of that symbol of impartial justice, no longer could I crave mercy for Israel, that nation fallen so far from the standard of right Therefore I listened to Jehovah's declaration that he would no more pardon his people, but that rather he would speedily bring upon their corrupt sanctuaries and ruling house the fire and sword of the conqueror.

Israel ripe for judgment (Amos 8:1-14). When Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, drove me forth, denying to Jehovah's prophet free utterance,—his God-given right,—there rose before me the vision of a basket of summer fruit, luscious, outwardly attractive, but dead ripe, and destined within a few days to become a mass of loathsome putrefaction. "Even thus," for so Jehovah interpreted to me, "is Israel ripe[4] for punishment" Bitter cries of lamentation shall soon succeed present festivity. Where now stands the joyful throng, heaps of corpses, hushed in death, shall lie. Know the fate which awaits you, rapacious rulers and merchants,—you who show no mercy to the poor and needy, you whose chief aim is to cheat both God and your fellow-men. As surely as Jehovah is omnipotent, your sins shall be punished. Nature shall conspire with the hostile foe to complete the destruction of your land. Anguish inexpressible shall fill all hearts. Then, too late, shall arise an intense longing to receive a prophetic message from Jehovah; but none shall then be vouchsafed. The ardent devotees of the popular shrines, such as Samaria and Dan, shall likewise share the common fate.

[4] In the Hebrew Kêtz, "end," represents a play on the word Kaitz, "summer fruits."

Divine vengeance upon the nation (Amos 9:1-6). As I meditated upon the conditions which I found in Northern Israel, the corruption of civil and religious rulers, the hollow formalism of the national religion, the blind popular confidence in ceremonialism, I seemed to see Jehovah standing above the altar from whence the smoke of their sacrifices rose. No blessing descended. Instead came the command to smite the supports of the great temple, which forthwith fell in overwhelming ruin upon the heads of the worshipers. With that command came the divine declaration that the sword should complete the work of destruction. Neither in the depths of the earth, nor on the dizzy heights, nor within lonely mountain caves, nor in the distant lands of exile, should escape be found from the hand of the avenger. He who rules supreme over the forces of heaven and earth Jehovah at whose command land and sea are transformed, has issued the mandate,—let no one hope for an instant that that just decree shall fail of fulfilment.

013. VI. The Immediate And Distant Future Of The Hebrew Race (9:7-15)

VI THE IMMEDIATE AND DISTANT FUTURE OF THE HEBREW RACE (Amos 9:7-15)

Israel answerable to the same divine laws as other peoples (Amos 9:7). Urge no longer, O Israelites, the vain plea that Jehovah stands in such a peculiarly close relation to you that he will not destroy you. In his sight you are on an equality with the dark-skinned Ethiopians. True, he led you as a nation out of Egypt, but in precisely the same way he guided your hated enemies, the Philistines and the Arameans, as they set out from the lands of their nativity, and finally gave them a home in Palestine.

Punishment of the nation shall be proportionate to its guilt (Amos 9:8-10). Jehovah sees all of Israel's guilt, and, since he is a God of impartial justice, he can do nothing but destroy this wicked, defiant state. Yet the Hebrew race shall not be completely cut off, for all are not equally culpable. To eliminate the evil from the good, Jehovah will scatter them among the nations, and captivity, like a sieve, will separate the different elements in the nation. The defiant reprobates, who lull the people to sleep with beguiling assurances that no danger impends, will receive their just desert at the edge of the sword; but over each faithful one Jehovah will carefully watch, that none may be lost.

Epilogue: promise to the faithful of a glorious restoration in the distant future (Amos 9:11-15). [Jehovah declares that when captivity has done its work of sifting, and when the Hebrew race has learned, through discipline, its solemn lessons, he will revive the humbled kingdom, over which David once reigned, and will restore to it the prestige and wide rule of that glorious era. In those coming days, so abundant shall be the fruits of the soil that, before they are gathered in, it will be time again to begin the sowing. Productive vineyards shall crown every hill-top. To enjoy this rich bounty of nature, and to rebuild the old ruins, Jehovah will recall his scattered people, and will establish them in their land, from whence they shall never again be torn.]

014. The Message Of Hosea

THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

015. I. The Prophet, And The Conditions Confronting Him

I THE PROPHET, AND THE CONDITIONS CONFRONTING HIM

Five or ten years after Amos the Judean delivered his stirring sermons at Bethel, Hosea began to preach to his countrymen. The geographical and historical allusions, and the intense sympathy for northern Israel, which appear in his every utterance, leave no doubt that he was a northerner, and probably a Galilean. Love for Israel's fair fields and hills, for her people, as well as for her God, was his master-passion. Although the obscure broken sentences, which burst from his lips, almost conceal the fact, Hosea was at heart a poet. Sometimes shutting his eyes to the conditions which confronted him, he gave expression to his poetic insight, and projected into the distant future the ideal of perfect harmony and love between Jehovah and his creation which filled his soul and dominated his every word and act. His fate it was, however, to stand by and see that ideal ruthlessly trampled upon by his perversely unappreciative countrymen. When he entered upon his prophetic activity, a little before 740 B. C., the social, political, and religious evils which Amos pointed out so plainly were already beginning to sap the strength of the state; but the strong hand of Jeroboam II (Hosea 1:4) still held the kingdom together, and the Israelites did not realize how near was the national ruin, which Hosea repeatedly proclaimed in his sermons, preserved in Chapters 1–3. The two or three years immediately following the death of Jeroboam II revealed Israel's fatal weakness. The inefficient son who succeeded the old king was murdered by Menahem, who maintained his position on the tottering throne by purchasing with heavy tribute, wrung from his unwilling subjects, the support of Israel's most dreaded foe, Assyria. By this act, Israel's prestige and that of its king were forever forfeited. With an unprincipled assassin on the throne, all law and order were relaxed. The body politic became corrupt from top to bottom. In this atmosphere the social evils which Amos denounced increased rather than abated.

Private as well as public honor was lost. Immorality was openly practised unrebuked. The debasing customs of the Canaanitish neighbors of the Israelites were eagerly adopted. The hollow ceremonial worship of Jehovah, which had served well enough as a national religion in time of prosperity, broke down under the test of adversity. The nation, which had lost faith in itself and had begun to seek support in foreign alliances, also began to lose faith in the Jehovah, whom, in their thought, they had degraded almost to the level of a heathen deity. Israel presented the sad example of a nation in the state of moral, political, and religious collapse, while slowly the irresistible, insatiable foe, Assyria, was advancing to crush it. Its condition arouses to-day our contempt and pity. In imagination it is possible to appreciate, in part, at least, what must have been the anguish of the inspired poet, patriot and prophet, who was forced to witness the suicide of his beloved nation. In the light of these facts we understand why the extracts from his sermons, delivered during these tragic days and preserved in Chapters IV-XIV, are impassioned—often obscure—cries, now of denunciation, now of anguish, now of entreaty. Before the final blow came, which ended Israel's life in 722 B. C., Hosea's voice apparently was silenced either by heartbreak or martyrdom; for throughout these later chapters there are no allusions to the closing scenes in the great tragedy. Gilead and the territory about the Sea of Galilee, which, in 734 B. C. were

conquered and annexed to Assyria, were still a part of the northern kingdom (Hosea 5:1; Hosea 6:8; Hosea 12:11); so that these sermons were delivered between the years 740 and 734 B. C., probably during the profligate, degenerate reign of Menahem. The other tragedy, which darkened Hosea's life, and which laid bare the very depths of his soul, is alluded to in his earlier sermons, and can best be presented as he hesitatingly tells his own sad story.

016. II. Earlier Sermons Delivered Between 750 And 740 B.C.

II EARLIER SERMONS DELIVERED BETWEEN 750 AND 740 B.C.

1. The Private Experiences of the Prophet (Hosea 1:2-3 a; Hosea 3:1-3; cf. Hosea 2:2-23)

Hosea's marriage to Gomer (Hosea 1:2-3a). You are all familiar, fellow-Israelites, with my sad personal experience. As I look back upon those hopeful days of my youth when I wedded Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, I can see that all the pain and agony which have followed in the train of that act have not been without their compensations. I felt that the same Jehovah guided me then who has guided me since in my work as a prophet. True, I had no absolute assurance that she whom I wedded would prove more faithful than many of her sisters who, under the corrupt influences of this age, have sinned so grossly; but the love which I gave her was strong and pure, and I trusted that she would return it His attempts to reclaim his erring wife (Hosea 3:1-3). You all know how bitterly I was deceived, and yet you can never know the agony I endured when I discovered the evidence of her faithlessness. If I had loved her less, I should have simply divorced her as our customs permit Weak, false though she was, I could not forget the solemn covenant into which we had entered, and abandon her to her fate; and so I forgave and overlooked her gross infidelity, and tried by greater tenderness and acts of love to woo her back to the path of rectitude. Alas! bitterly was I disappointed in my endeavor. In her folly and perversity she spurned my love and fled from my home to live a life of infamy. Undoubtedly, many would then have only tried to forget her, but I could not because of my great love. When I heard that she had fallen so low that she had been put up for sale as a slave, I ransomed her. Kindness having failed, the love within my heart commanded me, as a last means, to strive by discipline to lead her to true repentance. The lessons which his tragic experience taught him (Cf.Hosea 2:2-23). You all know the result. Painful, yes, tragic, has been my experience, and you doubtless feel for me only pity, if not contempt, because you think that I have squandered my affection upon such an unworthy object Pity I certainly deserve, and yet in this trying school of affliction I have learned lessons which have made me the prophet that I am. Now I realize the anguish which the sin of a dear one brings to the heart which loves; now I understand how the flame of true love can burn clear and strong even though the object of that affection stumble and fall; now I perceive clearly that judgment is but an expression of love, for oftentimes chastisement is the only method of reclaiming the fallen; now I know how eager, yes, willing, is a loving heart to forgive all the bitter wrongs which it has received from the one beloved, when once that sinner gives evidence of true contrition. If you would understand my message, recall the personal experiences of the man who utters it.

2. Living Sermons (Hosea 1:3-9)

Significance of the name Jezreel, (Hosea 1:3-5). When Gomer brought to me her first-born son, I gave him no sweet, pleasing name like my own,[5] but, sent as I was by Jehovah to preach to my nation, I called him Jezreel. Naturally, the people, filled with curiosity, inquired why I associated with an innocent baby the name of Israel's blood-stained battle-field. Thereupon I declared to them the truth, as it had been revealed to me: The day will quickly come when Jehovah will punish the

reigning house of Israel for the bloody crime whereby its founder Jehu secured the throne, slaying his royal master on that plain of Jezreel. On the same historic battle-field shall be broken the strength of the northern kingdom.”

[5] Hoshea, the same as Joshua or Jesus, meaning “salvation.”

Significance of the name Lo-ruhamah (Hosea 1:6). When my faithless wife again bore a child, this time a daughter, the anguish aroused in my heart by the knowledge of her infidelity led me more perfectly to appreciate the divine indignation kindled by Israel’s persistent apostasy. Accordingly I gathered up that new revelation in the one word, “Lo-ruhamah,”—“unpityed,”—and gave it to the little girl, thus making her likewise a living prophecy to be read by all men at all times. By this name I proclaimed that “No longer, O house of Israel, will Jehovah pity and pardon you as he has done in the past.”

Significance of the name Lo-ammi (Hosea 1:8-9). To the youngest boy also I gave the name “Lo-ammi,” whose meaning, “not my people,” was so unequivocal that even the most obtuse could not fail to perceive that it was a declaration that Jehovah had completely repudiated the close covenant relations between the nation Israel and himself.

3. The Relationship between Jehovah and Israel in Retrospect and Prospect (Hosea 2:2-23)

Jehovah’s fidelity and Israel’s infidelity (Hosea 2:2-5).—Indeed, almost too terrible to be credible are the grim predictions contained in the names Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi; and yet while the nation Israel persists in its apostasy no other relationship between her and Jehovah than that which they suggest is possible. Therefore I implore you, O fellow-citizens, in the name of God, spare no effort whereby you may, perchance, influence this nation, our common mother, to turn from her gross crimes, and from her apostasy, before she forfeits forever the possibility of divine forgiveness. As I was wedded to my wife Gomer, so Jehovah, at the beginning of Israel’s national life, chose and entered into a solemn covenant relation with Israel. On the one hand, Jehovah covenanted to love and care for his people, while the nation, on the other, agreed faithfully to serve and obey him. How has that solemn contract been kept? You well know that, even as I heaped upon my wife all the blessings a loving heart could suggest, so Jehovah has been absolutely true to his obligations, delivering Israel from innumerable perils, and bestowing upon her freely the wealth of his infinite love. And this nation? Gomer is its true type; for as soon as Israel became established in Palestine she began to forget Jehovah and to pay homage to the Canaanitish Baal. In her folly she thought that the heathen God of fertility would reward her infidelity by blessing her fields and flocks. Thus like the most shameless wanton she sold herself for hire, sinning and sinning again, until Jehovah recognized, as did I in the case of my wife, that favors would not turn the erring one from the path of guilt. Eternal love must therefore, in the light of the circumstances, find a higher expression in discipline.

Israel must be disciplined (Hosea 2:6-13). By painful experience the wilful nation must be made to see the utter folly and wickedness of her course. Therefore Jehovah declares that not mercy, but judgment, impends. When her lands and vineyards are laid waste, then shall Israel realize who was the real source of her prosperity. Through hard adversity shall she learn that she has sold herself to Baal for worse than naught. Upon her head shall be visited the consequences of her dallying with this corrupt heathen religion. The discipline intended to arouse contrition (Hosea

2:14-17). Jehovah, however, will not punish Israel merely because she deserves it, but as the last means of arousing true contrition. When once that end is attained, he will speak to her heart with infinite tenderness. During her period of national affliction new hopes shall be kindled, for she shall come back into the old relationship with Jehovah, which characterized those earlier and simpler days, when he delivered her from the bondage of Egypt. The names of the heathen gods upon whom she now calls shall be forgotten. Not even shall she address Jehovah as "Ba'ali," my master, but by the nobler and much more intimate name of "Ishi," my husband; for he will renew, on the basis of mutual fidelity and love, the old covenant, comparable in its closeness and reciprocal obligations only to that which exists between husband and wife. The reconciliation and glorious restoration, which shall follow Israel's repentance (Hosea 2:18-23). Penitent, forgiven Israel shall then faithfully do the will of Jehovah. The benign influence of this harmonious relationship between God and his chosen people will extend to all the animal world. In that distant day, when the divine will is done on earth, war and strife between Jehovah's creatures will cease, and peace shall reign. Moreover, the Eternal will gladly give command to the heavens, and they will send down the refreshing rains upon the earth, which in turn will put forth its fruits in richest abundance for the beloved people. Then, O Israelites, the name Jezreel, which to-day is a reminder of impending retribution, true to the meaning of the word, will well describe that nation "whom Jehovah has sown." Israel now designated as « «Lo-ruhamah" shall be called "the one who has obtained mercy, and they, who were rejected; shall be addressed by Jehovah as "my people."

4. Predictions respecting Israel's Immediate and Distant Future (Hosea 3:4-5; Hosea 1:10 to Hosea 2:1) In the absence of true contrition captivity is certain (Hosea 3:4). It is clear, O fellow-Israelites! that you eagerly long to see that glorious day, with its peace and prosperity of which you have heard me speak. Know that Jehovah is eager to institute it at once and that whether it is realized now or in some distant time depends entirely upon your own action. But as I behold with enlightened eyesight your defiant attitude, and how deep seated are your sins, I predict that certain captivity awaits you. For a long time you shall be deprived both of political organization and religious services. An ultimate restoration is also assured (Hosea 3:5; Hosea 1:10 to Hosea 2:1). [In the distant future, after captivity has done its preparatory work, the Israelites shall return repentant, craving forgiveness, and eager to serve Jehovah, and submit to the rule of the Davidic king. Then shall their numbers become as the sands of the sea, innumerable; Jehovah's decree of rejection will be revoked, and they shall again be known as "the sons of the living God." From the lands of their captivity the Israelites and Judeans shall be gathered to Canaan, and at last, again united, will elect over them one head. Then shall all animosity disappear before the common joy of restoration, of forgiveness, and of reconciliation with Jehovah.]

017. III. Later Sermons Delivered Between 740 And 734 B.C.

III LATER SERMONS DELIVERED BETWEEN 740 AND 734 B.C.

1. Jehovah's Stern Arraignment and Condemnation of Israel and Israel's Leaders (Hosea 4:1 to Hosea 5:14)

General charge against the nation (Hosea 4:1-3). Give heed, O Israelites, to the awful charge which Jehovah, as the plaintiff, brings against your nation. Whereas he had every reason to expect the fruits of fidelity and love, and the evidence of a true knowledge of him, he finds none of these; but false swearing, murder, theft, and adultery, characterize the people. Lawless deeds of bloodshed follow each other in rapid succession. As a result, the very land itself is going to ruin, and its inhabitants are perishing. The masses misled by their religious leaders (Hosea 4:4-6a). Not the common people, however, but their leaders, are to blame for this shameful state of affairs.[6] The ordinary citizens cannot be expected to be better than their priests and prophets who have themselves fallen into such heinous crimes. Through ignorance of the real character and demands of the God whom they blindly worship, the masses are perishing.

[6] Accepting the emendation demanded by the sense "my people are but as their priestlings." Cf. G. A. Smith, "The Twelve Prophets," I, 257.

Condemnation of the corrupt priesthood (Hosea 4:6-10). O you faithless priests who, instead of teaching them, have turned your back upon the law, the sacred treasure entrusted to your keeping, Jehovah declares that he has revoked your commission! Traitors, you have perverted your high office; you have grown fat on the sin offerings of the people; you have encouraged them in their crimes. Little wonder that they are so corrupt. The penalty of their guilt shall be upon their own heads. Having given free rein to greed and lust, their appetite shall become an insatiable master; childlessness shall be their lot. The gross immorality of the masses; (Hosea 4:11-15). Immorality and intemperance always dim the intellect, as is clearly illustrated by the way in which this people, instead of seeking Jehovah, consult the inanimate symbols of the Baal cult. That corrupt religion, which gives free license to the passions, has led them far astray from the true God. In connection with the rites of Baal, the men have committed abominable excesses. In the light of such an example, Jehovah cannot hold their daughters culpable, even though they have shamelessly bartered their chastity. Thus this stupid people are rapidly rushing on to their ruin. [Although the Israelites are so corrupt, let the Judeans avoid the temptation and shun the northern sanctuaries, with their debasing customs.]

Hopelessness of trying to save the northern kingdom (Hosea 4:16-19). How can Jehovah exercise his tender care toward Israel, as he fain would, when the nation manifests such a rebellious, defiant spirit? These northerners have so completely transferred their devotion to idols that there is little hope of saving them. No sooner are they through with one form of dissipation than they turn to another, while their rulers exult in their shame. Yea, and already they are in the power of the Assyrian tempest which shall rudely awaken them to a sense of their heinous apostasy.

Personal arraignment of the priests and princes (Hosea 5:1-7a). Hear, O priests and princes of Israel! your condemnation. You, who should be the shepherds of this people, for the sake of your own profit have lured them on to their ruin by encouraging them in the lewd practices, which are observed in connection with such sanctuaries as Mizpah and Tabor. The gross crime of this nation has made return to Jehovah impossible, for they are but the expression of the low state of morality which prevails, and which indicates that the people possess no real knowledge of Jehovah's character and demands. Israel and Judah both shall fall under their load of guilt. Vainly do they outwardly worship him with their ceremonial offerings, while their deeds reveal only treachery.

Prediction of speedy destruction because of the crimes and political mistakes of Israel's rulers (Hosea 5:7-14). Any month the foreign invader may swoop down upon you. Already, in imagination, I can hear the dread alarm announcing his approach. From the heights let the trumpet blast resound, calling the people to the defense of their homes. Vain, however, shall be their efforts, for the overthrow of the northern kingdom is determined. Jehovah will execute dire vengeance upon these despicable cheats, who rule over this wilful and foolish nation, oppressing their subjects and perverting judgment. Indeed, he has already begun to destroy from within both the kingdoms of the north and of the south. The short-sighted politicians of Israel, recognizing the internal weakness of their state, have sent their ambassadors to the land of the Tigris in the wild hope of gaining health and healing from that beast of prey, the Assyrian king. Bitterly shall they be disappointed. Jehovah himself will pitilessly complete the judgment upon Israel and Judah which he has begun, and no human power can hinder him.

2. The Fitful Repentance of the Israelites Belied by their Hideous Crimes (Hosea 5:15 to Hosea 7:16)

True repentance alone will save (Hosea 5:15). As Jehovah has so often declared by his prophets, the one hope of deliverance is through repentance. Until he sees evidence of genuine contrition he will leave the Israelites to their fate. Their words lightly spoken, not sufficient (Hosea 6:1-4). Let the people not deceive themselves by thinking that all that is necessary is merely to come to Jehovah with the formulas of repentance upon their lips, and that he will forthwith avert his judgment and cure all their ills. The spirit of their prayers reflects a fundamental ignorance, both of the nature of repentance and of the character of Jehovah. The Eternal himself is perplexed to know what to make of a people like these; for their love, which he craves, and which is the only basis for sincere contrition, is like the morning mist, which is quickly dissipated by the rising sun. The true evidences of repentance not ceremonial offerings but loving service (Hosea 6:5-6). And yet there is no excuse for their ignorance of Jehovah's demands, for he has taught them his will forcibly and often by the mouth of his prophets, and by his unmistakable judgments, impressing upon them the eternal truth that what he pre-eminently desires is not merely formal service, but, glowing within their hearts and prompting each action, a warm love for him and for their fellow-men. It is far more pleasing to him that they become acquainted with his will and character than that they conform in the minutest details to the dictates of the ceremonial law. The horrible crimes, daily committed in Israel, evince no true popular contrition (Hosea 6:7 to Hosea 7:2). But when Jehovah looks for the fruits of love, what does he find? Forgetting their peculiar relation to Jehovah, like any heathen nation, they have broken their solemn covenant and betrayed him. Go into any of their cities,—as, for example, Gilead,—and you may see the bloody footprints of the murderer. Assassins lie in wait for their victims; and, greater horror still! on the road to Shechem a band of priests are carrying on

organized highway robbery. A gross licentiousness also is corrupting all the people of Israel. Thus, when Jehovah would fain heal the ills of this northern kingdom, their crimes of treachery and robbery cry to heaven for vengeance rather than for mercy. He, who sees all, cannot overlook them.

Corruption of the court (Hosea 7:3-7). Note also the wickedness and the treachery which is openly countenanced in the court. A consuming passion inflames all. You are, alas! familiar with the sickening picture of the king, shamelessly holding court attended by drunken, unscrupulous cut-throats, waiting only for a favorable opportunity to murder their royal master, who himself had mounted the throne by the use of the assassin's knife. In all this unholy crew no one has cried earnestly to Jehovah.

Evidences of Israel's decay (Hosea 7:8-16). Thus the nation under their blind guidance, at the present critical period upon which it has entered, is constantly aping the heathen states about, and trying to save itself by foolish and entangling alliances. The result is that it is indeed a cake unturned. With its nobles at the head of its social organization corrupt and oppressive, the masses beneath defrauded and wronged, its religion outwardly dead ceremonialism, inwardly rotten, its political policy characterized by a long series of blunders, its condition, indeed, is pitiable. In its foreign relations, although not knowing it, Israel has been the loser. Already the signs of premature decay have begun to appear. Instead, however, of turning to Jehovah for help in the time of need, these foolish Israelites, like a silly dove, without any consistent political policy, seek disgraceful alliances, first with Egypt and then with their arch-enemy, Assyria. Jehovah's judgment shall surely overtake them, for their conduct represents open rebellion against him. He would, it is true, have gladly delivered them, had not they proved traitors in all their conduct. Not one cry of genuine contrition has escaped their lips. Only when famine stares them in the face do they look upward, and then it is to howl for food with which to sate their sensual appetites. Alas! no dependence is to be put upon them. For their insolence their rulers shall fall by the sword, while the Egyptians, their allies, in whom they trust so much, will only jeer at their misfortune.

3. Israel's Retribution Well Merited, Overwhelming, and Imminent (Hosea 8:1 to Hosea 10:15)

Having rejected their opportunities to save themselves, the Israelites shall soon know the woes of conquest (Hosea 8:1-3). Blow a blast of warning, for the enemy, like an eagle, is even now swooping down upon the land. The impending calamity is no mere chance. It comes because the inhabitants have broken their covenant with Jehovah and rejected his commands. Vainly do they claim that they stand in a peculiarly close relation to him. When they had the opportunity to win his favor, they spurned him who would have saved them in this time of need. Therefore retribution alone awaits them. Their artificial kings and idols no defense (Hosea 8:4-7). Following their own rebellious course, they have raised puppets to the throne and called them kings, but without the divine sanction. In the same way, out of their silver and gold they have manufactured idols to be torn down, even as have been their artificial kings. Do you, who worship Jehovah under the symbolism of a calf, know that you only arouse his indignation? Oh! when will your minds be freed from the thralldom of these degrading superstitions inherited from the less enlightened past? The calf of Samaria is, like the pagan idols, a creation of man's hands. There is nothing divine about it. Like all things human, it shall be broken in fragments in the general destruction which is about to sweep over Israel. Dire shall be the consequence of long years of folly. Completely shall the

territory be devastated, for the grain which escapes the blight shall the invader consume.

Evidence of Israel's approaching downfall (Hosea 8:8-10). The absorption of the northern kingdom by foreign powers has already begun. Its prestige among the nations is gone. Blind to all reason, it has rushed into the hands of the Assyrians and sought to strengthen its weak position by foreign alliances, purchased with heavy gifts. Vain is their attempt to escape Jehovah's judgment and to avert the national captivity which awaits them.[7]

[7] Following the Septuagint, which reads "that they may cease for a little from anointing a king," where the Hebrew has "they shall involve themselves with tribute to the king of princes." The service at their altars arouses Jehovah's indignation rather than his mercy (Hosea 8:11-14). Do the Israelites urge that they are serving Jehovah with rich offerings at their many altars? Those services are made merely the occasion for feasting by the altars, while in the sight of God they are but excuses for further sin. Were Jehovah to express his will in the most detailed law they would be utterly ignored by this people, who seek only their own pleasure. Their offerings, therefore, far from turning aside his indignation, only intensify the reasons why he must visit upon them the most severe punishment, even exile. The effects of the coming exile upon their social and religious life (Hosea 9:1-6). Let not the Israelites celebrate their harvest feasts with the same wild exuberance as do their heathen neighbors; for every acclamation of thanksgiving to Baal, the Canaanitish god of plenty, which rises from Hebrew lips, is prompted by the basest of motives, and represents gross apostasy from Jehovah. The present is no time for rejoicing, for they are on the point of being driven into exile. What will all this newly gathered grain and wine mean to them when they are carried away into captivity, and forced to eat the unclean food, which is all the heathen lands afford? Then shall their feasts and ceremonial worship be impossible. Far from the temple of Jehovah, no more shall they partake of the meat sacrificed to their God. All sense of communion with him shall be but a memory of the past, and what they eat shall be eaten in sorrow, and merely to supply their animal needs. In Assyria or among the ancient tombs of Egypt shall they find unhallowed graves, while their beloved land lies desolate.

Signs of the approaching dissolution (Hosea 9:7-9). Already the Israelites are beginning to reap the consequences of their sins. Into such excesses have they fallen that their prophets have gone mad, so that they utter no clear message, but only the incoherent muttering of frenzy. The true watchman of Ephraim, like myself, is guarded by his God, and is ever laying bare the faults of this people,[8] whom even the sanctity of the temple does not deter from base acts of treachery. Revolting deeds of lust, such as shocked even the imperfectly developed moral consciousness of the age of the judges, are common occurrences.[9] These crimes shall bring their own punishment.

[8] This contrast between the members of the degraded prophetic guilds and the true prophets was frequently drawn. Compare, for example, Micah 3:5-8. The passage is so elliptical that the exact meaning is obscure. The literal translation of the Hebrew seems to be, "Ephraim's watchman is with my God; a prophet is a fowler's snare upon all his (Ephraim's) ways." The readings of the A. V. and R. V. are familiar. For still another parallel translation, which, however, does not appear to suit the context as well, compare Smith, "The Book of the Twelve Prophets," I, 280.

[9] Cf. Judges 19:22-30

Magnificent possibilities prodigally squandered through lustful indulgence (Hosea 9:10-17). In sad contrast with their present fruits was the promise of those earlier days in the wilderness when Jehovah chose the people to be his own. But from the moment that they came into contact with the debasing civilization of Canaan they yielded to the temptation. That process of moral deterioration has gone on until the once virile nation has completely lost its character. Sadder still, sinful indulgence of lust has rendered barren the sacred organs of generation. Even should children be born, they shall grow up only to meet death by the sword of the conqueror. Northern Israelite though I am, I cannot pray for anything but retributive judgment Jehovah will not be slow in answering my prayer, for all his love is transformed by their misdeeds into loathing and indignation. Lawless, disobedient vagabonds that they are, he will drive them forth to find a home where they may among the nations. The hollow insincerity at the bottom of Israel's religious and political life (Hosea 10:1-4). Richly blessed with natural gifts was the land of Israel; but its very fertility became a stumbling-block to its inhabitants, leading them to fix their attention upon material things, and causing them to express their religious faith in the heathen symbolism of the Canaanites whom they found in the land. The fundamental error in Israel's religion is the lack of sincerity. Jehovah can do nothing but show his disapproval of it all by overturning their altars and pillars. Already this fickle people, who have no real faith in their God, are also beginning to lose their faith in the king whom they have set up. Therefore the keystone of their political as well as their religious organization is crumbling. As a result, public and private honor is wanting, every one is trying to cheat his neighbor, and consequently the courts are filled with lawsuits. The impending overthrow of the national religion (Hosea 10:5-8). Far from saving them in the time of their nation's danger, the calf set up by Jeroboam I at that house of impiety, Bethel, shall be a source of keenest anxiety to the people of the district of Samaria, and to the degraded priests of this steer-god, lest the prestige which it has enjoyed be lost Well do they tremble. To Assyria's warlike monarch shall it be sent, that the gold, with which it is laden, may swell the heavy tribute, while Israel's puppet king shall float helplessly, like driftwood, on the flood which is about to overflow the land. The same wars of invasion shall destroy the idolatrous shrines which have been the centers of Israel's apostasy, and their altars shall lie utterly desolate. Then shall the people long for death to deliver them from their shame and woe.

Whatsoever a nation soweth that shall it also reap (Hosea 10:9-15). Beginning with the disgraceful atrocity at Gibeah, Israel's history has been characterized by a long series of crimes. Worst of all, there has been no moral or religious progress. Jehovah can do nothing with such a people except punish, and the instrument which he shall use will be the armies of the nations. Hitherto he has allowed the burdens of life to rest easily upon the Israelites. Their existence has been one round of festivals. True development, however, comes only through labor. Now these two kingdoms shall experience the harder side of life. In this time of discipline, O fellow Hebrews, is to be found your supreme opportunity. If you faithfully discharge your duties, then shall you enjoy the warmth of Jehovah's love, instead of being smitten by his judgments. By efforts and persistence develop your religious sensibilities, which have been allowed so long to remain latent. There is yet time to win Jehovah's favor, and to save yourselves from your impending fate. Alas there is great need of a change, for hitherto your energies have been directed in quite different channels, and you are reaping the fruits in the calamities which are falling upon you. You must have learned to your sorrow the folly of trusting to crooked diplomacy and military equipment to save you. Soon you shall experience the shock of war, and your fortified cities shall crumble into ruins, as did

Beth-arbee, before the army of the conqueror. Thus, O Israelites, in accordance with the eternal laws of God, your nation, with its hypocritical and artificial religion, its corrupt priests and prophets, its idolatrous practices, its gross immorality, its hollow insincerity, and its puppet kings, shall go down to ruin, and its political organization shall disappear like a mist of the morning.

4. Jehovah's Love and Hopes for Israel (Hosea 11:1-11) The story of Jehovah's tender care toward ungrateful Israel during the earlier history (Hosea 11:1-4). Hear Jehovah's protestation of his love and care for Israel. In the earliest period of this nation's existence, when it was untrained and in bondage, my heart began to go out toward it in tender love, and I called it from the thralldom of Egypt to freedom and to sonship. Alas! the more clearly I made my will known by my prophets to these ingrates, the more they failed to do it. Nevertheless I did not lose patience, but, as a father teaches his child to walk, so I tenderly guided them in the path of duty and true development. When they were weary and discouraged, I comforted them, although they were too obtuse to realize that it was I who healed their bruises when they fell. As they took up the sterner duties of life I guided them, not with the whip and lash, as does a cruel driver his yoke of toiling oxen, but with words of encouragement and genuine affection, relieving them as far as possible from the painful strain, and supplying with never-tiring care their every need. The punishment which Israel's conduct has made necessary is in sad contrast to Jehovah's purpose (Hosea 11:5-7). But all my efforts have apparently been in vain, for they show no signs of contrition and obedience. Hence discipline is the only alternative. Absorption into the great Assyrian empire shall be their fate. Instead of responding to the calls of my prophets, their whole tendency is away from me and from doing my will. Therefore nothing remains but to let them experience the terrors and the woes of war. The compassionate longings of the infinite heart of love (Hosea 11:8-10). And yet, O people of my choice, how can I leave you to your fate, richly merited though it is? Must I destroy your cities, as I did those of the plain beside the Salt sea? My heart revolts at the thought. Compassion for you faint would deter me from doing what common justice prompts. Divine mercy and patience as far exceeds the human as infinity exceeds nothingness. Instead, therefore, of coming to consume you entirely, I will continue, even though I must burn out these impure elements, to manifest myself to you as the one ever near and ready to forgive and to save.

Promises of a future restoration (Hosea 11:10-11). In the distant future, when exile has done its work of discipline, then shall Jehovah send forth a loud summons, calling together his scattered people, and they with eagerness shall come hurrying back from the distant lands where they have found a refuge. Then will Jehovah restore them to their land and home.

5. Israel's Base Return for Jehovah's Loving Care (Hosea 11:12 to Hosea 12:14)

Israel has sought help from every other source than the true one suggested by the example of their ancestor Jacob (Hosea 11:12 to Hosea 12:6). Such is Jehovah's feeling and purpose toward Israel, but the people requited his mercy and love with deception and desertion.[10] They have preferred to play with fire by purchasing costly alliance, first with Assyria, and then with Assyria's enemy, Egypt. In so doing they have not only involved themselves in political entanglements, but have also committed sins against Jehovah which will not go long unavenged. Their folly and wickedness is all the greater because they have had before them the familiar example of their honored ancestor Jacob, who, beginning at his birth, ever struggled to secure Jehovah's blessing. He succeeded, as you know, in gaining it in rich measure. O Israelites, if you will only act in accord

with the simple dictates of love and of justice, and earnestly seek to win Jehovah's favor, you likewise may yet enjoy his spiritual blessings.

[10] Since the references to Judah in the chapter add nothing new to the prophecy, and interrupt the sequence of thought, they have been omitted in the paraphrase. The mercenary aims and corrupt religion have rendered this nation impervious to all moral culture (Hosea 12:7-14). But no, the one ideal of the Israelites has been material gain, and the pursuit of it has degraded them to a level with these cheating Canaanites. They consider that they have attained their ideal, and in their blind folly think that they have suffered no spiritual loss. Mistaken fools! Do they not realize that their life has been a complete failure, and that in their moral development they are exactly where they were centuries ago, when they were wandering desert tribes? Therefore Jehovah must cause them to go back to that simple nomadic life, and begin their education over again. This failure is not because he has neglected to send to them faithful prophets, who by forcible illustrations, as well as by spoken words, have striven long and earnestly to instruct them. But it was all in vain, for coupled with their mercenary ideals was their idolatrous religion, blinding them to all truth, and making them objects worthy of divine wrath.[11] The bitter consequences of their guilt shall be theirs to endure.

[11]Verses 12 and 13 interrupt the sequence of the thought, which is continued from verse 11 to verse 14, and, accordingly, have been omitted in the paraphrase. They seem to expand the thought of verse 9, recalling how, in the midst of adversity and danger, Jehovah ever led the ancestors of the Israelites. It is not improbable that the present text has been disarranged.

6. The Final Review of Israel's Mistakes and their Inevitable Consequences (Hosea 13:1-16) The Idolatry which prevails in Israel the real source of its decay (Hosea 13:1-6). In the earlier days, Ephraim, the great tribe of the north, was the acknowledged leader of the Hebrew race, but when its religion degenerated into Baalism, its death began. The best energies of the northern kingdom are still being devoted to the construction of idols and the senseless worship of the calves which have been set up at the popular shrines. A nation which is thus decayed at the core cannot survive in these troublesome times. When the Assyrian whirlwind strikes, it shall be scattered like chaff to the four winds. And yet, how different it all might have been! Egypt and the wilderness wanderings presented greater dangers than the present; and still, under Jehovah's guidance, they passed through them all in safety. It was the wealth and luxury of Canaan which led them to forget the God in whom they had found an able helper. The supreme opportunity lost because of the nation's folly (Hosea 13:7-16). Thus, in their time of stress, he who alone can deliver is their fierce antagonist How powerless are the weak kings whom they set up for Jehovah forthwith to cast down! The present moment might have been one of triumph instead of judgment But as it is, can Jehovah think for an instant of delivering? Instead, he must stifle all feelings of pity and give over the culpable nation to severest punishment Drought, conquest, and pitiless war, shall speedily do their cruel work. Before them the strong, the helpless, and the innocent, shall all meet a common death.

7. The True Prayer of Repentance and its Answer (Hosea 14:1-9)

What Israel's attitude toward Jehovah should be (Hosea 14:1-3). Fallen, sin-stained people, come back, I beseech you, to Jehovah, your only true God. Come, bringing not in your hands sacrifices and burnt offerings, but on your lips true words of contrition. Let your prayer be, "Cleanse us thoroughly from our sins. Accept as our best offering the confessions and faithful vows which we

now make. At last we have learned that Assyrian alliances will not save us, nor Egyptian cavalry. No longer will we pay divine homage to the idols which our hands have made. To thy mercy, O thou Father of mercies, we commend ourselves." The gracious response which Jehovah would make to such a petition (Hosea 14:4-6). Hear the ready response which Jehovah would give to such a prayer: "Although Israel is suffering grievously from the effects of long years of sin, I will restore and bestow my love unreservedly upon this repentant people, for it is necessary no longer for me to think of judgment. Under my benign influence their growth, so long arrested by their course of crime, shall proceed rapidly, until they shall stand before the world a powerful and attractive nation. The joys of repentance and reconciliation (Hosea 14:7-8). "Then will those who live under its banners enjoy prosperity and a glorious development. Then will Israel recognize the folly of worshiping idols, and I in turn will freely forgive and care for the repentant nation. At last Israel will realize and confess that its true growth and prosperity come from me, who am the eternal source of all life and growth." The Epilogue (Hosea 14:9). [Whoever is quick to perceive and appropriate truth will find in these obscure prophecies rich and eternal messages, illustrating above all the great fact that Jehovah's demands are altogether just, and that, for those who conform to them, life is easy; but, for those who refuse to comply, it is beset with insuperable difficulties.]

018. The Earlier Prophetic Activity Of Isaiah

THE EARLIER PROPHETIC ACTIVITY OF ISAIAH

019. I. The Young Prophet Of Jerusalem

I THE YOUNG PROPHET OF JERUSALEM

While Amos and Hosea were executing in the northern kingdom the mission with which God had entrusted them, a youth was approaching manhood in the city of Jerusalem who was rarely qualified in personal endowment and by favoring conditions to enter upon a similar work in Judah, and to carry it to a higher stage of development. The peer of these men of God in loyalty, devotion, and courage, he was so situated that a much wider sphere of service was open to him. If not related to the royal family, he was at least of gentle blood, and entitled by general consent to a place of dignity and influence at the court and among the people. During his whole career he played the part of a leader in political as well as religious and social affairs. As a loyal citizen of Jerusalem, he was peculiarly fitted to perceive and express the important relation of the holy city to the plan of God, unfolding for the nation. That his natural abilities were of no ordinary character is proved by the dignity, vigor, and beauty which characterize all his utterances. It is entirely probable, however, that he availed himself of all the educational resources of a brilliant era. His boyhood was during a happy period of Judah's history, when the energetic and enterprising Uzziah was on the throne of Judah. This king, enthroned when but a youth, enabled his people to recover speedily from the depression to which the stubborn conceit of his father Amaziah (2 Kings 14:8-14) had reduced them. With skill and judgment he developed Judah's natural resources, strengthened her defenses, and opened many avenues of wealth. He compelled the petty nations round about to resume their old relation as tributaries. He even won back the port of Elath, on the eastern arm of the Red Sea, secured a navy of "ships of Tarshish" (Isaiah 2:16), and resumed the traffic with South Arabia which Solomon had fostered. He thus made his little kingdom secure, powerful, and prosperous, and gave his people renewed confidence in themselves and in their future. Judah, under King Uzziah, became a fair counterpart of Israel under King Jeroboam II, whose reign was practically contemporaneous. No wonder that the soul of the young Judean prophet was stirred by the sight of evils similar to those which had kindled the prophetic ardor of Amos,—a thoughtless greed for wealth, a consequent abuse of power and opportunity, a forgetfulness of moral standards, all combined with a scrupulousness for religious forms and with a pretense of loyalty to Jehovah,—and that his study of the utterances of Amos and Hosea to the northern people prepared him for a prompt consecration of himself as God's spokesman to the people of Judah. By his own statement (Isaiah 6:1) the prophet lets us know that it was in the year of King Uzziah's death that he began his public career. He then definitely recognized the duty imposed upon him by his divine sovereign. He was then a young man, but probably married. He was not immature nor lacking in prestige. On the contrary, his earliest utterances breathe the same serene and thoughtful confidence, and exhibit all the characteristic qualities, which we find in the impassioned addresses of forty years later. His growth during these years was not so much an advancement in social position nor oratorical skill, nor even in fundamental ideas, as in his grasp of all the factors which were to be combined to carry out the divine plan, and in his emphasis of those which were of supreme importance. During the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the

prophet was a prominent factor in the affairs of Judah, recognized, although sometimes opposed, by both king and people. He applied the touchstone of Jehovah's approval to their pursuits and plans. Like his prophetic predecessors, he rebuked the ungodliness made manifest in the superstition, formalism, and self-esteem of the people of Judah, and denounced the social evils which were spreading among them. He advanced beyond Amos or Hosea in his application of the principles of prophecy to national questions. Partly, perhaps, because of his intimacy with those who ruled the state, partly because of his habit of mind, he was a statesman as well as a reformer. He constantly urged a national policy based upon the will of Jehovah. He thus restored the advisory function of the prophet of Jehovah, so honored in the life of Elisha, and gave it a broader definition in the light of the higher prophetic ideals of his own age. He was more, however, than reformer or statesman. That which gave him power in either capacity, and transformed his utterances from nothing more than a skilful exhibition of rhetorical power into stirring and searching appeals to conscience, was his wonderful grasp of the nature and purposes of God, and his insistence upon the recognition of God in every act of man. From his inaugural vision of Jehovah he was a student of the divine nature, plan, and methods, transmitting to his disciples a well-ordered survey of the relations of God, man, and the universe, which is entitled to recognition as the first true theology which we can trace.

It would be impossible for the student of prophecy to understand the life and work of this uncrowned king of men by reading the Book of Isaiah in the present order of chapters. When his utterances were first reduced to written form,—in part, perhaps, by the great teacher himself, in part by his disciples,—they circulated among the faithful in Israel in more or less fragmentary form. Disciples here and there made collections of these published prophecies, arranging them in little groups, each bearing on a special theme. It thus happened that when the Isaianic writings were all gathered into one roll by some one who probably lived long after the prophet had passed away, their order was distinctively topical. Chapters 1 to 12, for instance, form a little volume of discourses of very different dates on Judah and Jerusalem. Chapters 13 to 27 seem to have been grouped together because they deal with various foreign nations. The historical student of to-day is forced to ignore the present order of chapters or discourses altogether. Nor does he seek to arrange them in the probable order of composition. It is not unlikely that the sixth chapter, which relates the inaugural vision of the prophet, was written many years after the actual experience, yet the one who seeks to reproduce and interpret the prophet's career will study it first of all. Similarly, the first chapter, which to-day makes a forceful introduction to the book of Isaiah's prophecies, was possibly written almost forty years after the opening of his ministry. It is a capital résumé of the earlier work of the prophet, and can best be treated as such.

Under the generally acknowledged principle that the prophecies can most helpfully be read and studied in connection with the historical period to which each one refers, a number of chapters in the Book of Isaiah are at once relegated to the time of the Babylonian exile or later. Whether the prophet Isaiah uttered these predictions, or some one else, does not affect this necessity for studying them in connection with the history of the exile and the return. Only then do they become intelligible and convey to our minds the impression intended by him who produced them. In accordance with this principle, not only do we omit from present consideration chapters 40 to 66, but also chapters 13 and 14, 24 to 27, and, with less assurance, chapters 21, 34, and 35. The remaining thirty chapters can be arranged with considerable certainty into two groups of

prophecies which relate to events during the actual lifetime of the prophet. The public career of Isaiah was not less than forty years in length. The year 701 B. C. is the last year which we can definitely determine. It would seem incredible that even sixty-six chapters should represent the intense activity of those years, did we not remember that a paragraph or chapter often summarizes in briefest possible form the leading ideas of a year or more of active ministry. From the material preserved to us we might infer that his busiest years were at the opening and at the close of his prophetic life, for the greater number of these chapters belong to the years 739 to 732, and 705 to 701 B. C. The first group includes about fourteen chapters, and reflects the earlier activity of Isaiah down to the fall of the northern kingdom (722 B. C.), a period of seventeen or eighteen years. From the standpoint of prophetic biography these chapters are full of interest. Aside from the story of his consecration to his exalted office, they reproduce his earliest ministry, when his message was of judgment upon the ungodliness and crime prevailing in Judah,—a message parallel in many respects to those of Amos and Hosea, and doubtless inspired in part by them. About 735 B. C. came the crisis which gave occasion for his first appearance as a political adviser. The weak and timid King Ahaz, being besieged in his own capital by the allied armies of the kings of Northern Israel and Syria, secretly meditated a deliverance by becoming a vassal of the all-powerful king of Assyria, the famous Tiglath-pileser. The prophet appealed in vain to prince and people to show their trust in Jehovah by relying upon him alone in their emergency, and rejecting all temporary expedients for safety. Disappointing as his failure was, it had important results, which affected the methods and principles of his subsequent ministry. The most obvious consequence was also, in all probability, the most important. Since the nation as such would not heed his message, he seems to have retired from public activity and given himself to the instruction of such kindred spirits as he could gather round him. Thus the ten years of comparative silence which followed were, after all, years of most influential service, and the period as a whole was an essential preparation for the outwardly more glorious achievements of later years. Our study of the life and teachings of the prophet as portrayed in his own utterances will naturally commence with his reminiscences of that solemn hour when his Lord was first revealed as a king, who called for a messenger to men, and accepted him.

020. II. Isaiah's Call To Service (Isaiah 6)

II ISAIAH'S CALL TO SERVICE (Isaiah 6) The vision in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-3). Just after the death of my once-revered sovereign, Uzziah, while meditating in the temple on the outlook before my beloved people, I suddenly found myself standing in the very presence of Jehovah, enthroned in majesty, his ample robes seeming to fill the space before me. Around him stood a retinue of heavenly beings, veiling in deep reverence their faces and forms, while they joined in continual praise of his holiness, power, and glory. His confession of sin and forgiveness (Isaiah 6:4-7). My first impression was one of fear. The thresholds trembled at the sound of their voices; before my profane eyes a protecting veil of mist arose. I longed to unite my praises with those of the heavenly choir, but a sense of my unworthiness checked me, and I said: "Alas! I dare not take the holy name upon my lips, for this vision of my heavenly sovereign reveals to me my own sin and that of my people." No sooner had I uttered this confession than I was given a glad assurance of forgiveness and atonement. A seraph touched my lips with a glowing coal from the altar, assuring me that they were now cleansed. His call (Isaiah 6:8-9a). At once I seemed to hear Jehovah saying, "Who will be our messenger to men?" and with joy I offered myself for the service. Then he uttered this depressing word: "I appoint you, indeed, to declare my will to this people. The effect of his preaching upon his obdurate countrymen (Isaiah 6:9-13a). Do not overestimate, however, the effect of your preaching. The great mass of your countrymen will refuse to listen to you. Nay, the more earnestly you plead, the more will their obstinacy deaden their capacity to receive spiritual impressions. Your work will seem disheartening and fruitless." Appalled by this prospect, I said: "Surely, O Jehovah! there will be a limit to this stubborn unbelief;" but in reply I received a message which wrung my heart: "Not until Jehovah's desolating judgment of war and captivity has been enforced against this sinful land. Even when only a tenth of the people remains, the judgment must be repeated, until nothing is left of the stately tree of Judah but an unsightly stump." A ray of hope (Isaiah 6:13b). One blessed ray of hope was given me: "As the stump of the oak tree retains its vitality and sends up shoots, which form a new tree, so will it be with Judah. The faithful servants of Jehovah, though few in number, will survive the judgment, and grow again into a people fitted to carry out God's great plan."

021. III. Prophecies Of Judgment Upon Judah For The Sins Of The Nation

III PROPHECIES OF JUDGMENT UPON JUDAH FOR THE SINS OF THE NATION 1. Sermons about Jerusalem from Jehovah's Point of View (2 to 4)

Popular expectations regarding the future glory of Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4). Not long after Jehovah had called me to his service, as I was thinking of his plans for my people there came to my mind the well-known prediction that Mt. Zion, the site of the beautiful temple of Jehovah, will yet become the most conspicuous mountain in the world, so that all nations will eagerly flock thither to be taught true views regarding God and life. Their disputes will then be settled by Jehovah's just arbitrament. Since all necessity for war will cease, their weapons will be fashioned into implements of agriculture.

Why Jehovah cannot fulfil such pleasing hopes (Isaiah 2:5-9). As I repeated in public this glorious hope, I could but add, "O house of Jacob, does not such a destiny impel us so to serve our God that we may be found worthy to fulfil it? For let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that Jehovah is ready to use us, sinners that we are. He must sorely discipline his beloved people, for they no longer trust in him. Sorcerers and soothsayers and strangers are their friends. They gloat over their accumulating wealth and resources. They have even filled the city with idols made by themselves. Every one of them deserves a humiliating retribution for his forgetfulness of God; they are beyond forgiveness. The "Day of Jehovah," a day of humiliation for mere earthly pride (Isaiah 2:10-17). You boast, O my people, of what will happen on Jehovah's day. Alas! his coming in majesty will be a day of terror and humiliation to you. Everything that seems to exalt itself or minister to human pride shall be brought low, for at all costs Jehovah will maintain his supremacy. He alone will be exalted. And a day when idolatry will be overthrown (Isaiah 2:18-21). The idols, so carefully made of costly material, will be cast aside when Jehovah reveals his majestic presence in the earthquake. You will try to hide away from him in the recesses of the rocks. How puny human power will then seem to be; how useless such hand-made gods! The complete collapse of social order in Judah certain (Isaiah 3:1-7). In the year that the boy king, Ahaz, ascended the throne, I made known to Judah the catastrophe to be expected. "Jehovah will remove all who contribute to the order and stability of society. Weak and capricious rulers shall have supreme power. All discipline or government will come to an end. In vain will you entreat the one remaining householder to assume authority over his fellows. You will all be driven to utter despair."

Because of the just judgment of Jehovah upon her wicked rulers (Isaiah 3:8-12).

He will vindicate the oppressed (Isaiah 3:13-15). The reason for this certain ruin is the flagrant wickedness carried on so openly by those who should be the protectors and exemplars of virtue. They cannot complain if their own evil doings bring evil upon themselves. O my people, your leaders are misleaders; they only make you go astray. When Jehovah calls his people before him for judgment, he will reckon with these cruel and selfish rulers, who neglect all interests but their

own. The fate of the haughty and luxurious ladies of Jerusalem (Isaiah 3:16 to Isaiah 4:1). At another time Jehovah bade me announce that his righteous judgment would not fail to descend upon the proud and vain ladies of Jerusalem, whose luxuries gave excuse for the exactions of their husbands. Theirs shall be a terrible fate. Those who are now so haughty and coquettish will be stripped of their bewildering attire, exposed to shame, and treated as wretched captives of war, while the holy city will be disconsolate because of the loss of her brave defenders. So few will be spared that the women in that day will crowd around each survivor and plead for marriage, that they may be spared the reproach of childlessness. The Jerusalem in which Jehovah will delight to dwell (Isaiah 4:2-6). [12] When the desolating judgment has been completed, the land will become abundantly fertile. The few who are left to enjoy it, because predestined to life in the holy city, will be truly holy, for Jehovah himself will thoroughly purify them. Over the city will hover his protecting presence, even as he once manifested himself to his people in the desert. He will also protect his favorite dwelling-place from the scorching heat of midday and from the driving storm. His constant presence will make it a paradise.]

[12] It is thought by many scholars that this paragraph formed no part of the spoken message of the prophet at this particular epoch, but was added as a suitable conclusion at the time when the separate sermons of chapters 2 to 4 were gathered into their present literary form.

2. Judah the Unfruitful Vineyard of Jehovah (Isaiah 5:1-24) The song of the vineyard and its application (Isaiah 5:1-7). Determined to bring home to my countrymen their unfaithfulness to God, I offered one day to sing a melodious song about a friend of mine who owned a vineyard : A vineyard belongs to my friend, On a hill that is fruitful and sunny;

He digged it and cleared it of stones, And planted there vines that are choice. A tower he built in the midst, And hewed therein also a wine-vat; And he looked to find grapes that are good.

Alas! it bore grapes that are wild.[13] [13] The version is that of Professor Cheyne.

I appealed to my auditors: "Ye men of Judah, yourselves judge. Has this vineyard fulfilled my reasonable expectations? Am I not amply justified in laying it waste and giving it no further care?" At their ready assent I exclaimed, "O men of Judah, you have condemned yourselves. You are the plantation on which Jehovah has lavished his affectionate care. He expected you to set an example of justice, but there is nothing to be seen but bloodshed; he looked for righteousness, but he hears the bitter outcry of the oppressed." [14] [14] The contrasts are heightened, in the Hebrew, by striking similarities of sound in the words.

Judah's wild grapes,—the greed for landed estates (Isaiah 5:8-10). Do you indignantly deny my charge? Then let me show you the evils that are sapping the moral life of this nation. See the cruel greed for vast estates that incites the wealthy to unjustly add to their possessions until a few of them possess the whole land. Woe to them! Jehovah himself hath revealed to me that depopulation and barrenness shall be the sequel.

Excessive drunkenness (Isaiah 5:11-17). Again God's curse is upon those nobles who spend day and night in reckless dissipation, too engrossed with the pleasures of the table to give attention to Jehovah's interests. Alas! not these alone, but the many who unthinkingly follow them, will have to suffer the distress of captives. Nay, Sheol shall engulf in oblivion all their pomp and glory. Where once was a beautiful city flocks shall peacefully graze; for at all costs Jehovah will compel his

people to recognize him as the righteous and holy One.

Defiant skepticism (Isaiah 5:18-19). Woe again to those who are so deliberate and persistent in doing evil that they even dare to defy Jehovah's judgment, announced through his servants, until it overtakes them! Their very attachment to their sin is a bond which fetters them for the inevitable judgment.

Sophistry and egoism (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Judicial corruption (Isaiah 5:22-23). Jehovah cannot look with favor upon those who, for their own profit, juggle with moral distinctions that abuses may flourish, nor upon those self-complacent men of influence who will take no heed of prudent counsel. The just God cannot approve of those on thrones of judgment whose only ambition is to be praised for their ability in drinking and their skill in producing drinks, while officially they accept bribes to acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent. The conclusion (Isaiah 5:24). O my people, these sins are ruining our beloved nation. As swiftly as fire devours stubble, or as hay shrivels in the flame, will it lose strength and life; for its citizens will not listen to the warning voice of their King and Lord.

3. Israel's Ripeness for Judgment, a Warning (Isaiah 9:8 to Isaiah 10:4; Isaiah 5:25-30)

Israel's disregard of divine warnings (Isaiah 9:8-12). Jehovah has often spoken to his people of Samaria by providential dealings which they should have recognized and interpreted as warnings. But in their self-confidence and bravado they simply boast that they can repair all their losses to their own advantage, wholly ignoring Jehovah's purpose. He it was who stirred up their fierce eastern foes, the Syrians, and their Philistine enemies on the west, so that repeatedly the strength of their land was broken. Yet, since there was no repentance, Jehovah's menacing attitude had still to be maintained. The sudden calamity which overtook it (Isaiah 9:13-17). Upon these obstinate people Jehovah brought an overwhelming calamity. He suddenly caused the leaders, great and small, true and false, to perish. They amply deserved this fate, for they misled and ruined their people. The whole nation shared in their corruption. God could spare neither the strong nor the helpless. And even then he was forced to continue his judgments. The horrors of internal anarchy (Isaiah 9:18-21). For wickedness, which Jehovah permits to have its way, is as unquenchable and destructive as a forest fire. A condition of anarchy arose at once in Israel. Faction fought with faction, all ties of kindred being forgotten in the mad strife. The only bond of unity was a common hatred of Judah. But not even this has sufficed to open their eyes. A day of reckoning coming for corrupt judges (Isaiah 10:1-4). Woe to those men who use their power to cover, by the forms of justice, the most grievous wrongs against the poor and helpless! What will such do in the day of reckoning, when Jehovah summons the invader from afar? Of what use then will be their ill-gotten wealth? Nothing can they do but burrow for safety beneath the corpses on the battle-field. Even this sweeping judgment will not satisfy Jehovah's sense of justice. The earthquake (Isaiah 5:25).[15]Nor did the earthquake avail. Jehovah raised his hand, the mountains shook, the dead were like offal in the streets, yet the warning was unheeded.

[15] The proper position of this verse, which seems to be all that is left of a stanza of equal length with the four preceding ones, is a matter of much dispute among scholars.

God's distant instrument of judgment (Isaiah 5:26-30). So Jehovah will have to signal to a distant but well-known nation, summoning it to be his agent of retribution upon his stubborn people.

Tireless and vigilant, perfectly appointed for war, its weapons ready for use, its horses and chariots prepared for action, swiftly will it come, and will take possession of the land as a lion seizes its prey. Its onset will be irresistible, and nothing shall escape its grasp. With the rush and roar of a tidal wave, these dread foes shall sweep over the country, leaving only ruin and distress behind them.

022. IV. Incidents And Sermons Relating To The War Of Syria And Israel Against Judah

IV INCIDENTS AND SERMONS RELATING TO THE WAR OF SYRIA AND ISRAEL AGAINST JUDAH

1. The Situation (Isaiah 7:1-2) In the closing days of Jotham's reign over Judah (2 Kings 15:37), Rezon, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the king of Israel, made an alliance, and declared war against Judah, in order to force her to unite with them in resisting the future advances of the aggressive king of Assyria. Chapter Isaiah 17:1-11 was probably uttered by Isaiah in view of the alliance before active hostilities had been begun against Judah. The accession of young Ahaz to the throne of Judah may have been coincident with the first attack of the allies. They met with considerable success, yet Ahaz would not yield. The two kings determined, therefore, to capture Jerusalem by assault, put an end to the Davidic dynasty, and set an adventurer on the throne of Judah (Isaiah 7:6). This greater danger produced a panic in Jerusalem. Ahaz did not fail to look to his defenses; but he resolved to save his throne by declaring himself a vassal of Assyria, and imploring the protection of his more distant foe. To people as well as prince this seemed a judicious step to take in the circumstances. While it was being considered, the prophet Isaiah came forward to urge a policy of conduct more befitting a nation whose God was Jehovah of Hosts.

2. The Speedy Ruin of Syria and Israel (Isaiah 17:1-11) The approaching fate of Damascus (Isaiah 17:1-3). O men of Judah, are you dismayed to hear that Syria and Israel have made an alliance? Alas that it should be true! Unhappy Ephraim will bitterly regret her forgetfulness of Jehovah and her friendship with the idolatries of Damascus. Nor will it avail her politically. Damascus will soon be an utter ruin. Where once were populous cities there will be only a lonely pasturage for flocks. The kingdom, so long a protecting bulwark of Israel against all northern foes, shall cease to be. A similar judgment to be executed upon Israel (Isaiah 17:4-6). But Jehovah plans that Israel too shall speedily lose all that has made the nation renowned and wealthy. She shall be enfeebled as if by a wasting disease, her people cut off as grain is gathered by the sturdy reaper, and a mere remnant left, like the meager leavings of an olive-picker. The salutary effect in promoting the worship of Jehovah (Isaiah 17:7-11). The effect of this will be that men will recognize the divine author of life, Israel's Holy One, and will cease to reverence idolatrous emblems and altars. Your devastation, O Israel, as complete as that which befell the inhabitants of Canaan at the hands of your forefathers, is wholly due to your forgetfulness of God, your only source of strength. The pains you take in the worship of the Syrian Adonis are utterly futile; your only reward will be incurable distress.

3. Faith, not Fear, the True Motive for Judah's King (Isaiah 7:3-17)

Why Isaiah sought an interview with king Ahaz (Isaiah 7:3). When Judah's affairs seemed to be coming to a crisis, Jehovah directed me to take my little son "Remnant Shall Turn," whose name was a constant reminder to all the people both of the coming judgment which God had bade me announce so often and of the hope which he would also extend under certain conditions, and go to

meet the king near the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool, where he was anxiously inspecting the water supply of the city in anticipation of the coming siege. His encouraging message (Isaiah 7:4-9). My message was one of comfort and encouragement “Be prudent, O king; commit yourself to no rash policy. Do not fear these menacing foes. Their show of strength is but the last flicker of two expiring torches. Surely you are not afraid of that usurper, Pekah, who has incited Israel to make this attack, nor of his ally, Rezon. It is Jehovah’s will that their plans shall fail. Who are these champions in comparison with him![16]Let your policy be dictated by faith, and not by fear. Without faith[17] in God’s word, uttered through me, there is no security for you.”

[16] Verse 8bis generally regarded as an insertion, not a part of Isaiah’s real address at this time.

[17] There is a play on words here. “Without belief there will be no relief.” The king’s unwillingness to receive it (Isaiah 7:10). The king’s face betrayed his unwillingness to respond to my appeal. Evidently he had formed some plan of action to which he and his advisers were committed. He was not ready to approve of an attitude of defensive neutrality, supported by a steady confidence in God’s protection. So Jehovah led me to continue my message. “Do you hesitate, O king, to place implicit trust in Jehovah, your God? An assuring sign offered and refused (Isaiah 7:11-12). Let him convince you by a sign that I am speaking in his name. Ask any sign you choose in the whole realm of creation.” Unwilling to commit himself, the king replied, evasively, “God forbid that I should put Jehovah to the proof,” whereupon, indignant at such hypocritical indifference to God’s appeal through me, I said: “Listen to me, all ye whom Jehovah appointed to rule and lead this nation. Is it so small a matter to ignore the thoughtful advice of your faithful subjects that you delight in despising Jehovah’s counsel as well? The sign of the boy Immanuel (Isaiah 7:13-17). He will give you a sign. A young woman shall bear a son who shall truly represent the hopes we have inherited from the days of David. His very name, ‘God-is-with-us,’ shall express the secret of his power. Through your obstinate folly he shall receive but a sorry inheritance. His youth shall be spent amidst privations, his food being only curds and wild honey; for while he is yet young the lands of Syria and Israel shall be ravaged, and the very power on which you rely for deliverance from this present danger shall be the means of inflicting upon Judah such a blow as it has not known since the days of the great disruption.

4. The Certain Consequences of the Pro-Assyrian Policy (Isaiah 7:18-25)

Judah will be invaded by both Egypt and Assyria (Isaiah 7:18-20). At various times thereafter I set forth to my people the inevitable results of the determination of Ahaz to enter into alliance with Assyria. “It can but result in drawing us, as well as our neighbors, into the struggle which Egypt and Assyria, in God’s providence, will soon begin. Their armies, like swarms of insects in number, shall penetrate into every obscure corner and hiding-place of our land. The very force which Ahaz has bribed to rid us of our enemies Jehovah will employ to lay bare and humiliate his own people.

All Judah will be turned into pasture land (Isaiah 7:21-25). “So complete will be the ruin that the few remaining domestic animals will have free range, and from their yield of milk the sparse population will get the curds which, with wild honey, will be their only food. All the choice vineyards, so prized by Judeans, will give place to thorny thickets, where hunters will seek their game, or to pasturage for cattle and sheep.”

5. A Vain Appeal from King to People (Isaiah 8:1-18) The public tablet (Isaiah 8:1-2). Since the king and his advisers would pay no heed to my suggestion of the only policy worthy of a nation whose God was Jehovah, I was moved to take steps to impress upon the people the uselessness of their panic. I inscribed upon a huge tablet, in plain letters, the suggestive words "HASTEN-SPOIL-SPEED-PREY," and fastened it where all the people could see, securing two reliable witnesses of my act. The name of his second son and its meaning (Isaiah 8:3-4). Some time later another son was born to me. Acting still under divine direction, I gave him this same name, explaining it to mean that before long Damascus and Samaria would be captured and plundered by the Assyrian king. The Assyrian ally to become an invader (Isaiah 8:5-8). But the faith of the populace was no sturdier than that of their king. The danger from a visible foe seemed far more substantial to them than the promises of an unseen God. So this message came to me: "Since this people despise the gently flowing water of Shiloah, fitting type of God's unobtrusive but beneficent presence in our midst, and are faint-hearted at the sight of Rezon, Jehovah must give them a needed lesson. The Assyrians, to whom you wish to appeal, will advance like the flooded Euphrates, inundating not only Israel, but also Judah, all but engulfing this land, carrying destruction to every quarter of even Immanuel's land.

Although a people of faith might bid him defiance (Isaiah 8:9-10). "Let that name be our inspiring watchword. God's presence is indeed with us. We might defy the peoples gathered from the ends of the earth to serve under Assyria's standard if our faith is strong. Their destructive plans can be frustrated with ease, since God is in our midst"

Isaiah's certainty that his advice was of God (Isaiah 8:11-15). While under the immediate influence of God, in a state of prophetic ecstasy, I received this warning against the impulses of the hour: "With bated breath your countrymen are discussing the schemes of Rezon and Pekah. Do not share their absurd terrors, but reverence Jehovah as the great central factor of human life. To those who trust him, he, the Rock, will be an altar of refuge; to those who ignore his mercy, a stumbling-block and trap." His retirement from public life to await the fulfilment of his predictions (Isaiah 8:16-18). Alas! as Jehovah predicted when he called me to his service, I have not been able to draw this people close to God. They have not listened to my appeals. God counsels me to write these down and commit them to my little circle of faithful disciples. This done, I will wait patiently until by their fulfilment Jehovah vindicates his messenger. Meanwhile, I and my children, our very names recalling constantly the messages I have uttered of judgment, promise, and power, shall be living witnesses to my people of Jehovah's presence and purpose.

6. Jehovah's Controversy with his People—a Retrospect (Isaiah 1:2-31) The nation's ingratitude toward Jehovah (Isaiah 1:2-4). Let all creation listen and shudder while I recount how Jehovah has been forced to charge his people with rebellion. They are less grateful and responsive to him than an ox or an ass to its owner. So utterly corrupt are they that they hate Jehovah for his very holiness, and refuse to worship him to whom they owe their existence as a nation.

Resulting in sweeping calamity (Isaiah 1:5-9). Why lay yourselves open to further punishment by your continued apostasy? You are bruised and mangled from head to foot,—a mass of festering sores, left without attention. Our land is a desert, ravaged by foreign troops, as desolate as the site of ancient Sodom.[18] Jerusalem is yet spared, but is as isolated as a watcher's booth in a large vineyard or cucumber-field, or as a city closely besieged. Only Jehovah's mercy has prevented our

utter destruction.

[18] This alteration of the text is supported by many scholars. It then becomes a familiar simile. Not costly rites but active righteousness is what God desires (Isaiah 1:10-17). Do you think to keep Jehovah's favor by a lavish use of sacrifices, O wicked people! Listen to divine instruction. Your costly and constant offerings of various kinds I do not wish. Your coming into my presence is a mere form, your mechanical performance of your religious duties a desecration. Every one of your gifts is detestable to me, your presence at sacred seasons unendurable, for you bring iniquity with you. Even your prayers are offensive and useless, for your uplifted hands betray stains of blood. Cleanse yourselves, put away evil, do deeds of righteousness, give every human being his rights. Then Jehovah can show you favor.

He is willing to pardon all who will obey him (Isaiah 1:18-20). Let us come to a mutual understanding. Do not despair of divine forgiveness. However grossly you have sinned, you can be made free from stain, if you will devote yourselves heartily to Jehovah's service. If you continue to rebel, you must take the awful consequences, for Jehovah's word cannot be broken.

Jerusalem's degeneracy (Isaiah 1:21-23). O my beloved city, must I utter a wail for you as one dead?[19] Instead of being a home for those who practice righteousness, you shelter offenders against God's righteous law. Nothing real and genuine is left. Your princes have no principle.[20] They connive at extortion, and neglect the cause of those who cannot bribe them.

[19] A thought cleverly expressed in the Hebrew by putting verse 21 into elegiac meter.

[20] This chapter is full of similar plays on words, which cannot be rendered.

Jehovah's purpose to restore her (Isaiah 1:24-26). Therefore the Lord Jehovah, the defender of Israel's true interests, having discovered that Jerusalem's real adversaries are her own wicked people, will purge away these evil-doers, and restore to authority true rulers who have her best interests at heart. Thus the city, as of old, shall become a stronghold of righteousness. By this righteous judgment God shall redeem his city and those faithful ones who turn to him repentant, but the rebellious he will destroy. At that time, all remaining confidence in sacred trees or other emblems of nature worship shall disappear, for superstition will be as dead as a sapless oak or a waterless garden. It will destroy itself unheeded.

7. The Bright Future for those who Trust in God (Isaiah 8:19 to Isaiah 9:7) The despair and distress of the God-forsaken people (Isaiah 8:19-22). During the dark days which followed the events already described, God gave me this message for my faithful disciples. "When the people in defiant despair urge you to have recourse to necromancers and wizards, be bold to point out to them the disloyalty and folly of such action. They will then remember my teachings, although it will be too late to profit by them. Wandering through the land, discouraged and faint with hunger, they will be goaded to fury by their sufferings. In whatever direction they look for help, no ray of hope will brighten the gloom. A gleam of hope (Isaiah 9:1). But for those who know Jehovah's purpose, and can trust him, a brighter prospect dawns. The sure deliverance from the dominion of Assyria (Isaiah 9:2-5). The land of Zebulun and Naphtali, already feeling the depressing humiliation and hopeless prospect of a captive land, shall be the first to see the light of the new day. All shall share in the blessing; there shall be no bounds to their joy, for the galling dominion of Assyria shall be suddenly broken. Yes, every relic of the armies which trample on the liberties of Canaan, and

drench its soil with blood, shall be given to the flames in anticipation of the glorious reign of our deliverer. The deliverer,—the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). He shall be born to rule and lead this people, and, in grateful recognition of his character and deeds, his people shall name him, because of his wisdom, 'Wonderful Counselor;' because of his strength, 'Hero-God; 'because of his constant care of his people,' Father of Eternity,' and, to describe the nature and effects of his rule, 'Prince of Peace.' His authority will be everywhere recognized, and his reign profoundly peaceful, for he will establish his throne forever by the exercise of justice and righteousness. Do you question this promise? Jehovah's honor is pledged to its performance."

023. V. A Prophecy Regarding Phœnicia (23:1-18)

V A PROPHECY REGARDING PHCENICIA (Isaiah 23:1-18) The coming downfall of Tyre (Isaiah 23:1-5). When Shalmaneser IV, about 725 B. C., was laying siege to Tyre, the prophet uttered this message concerning that city of merchants: "Mourn, O homeward bound merchantmen, over the disaster reported to you at Cyprus. The harbors are closed against you. Phœnicia, so long enriched by traffic, whose harvest-fields were in Egypt, is helpless. The lonely sea will not acknowledge her children nourished on her bosom. Egypt herself shall be seized with a panic.

Because Jehovah purposes to humiliate her (Isaiah 23:6-9). "O Tyrians, make haste to flee to distant Tarshish. Tyre is no longer the happy, enterprising city of olden times, the maker of kings, the home of merchants as honored as princes. Jehovah has humiliated her because her greatness was never ascribed to him, the true Source of all.

She will have no chance to escape (Isaiah 23:10-14). "It will be useless to escape, for Jehovah's power can reach over the sea. Neither in her colonies nor in Cyprus will the fugitives from the ruined city find a resting-place. The recent ruthless spoliation of Chaldea by the Assyrian takes away her hope of deliverance.

Tyre's future service for Jehovah (Isaiah 23:15-18). For many year—the length of dynasty—Tyre shall be in oblivion. Then she will sing the well-known harlot's ballad :

Take thy lute and go about the city, Harlot, forgotten now by men!

Play thou with skill, sing many a ditty To win remembrance then.[21] [21] Cheyne's version.

Thus regaining her traffic with mankind, she shall consecrate her gains to Jehovah and to the use of his faithful servants."

024. The Message Of Micah

THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

025. I. The Peasant Prophet Of Judah

I THE PEASANT PROPHET OF JUDAH

While the prophet Isaiah was studying his country's need from the point of view of a broad-minded statesman conversant with her ambitions and in close touch with her leaders, there arose in the obscure village of Moresheth, near the border of Philistia, a man of God who surveyed the tendencies and dangers of the time from the standpoint of a man of the people. Realizing even more keenly than his aristocratic colleague the bitter and heartless tyranny of the upper classes, Micah proposed a more drastic requital. In his earliest prophecies, when he probably was yet a young man, and before he had gained his broadest outlook, his message of judgment was as unreserved as that of Amos. It is an interesting illustration of the fact that God gradually revealed his purposes even to his servants the prophets, to note that, while Micah, viewing only the immediate situation, affirmed in a way that carried conviction to the heart of his hearers[22] the certain ruin of Jerusalem, Isaiah, his thoughts directed to the plans of Jehovah for his people, affirmed with equal confidence that Jerusalem was secure from hostile attack. Each was a true prophet, but not a prophet of the whole truth.

[22] Compare with Micah 3:12 the explanation in Jeremiah 26:17-19. The conditions of Judah, when Micah first began to prophesy, were, indeed, such as to stir a prophet's soul. If Hezekiah ascended the throne about 727 B. C. he had not been reigning long. Isaiah's work as a social reformer had met with scant success. Unable even to prevent Ahaz and the people from entering into alliance with Tiglath-pileser, he had, in the main, given himself for the last dozen years to the instruction of his disciples. The social wrongs, which he had first attacked, became more and more marked. Misuse of power, indifference to the claims of human brotherhood, and wanton luxury, characterized the daily life of the city. To Micah, the villager, the unjust treatment of the helpless poor by men of wealth and power is the sin that cries aloud to heaven. He has but little to say about idolatry or display or immorality. Were the first three chapters all we have of Micah's utterances, it would be easy to draw the prophet's portrait. He would be much like Amos—brusk, earnest, eloquent,—a rugged, simple, clear-eyed messenger of judgment. So strongly marked are these characteristics that some scholars are inclined to deny that chapters 4–7 are from Micah. When we recognize, however, the probability that Micah and Isaiah would become known to each other, and that the younger prophet would gradually come into sympathy with the broader and more spiritual tone of his predecessors, especially of Hosea, it is no longer difficult to understand his change of tone and outlook. While it is not likely that such different messages as those of chapters 1–3 and chapters 4–5, would be uttered in direct succession, it is wholly probable that they would spring from the varied prospect of two distinct periods of his life. The Book of Micah represents utterances of very different dates. Chapters 1–3 can be dated with reasonable assurance not far from 722 B. C., since the first chapter represents the fall of Samaria as either imminent or recent, while the other two supplement and explain the first. Verses 12 and 13 of chapter 2 are evidently out of place. They are a fragment of some separate sermon, and break, in their present position, the very close connection of thought. They seem to belong with verses 6 and

7 of chapter 4, which refer to the restoration from exile. Chapters 4 and 5 refer consistently to Judah's future, but are made up from a number of separate prophecies. If they were gathered up by Micah himself, they probably represent sermons delivered not far from 701 B. C. Chapter 6 is not easily dated. By many it is referred to the reign of Manasseh, but the grounds for the judgment are very slight It may quite as well be earlier. The first six verses of chapter 7 reflect a condition of persecution which can hardly be earlier than Manasseh's time. The remainder of the chapter can hardly have been put together earlier than the close of the exile. It is usually considered a late appendix to Micah's prophecies. The prophecies of Micah are remarkable for independence of thought, and for beauty and force of expression. Like Amos, he is a peasant only in his surroundings and his point of view; he is a master of artistic and effective rhetoric. His use of paranomasia is unique, and his reminiscences of earlier prophetic writings unobtrusive. If it is safe, with the majority of students of his writings, to consider that the bulk of this book can be ascribed to him, it follows that he was fully worthy of a place by the side of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Unsparing in criticism when plain speech was needed, he could discriminate. Beginning as a prophet of judgment, he became a prophet of restoration, of divine forgiveness, and of Israel's future glory. No man of God in the days before the exile did more than Micah to give his people confidence in the gracious purpose and the loving care of Jehovah. As he came to maturity in his village home, he could look across the busy Philistine plain and observe the currents of commerce and war which flowed from the coast region toward Jerusalem. With his keen appreciation of the abnormal social conditions in Judah, and his grasp of the true ideals of Jehovah, and his acquaintance with the movements of the day, we can understand why he felt sure that the time had come to utter a warning message to his countrymen before it should be too late to save their land from God's invading army.

026. II. Jehovah's Certain Judgment Against Samaria And Judah (1:2-16)

II JEHOVAH'S CERTAIN JUDGMENT AGAINST SAMARIA AND JUDAH (Micah 1:2-16) The whole earth summoned to witness Jehovah's self-manifestation (Micah 1:2-4). Listen, O nations of the earth, Jehovah of Israel summons you to witness his dealings with the people of his choice, in order that you may understand his providential purpose for the world. He is about to manifest himself in judgment, coming from his dwelling-place on high. His pathway is the tempest. Beneath his tread the very mountains are dissolved, as wax melts before a fervent heat, and the valleys are rent in every direction, like water dashed over a precipice. The sins of Israel and Judah the cause (Micah 1:5). He comes to punish the sins of his own chosen people, who deliberately ignore his will. They cannot escape responsibility; for the capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, which should be centers of moral stimulus and religious instruction for each portion of our nation, are but sources of corruption and ungodliness.[23]

[23] In verse 5 the reading "sins," instead of "high places," is made probable, not merely by the ancient versions, but by regard for parallelism and context. The sweeping judgment against Samaria (Micah 1:6-7). This is the reason for Samaria's sad overthrow. The proud city, a "watch-tower" for strength, far famed for beauty, shall become a lonely mound, with its sloping sides turned into a vineyard. The huge stones of her costly palaces shall fill the valley below, while the foundations lie exposed to wind and weather. The idols in which she trusted shall be shattered, their costly offerings and adornments destroyed by fire. These treasures, earned through her shameful unfaithfulness to Jehovah, her true lord and husband, shall be devoted by her conquerors to their deities. The same fate threatens Jerusalem (Micah 1:8-9). When the significance of this judgment comes over me, I am in despair. No ordinary symbol of grief expresses my emotion. I could walk about like a captive, barefooted and scantily attired. I could rival the jackal or the ostrich in their distressing cries, for Samaria's punishment is but an index of a wickedness in which she does not stand alone. The blow that falls upon her must fall on Judah too; it will be felt in Jerusalem itself. Its approach from the sea-coast to Jerusalem will bring woe to many a Judean community (Micah 1:10-16). I seem to see a conquering army making its way toward the capital. What distress it will bring upon the border villages! In their names[24] I can trace omens of disaster, woe, and despair. Let not Gath (Tell-town) spread abroad the dreadful news. You who live in Accho (Weep-town), restrain your tears; in Beth-le-Aphrah (House of Dust), cover yourself with dust in token of your grief and disgrace. O lady of Shaphir (Beauty-town), pass along in the captive train exposed to shame. The citizen of Saanan (March-town) will not come forth to fight, for Beth-ezel's (Neighbor-town) lamentation will fill you with despair. The inhabitress of Maroth (Bitternesses) cannot contain herself because of her anxiety, as she hopes for a good fortune which will never come; for Jehovah will bring the evil to the very gates of Jerusalem, and none shall escape. Yoke the chariot to the steed (rekesk), for your time of reckoning has now come, O dwellers in Lachish, who have so often tempted Judah to traffic with Egypt, and to trust in her aid instead of that of Jehovah. To Moresheth[25]-Gath, O Judah, you will have to give a

marriage portion as she is dragged away by the conqueror. The resistance of the warriors of Achzib to the enemy will be as disappointing to the rulers of Judah as a dried-up water-course[26] to the thirsty traveler. To thee, O inhabitress of Maresha (Possession), I shall bring one who will make thee his possession; to Adullam[27] shall come for refuge the nobles in whom Judah takes delight Alas! O mother Judah, make manifest your deep grief, for your beloved children are destined to captivity in a distant land.

[24] This paragraph contains a remarkable series of paranomasias or plays upon the names of villages, some not to be identified to-day, supposably in the track of the invader. These puns cannot be imitated in English with success. Some depend on the sense, some on sound. The text requires some emendation, but the general meaning is quite clear.

[25] The play here is probably with the similarly sounding word *meore*sheth*, which means "the betrothed one."

[26] The Hebrew reads, "the houses of Achzib shall be anachzab."

[27] The word "Adullam" suggests "ad ullam," to their yoke.

027. III. The Flagrant Crimes Of Judah's Leaders (2:1-12; 3:1-12)

III THE FLAGRANT CRIMES OF JUDAH'S LEADERS (Micah 2:1-12; Micah 3:1-12) 1. The Sins of the Wealthy and Powerful (Micah 2:1-12) The greed of the landed proprietors (Micah 2:1-2). Woe to those men of wealth so covetous of great estates that even in the hours devoted to sleep they are planning evil measures against the hapless peasantry, which at daybreak they carry out with a merciless exercise of force. Whatever they desire they seize, whether land or houses. No scruples restrain them, but, by fraud and violence, they crush and ruin the freeholders of Judah. Their punishment will be in kind (Micah 2:3-5). The message of Jehovah to a nation which permits such brutal tyranny is clear. He promises that he too will plan an evil, the issue of which you shall not control. It will be a distressing captivity, preceded by the loss of all this property which you have wrongfully acquired. In the day of your humiliation, your own lamentation will be echoed in mockery by your brutal captors:

“ My people's property one measureth off with the surveyor's line, And none giveth it back; To our captors one divideth our fields, We be utterly spoiled.”^[28] ^[28] A rearrangement of an obscure passage, following the Septuagint, which at least suggests the elegiac meter.

Moreover, the land you thus lose will never be restored to you in the year of general redistribution. By bringing on the nation's destruction, you have made this impossible. Their protest against such charges (Micah 2:6-7). Do I hear you exclaiming, in angry repudiation of my charge: “Cease this constant prating about us and our affairs. You utter nothing but reproaches. What is the justification^[29] for pronouncing such a sentence? Are we not sons of Jacob? Has Jehovah become unable to fulfil his promises? Are we not doing our duty by him as upright citizens?”

^[29] An uncertain interpretation. Some expositors take verse 7 with what follows. The prophet's rejoinder (Micah 2:8-10). Ah, hypocrites, what sort of uprightness do you show? You^[30] are the foes of God's people, committing all manner of outrage upon the peaceful and defenseless, regarding them as prey, even separating mothers from their children, and selling each into hopeless slavery in a foreign land. Begone to your justly deserved exile! Such outrageous deeds defile the land, which should be holy. It is no resting-place for such as you. Your iniquity invites only God's destructive judgment.

^[30] Adopting a reliable emendation, which reads, “But ye to my people are,” etc. The secret of their obtuseness (Micah 2:11). It is easy to understand your moral obtuseness. You accept as divine only what you wish to hear. One who predicts for you fleshly gratifications you welcome with enthusiasm as Jehovah's prophet; one who utters warnings for repentance and reform you ignore.

2. The Sins of the Magistrates and Leaders (Micah 3:1-12) The magistrates plunder the people (Micah 3:1-4). O ye that rule this people of Judah, who have the power to promote their highest interests, to whom they look for just judgment, how utterly you misuse your authority! Far from being defenders of the right, you exult in oppressive and unjust deeds. You flay your helpless victims as cruel conquerors treat their captives; you devour them like cannibals. You are entirely

forgetful of your duties; you think only of yourselves. But in the day when Jehovah manifests himself to give to every one his just deserts, he will be deaf to your agonized appeal for mercy. The prophets are mercenary (Micah 3:5-7). The true prophet contrasted (Micah 3:8). Jehovah has a message too for the prophets who abet such wrong-doing. As long as their mouths are kept full they predict prosperity and happiness for their patrons; against those who refuse to bribe them they encourage all manner of opposition. They are utterly selfish and mercenary. "Such insincerity will destroy your moral vision. God's messages you will be unable to read. That great day shall be for you a day of humiliation and mourning, for every one will know that Jehovah repudiates you as his representatives." To me, however, his true servant, he will give power from on high, and wisdom and courage, that I may be able to declare to my people their unfaithfulness to God, and to demand repentance and reform. The leaders are so hopelessly corrupt that judgment seems sure (Micah 3:9-12). O rulers of Judah, among whom justice is divided, and that which is straightforward made crooked, who use your legal authority to commit judicial murders in order that you may acquire the means for building stately palaces, you magistrates and priests and prophets, who do your duty only when bribed, and lend yourselves to any injustice, do you now dare to claim Jehovah's sanction and protecting presence? Can you not see that no city, however sacred in name, can stand on such foundations? This is Jehovah's message to you: "If you do not amend your evil-doings,[31] so sweeping a destruction shall come upon Jerusalem that all signs of habitation will disappear. A part may be cleared for cultivation, a part will lie in ruins. The temple mountain will be as forsaken as a hill in the midst of a forest."

[31] The reference to this prediction in Jeremiah 26:17-19 shows that it was to be interpreted as conditional.

028. IV. Visions Of The Triumphant Future For The Jewish Race Restored From Exile (Micah ...

IV VISIONS OF THE TRIUMPHANT FUTURE FOR THE JEWISH RACE RESTORED FROM EXILE (Micah 4, 5) The future supremacy of Zion (Micah 4:1-4). Recall, O my people, the beautiful forecast of Zion's service to God and the world which many of you cherish. In the distant future the temple mount shall be exalted above all the earth, every nation shall acknowledge Jehovah's law. From every quarter they shall flock to Jerusalem to be instructed in the true principles and practices of religion. Warfare will then come to an end, for even the most distant nations will accept Jehovah's arbitration in their disputes. The weapons of war will be converted into implements of husbandry, the science of warfare will be forgotten, men shall everywhere dwell in secure possession of their property. The contrast of the present time (Micah 4:5). Alas! as yet this is but a vision of what is to be. Now every nation has its own god, which it acknowledges; but we will both now and evermore be faithful to Jehovah.

After exile the "remnant" shall become a powerful nation (Micah 4:6-7). In that future day Jehovah promises that he will gather together the crippled and scattered exiles. He will heal and forgive them, and build them up into the mighty nation of his purpose, and over them he shall reign in Jerusalem forever. Its deliverance from captivity (Micah 2:12-13). "O Israel," he has promised, "I will surely gather together my scattered people. They shall assemble, a great multitude. From their prison shall the barrier-breaker deliver them. They shall force their way through the gates and follow their lord and king, Jehovah, who will lead the van, as in the days of yore. The Davidic restoration must be preceded by a distressing captivity (Micah 4:8-10). But thou, O Jerusalem, strong in thy defenses, yet standing in the land as solitary as a shepherd's watch-tower on the frontier, do not lose heart entirely. The Davidic kingdom shall recover its ancient glory, but not immediately. I perceive a time of deep distress and anguish, ending in captivity. This is but the just retribution for your iniquities. Expelled from the city, camping in the open field, carried off captive [even to Babylon], you will be rescued by Jehovah and delivered from the power of your foes. The hour of Zion's triumph (Micah 4:11-13). The time will come when the nations which now attack Judah with scornful confidence, insulting both her and her sovereign Lord, shall find that they are but sheaves for Zion to thresh. At Jehovah's summons she will tread this human harvest, devoting to her Lord the yield thereof. The insulted nation will be delivered by the shepherd Prince of Peace (Micah 5:1-5a). Again the invading army assembles to besiege Jerusalem, the city is hemmed in, its ruler utterly helpless, and exposed[32] to gross insult. Over against this picture of what we may at present expect, I place the appearance of the promised King, the second David, destined to come from the obscure village of Bethlehem, and yet to be heir of Israel's past glory. [Not until Immanuel appears (Isaiah 7:14) and the exiles of Israel are gathered shall this be].[33] Born among the people, he will watch over them like a faithful shepherd, ministering to their needs and proving their sufficient defense because Jehovah's strength and majesty are his. His dominion will reach unto the ends of the earth, he will be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

[32] Another play on words. “With a rod (shevet)they smite the judge (shopet).

[33]This verse seems to break the close connection between verses 2 and 4. The destruction of Assyria’s power (Micah 5:5-6). When the Assyrian then ventures to invade our land, there will be no lack of brave defenders. Led by the shepherd prince, these shall shepherd Assyria with the sword. They shall not only drive the enemy from our borders, but will be able to lay waste their country. The “remnant” both beneficent and destructive (Micah 5:7-9). The Jewish race, when redeemed, shall be Jehovah’s instrument in dealing with mankind. To some peoples her influence shall be as beneficent as the dew, which is subject to none other than Jehovah’s laws; to other nations, she shall be as fiercely destructive and irresistible as a lion. O Israel, may your hand be strong to cut off all your enemies? In Jehovah’s day all that demoralizes Israel shall cease (Micah 5:10-15). In Jehovah’s day, he promises that all that has tended to demoralize our nation shall be done away. The agencies of your independence and pride—the war horses and chariots and large cities and strong fortresses—will be completely destroyed. Your sorcerers and diviners will no longer be available. All the symbols of false forms of worship—the idols of metal or stone or wood, the pillars and asherahs—will be removed. And then will he take signal vengeance upon the nations which ignore his sovereignty.

029. V. Later Sermons Mourning Judah's Degeneracy (6:1-7:6)

V LATER SERMONS MOURNING JUDAH'S DEGENERACY (Micah 6:1toMicah 7:6) 1. The Human and the Divine Conception of True Religion (Micah 6:1-8) The mountains summoned to hear the controversy between Jehovah and his people (Micah 6:1-2). O people of Judah, listen to the word of Jehovah. He summons you to defend yourself against his charges in the presence of the mountains. O everlasting hills and enduring foundations of the earth, as intelligent witnesses, he calls upon you to hear the controversy.

Jehovah's accusation of Israel's ungratefulness (Micah 6:3-5). O my people, what complaint have you against me? In what respect have I burdened you? How can you turn away from me without excuse, when you remember how I delivered you from cruel bondage in the land of Egypt, gave you illustrious leaders, brought to nought through Balaam, the seer, the crafty designs of Balak, the Moabitish king, and manifested my righteous and friendly purpose on both sides of the Jordan?[34] [34] "From Shittim unto Gilgal" is regarded by many scholars as a gloss. The reply of the conscience-smitten but ignorant people (Micah 6:6-7). O Jehovah, we cannot but admit our guilt, we have forgotten and neglected thee. How can we make our peace! Shall we present ourselves in the temple? Shall we bring more valuable beasts for the burnt offering? Will it please thee if we offer rams by thousands and oil in rivers? Shall we make our last and costliest gift—our first-born son? Will such devotion win thy blessing and expiate our sin? The prophet's answer (Micah 6:8). O my people, you need not have been in such ignorance of Jehovah's desire. None of these things doth he really require of you. They have no moral value in themselves. What he demands, as an evidence that you desire to serve him, is that you practice strict justice in all your dealings, cherish a spirit of sincere love toward your fellow-men, and obey his revealed will in quiet trustfulness.

2. Jehovah's Complaint against Jerusalem (Micah 6:9-16) The prophet summons the city to listen (Micah 6:9). Hearken, people of Jerusalem, Jehovah has a message to your city. Wise is the man who listens with reverence. Listen, O nation of Judah, and you who are responsible for its well-being.[35] [35] An obscure verse. The emendation would read "Hear ye, O tribe and its assembly (?)"

Jehovah denounces her as a city of false dealing (Micah 6:10-12). Can I longer, saith Jehovah, overlook the amassing of wealth by fraud? Can I withhold justly deserved punishment from those who use scant measures and trade with lying scales and weights? The city is given over to evil deeds; her rich men think only of the wrongs they may commit with impunity; her people can utter only lies. Her punishment will be a siege (Micah 6:13-15). In such circumstances I am forced to do that which will help you to repent So grievous is your sin that my judgment must be terrible. An army I will set about the city. You shall suffer the horrors of a siege, the lack of sufficient food, the impossibility of escape, the capture of the property you try to save, and the confiscation of your harvests.

Well deserved because of her attitude (Micah 6:16). For your ideals and methods in religious and political affairs are those of the dynasty of Omri. Its sacrifice of all other considerations to its selfish ambition for power and splendor was the secret of its bloody end. Since you have this same ambition, it will just as certainly bring to you overwhelming ruin,—as captives, you will be the butt for the jests of strangers.[36][36] With a slight alteration reading, with the Greek version, “nations” for “my people.” This gives a natural sense.

3. The Lament of Righteous Jerusalem (Micah 7:1-6) Her lack of truly righteous citizens (Micah 7:1-4 a). Alas! I am like a garden after the fruit has been gathered, or a vineyard where only gleanings remain. There is nothing left worth picking. My choicest citizens, the earnest, loyal, generous, and good men in whom I would rejoice, are no more. Every one considers his neighbor as his lawful prey, and hesitates at no crime to gain his end. The leaders of the people conspire together for evil. The best of them are like thorns,—useless except to inflict pain. The prophet's comment (Micah 7:4-6). The day of reckoning, which thy prophets foresaw, O city, cannot be far distant It will be a day of dismay and confusion. No one will know whom they can trust. All the usual bonds of friendliness and kinship will go for naught Not even will one rely on his wife and children.

030. VI. The Psalm Of Penitent Israel (7:7-20)

VI THE PSALM OF PENITENT ISRAEL (Micah 7:7-20) In after years, when the blow that Micah predicted had fallen, when Judah had been taken away to bitter captivity, she recognized that she had suffered for her sins. Then, in deep contrition, she utters these words of penitence and hope.

Israel's confession and hope (Micah 7:7-10) [I will humbly seek Jehovah, who is my true deliverer. He will surely hearken to my truly penitent prayer. Although my oppressor exults over my destruction as if final, and I seem to be in the darkness of despair, still Jehovah will bring me to the light; he will manifest again his righteousness by delivering me. Then shall my enemy, who scoffs at Jehovah's power, receive his true deserts. The prophet's assurance (Micah 7:11-13). On that day of pardon and deliverance, thy ruined walls shall be restored, and thy border broadened.[37] From every quarter of the earth people shall flock to Judea, for their lands shall be made desolate in the day of retribution.

[37] The Hebrew is a play, "yirhaq hoq." A prayer for restoration to Judah (Micah 7:14-17). O Jehovah, let our prayer come unto thee. Be again our tender shepherd. Let us feed in the rich pastures of Bashan and Gilead, and in the forests of Carmel. Make once more a signal deliverance of thy people from oppression, so that all the nations, humbled and terror-stricken, shall bow in reverence before thy power. A hymn of praise (Micah 7:18-20). What nation worships such a God as thou art, O Jehovah, who punishes in order to redeem and forgive, who takes delight in doing good to men. Our sins thou dost utterly remove from sight Thou dost fulfil in truth all those promises which thou gavest to our fathers; for thy faithfulness and thy mercy never fail.]

031. The Later Prophecies Of Isaiah

THE LATER PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH

032. I. The Task Of The Prophet During The Years 722–700 B.C.

I THE TASK OF THE PROPHET DURING THE YEARS 722–700 B.C. As long as King Ahaz sat upon the throne of Judah, he and his people remained loyal vassals of Assyria. Whether this was due to the shrewdness or to the weakness of the king is uncertain. The situation was not without its advantages politically. Judah was guaranteed security and peace, and could give undivided attention to her own concerns. Consequently the prophet Isaiah, whose patriotism was as unquestioned as his far-sighted judgment, accepted the situation, and did all in his power to maintain it. He did not give up his expectation of a coming judgment upon his people through the very nation which was then its patron; but, in the interest of cultivating a more abiding trust in the Holy One of Israel, the supreme ruler of the universe, he decried all purely human expedients for changing the situation. The immediate religious results of this submission were deplorable. To the people at large the political supremacy of Assyria implied the superior power of her gods. King Ahaz not only erected a new altar in the temple patterned after an Assyrian model, but made other changes of similar character, and introduced the Assyrian worship of the heavenly bodies (2 Kings 23:12). In this dishonor to Jehovah of Hosts he was heartily supported by many of his influential subjects. As Micah's unsparing criticisms show, the frivolity and superstition of the early days of Ahaz developed rapidly into a deliberate disregard of moral obligations. The rapacious nobles tolerated only those religious advisers who pandered to their desires. Isaiah was for a while comparatively isolated. He got no hearing from king or nobles or people. His attention was devoted mainly to his own disciples. That he did not fail, however, to take advantage of any opportunity to proclaim loyalty to Jehovah and conformity to righteous ideals, is shown by the captious complaint of the revelers, in chapter 28, that his advice was, to say the least, monotonous.

There is no trace of any prominent activity on his part until after the year 715 B. C., when it is certain that Hezekiah was on the throne.[38] The acquiescence of the Judeans in their vassalage to Assyria had been promoted by the decisive victories gained by Sargon in 720 over a coalition of northern communities headed by Hamath, and over an Egyptian army at Raphia. But about 716 a new sovereign came to the throne of Egypt. He acknowledged himself Assyria's vassal in 715, but began to use every secret means in his power of arousing a spirit of discontent among the petty states of Palestine. This found expression, about 711 B.C., in the town of Ashdod, which deposed its authorized ruler. But, before the revolt could gain much headway, Sargon despatched a selected body of troops, and quelled the insurrection. Judah, along with Edom and Moab, he suspected of desiring to revolt, but contented himself with receiving their ready submission.

[38] The date of Hezekiah's accession is an unsolved problem as yet. If the sixteen years ascribed to Ahaz are allowed, it was about 719 (so Cheyne, McCurdy); if 2 Kings 18:9-10, is correct, it was 727 or 725 (so Kent, Skinner, G. A. Smith); if 2 Kings 18:13 is accurate, it was 715 (so Cornill, Kittel, Stade).

It is probable that Isaiah was responsible for the hesitation of the people of Judah to take part in the revolt. He did his best to show the sure result of such a step by wearing, in public, for several

years, a captive's garb. He succeeded in preventing any overt acts of rebellion while Sargon lived. It seems probable, however, that Egyptian intrigue found all this time a ready response in Judah. An anti-Assyrian, pro-Egyptian party grew in strength, which counted as its adherents not a few distinguished courtiers. The events which gave these conspirators courage for open disaffection were two important changes of dynasty. The dreaded Sargon died by violence in 705 B. C., and was succeeded by Sennacherib, whose prowess had yet to be proved. At about the same time there came to the over-lordship of Egypt and Ethiopia a remarkably clever and ambitious king, Tirhakah. Despite Isaiah's utmost activity and earnest warnings against the folly and wickedness of trusting in Egypt, active negotiations began between Judah and the other Palestinian states looking toward a combined rebellion against Assyria. King Hezekiah yielded to the popular desire, and became a prominent factor in this league. Isaiah's predictions of what Assyria would do were wholly wasted. In fact, for four years, Sennacherib was forced to give his whole attention to a yet more serious situation in the Far East. When his people had taken the decisive step of refusing allegiance and tribute, and were face to face with an Assyrian invasion, Isaiah, true to his prophetic function, began at once to strengthen them for the inevitable shock. He aimed to center their hopes upon Jehovah, who, in his providence, was using Assyria as a tool to humble Judah, and cause her to recognize him as her only deliverer. He declared that Jehovah would set certain limits beyond which the boastful Assyrian would not be allowed to pass. Jerusalem, the city of Zion, was still needed for the furtherance of the divine purpose; hence Jehovah would protect it. Judah need not fear, if her people would only become truly loyal to him. In 701 B. C., Sennacherib advanced to punish his rebellious subjects in Palestine, and to quell, once for all, their fondness for revolt. It was the crisis in the history of Judah. How at this time of stress the prophet comforted, warned, encouraged, and taught his people, his own utterances will show. He not only inspired them at critical moments with courage and confidence, but made the apparent hopelessness of the situation a ground for emphasizing Jehovah's world-wide sovereignty and irresistible purpose. When Sennacherib returned to Assyria, leaving Jerusalem untouched, the political deliverance was insignificant in comparison with the triumph achieved for religious progress.

033. II. Isaiah's Activity During Sargon's Reign 722–705

II ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY DURING SARGON'S REIGN 722–705 1. The Earlier Events of Hezekiah's Reign

It is probable that the earlier years of Hezekiah's reign, whether it began in 727 B. C. or later,[39] were years of comparative prosperity. The young king differed greatly from his father, and was undoubtedly a pupil and friend of the prophet Isaiah. One of his earliest official actions seems to have been the public acknowledgment of the nation's fealty to Jehovah. He promoted certain measures of religious reform, and probably encouraged improvements in social administration. His military policy was vigorous and sensible. He was readily acknowledged as leader among the petty rulers of Palestine. He was popular with his people. By exploiting, after the manner of Uzziah, the resources of his country, he was able to pay the annual tribute to Assyria, and still to accumulate no little treasure. Meanwhile, he judiciously strengthened his defenses, probably constructing the conduit (2 Kings 20:20), which insured a good supply of water in case of a siege. On the whole, his people were justified in taking heart and renewing their impatience of outside control.

[39] See note, page 134. At what period of his life the events related in Isaiah 38, 39 took place cannot be surely determined, in the absence of certainty regarding the beginning or end of his reign. The sickness of Hezekiah must have preceded by about a year the embassy of Merodach-baladan (Isaiah 39:1). The latter event almost certainly took place about 714, or about 704 B. C. At both of these times Merodach-baladan was an active enemy of the reigning king of Assyria. Judah was being enticed by her immediate neighbors to revolt, and was enough of a leader in Southern Palestine to make the flattering advances of the Babylonian far from ridiculous. In view of the fact, however, that Hezekiah seems to have avoided making any treaty, and to have been impressed by Isaiah's point of view, we may relate these incidents as if they happened just before the outbreak in Ashdod, about 712 B. C., which was put down so quickly by Saigon's general.

Hezekiah's sickness and recovery (Isaiah 38:1-8; Isaiah 38:21. Compare 2 Kings 20:1-11). Hezekiah was taken with an apparently mortal illness. Even the prophet Isaiah believed that it was Jehovah's will that he should die, and advised him to give his last injunctions to his successor. But the good king longed to live, and plead with God for grace. At once the answer came. Before the departing prophet had left the palace he received this comforting message for Hezekiah: "I, the God of thy father David, have listened, and will heal thee. Thou shalt continue to worship me for fifteen years to come, and I will make thy capital secure." [40] At the king's request, this promise was confirmed by a striking sign. A strongly marked shadow falling on the step-clock set up by Ahaz was made to alter its position by ten steps, as if the sun had retreated in the heaven.

[40] The first part of verse 6 is probably a gloss, suggested, perhaps, by Isaiah 37:35. His psalm of thanksgiving: his anguish and despair (Isaiah 38:9-14). This poem of thanksgiving reflects the thoughts of Hezekiah when face to face with death. ["Alas! must I be cut off in the prime of life, and

go to Sheol, no more to worship God or know mankind. My life is as unstable as a shepherd's tent; it is concluded as quickly as a weaver finishes his task; in a day all is over. I cannot but mourn; I beseech thee, O Jehovah, to redeem me.

“And what can I say of his wonderful deliverance. Help me to make worthy my remaining life. For my welfare was this bitter experience; thou hast delivered and forgiven me. I thank thee that thou dost spare me to live and praise thy name.”] The embassy of Merodach-baladan to Hezekiah; (Isaiah 39:1-2). No sooner had the news of this recovery had time to reach Babylonia than Merodach-baladan, a claimant of the throne of Babylon, and hence a foe to the king of Assyria, to whose authority he would not bow, seized the opportunity to send a formal embassy to Hezekiah to bear a royal gift, and to offer his congratulations. They were given secret instructions to negotiate a treaty with the king of Judah, or at least to stir him to rebellion against the Assyrian king. Flattered by this attention, Hezekiah sought to prove the value of his friendship by exhibiting to the envoys all his royal resources.

Isaiah's reproof and prediction (Isaiah 39:3-7.). The prophet Isaiah, knowing their real motive, questioned the king about them. He answered evasively, but admitted that he had shown them his treasures. Then the prophet pointed out to him his wickedness and folly, for his willingness to enter into such alliances and his pride in his own resources were directly opposed to a sincere trust in Jehovah. His foolish display of wealth to these distant Babylonians God would punish by a Babylonian invasion.

Hezekiah's acquiescence (Isaiah 39:8). Hezekiah perceived the weakness of the plan, and resigned himself to Jehovah's will, hoping that peace and stability would at least remain with him.

2. Edom's Anxiety and the Judgment upon Arabia (Isaiah 21:11-17)

About the year 711 B. C., when the inhabitants of Ashdod and Gath broke out in open rebellion against Sargon, according to an Assyrian inscription, Edom, Moab, other Philistine cities, and Judah, were also compromised. It was probably at this time that Isaiah uttered these sayings upon the nations which meditated revolt.

Edom's query and the prophet's reply (Isaiah 21:11-12). Hear the men of Edom[41]asking the prophet whether their troubles will soon be over. By such a riddle as their men of wisdom will understand, the prophet answers that there is mingled hope and despair in prospect This is all that he can see at present [41] Dumah may be a sort of anagram for Edom. The destruction coming upon North Arabia (Isaiah 21:13-17). O men of Tema! go forth with provisions to succor the caravan of merchants from Dedan, which, avoiding the armed bands of invaders, is forced to encamp at night in the barren desert. For within a year the tribes of North Arabia, famous though their bowmen be, shall be humbled and almost destroyed.

3. The Symbolic Prediction of the Captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia (Isaiah 20:1-6) The hapless plight of Palestine's would-be helpers (Isaiah 20:1-6). In the very year that the army sent against Ashdod by Sargon appeared, Jehovah gave me a message against Egypt and Ethiopia. In obedience to his will, I, a noble of the court, had walked the streets of Jerusalem for many months in captive's garb to illustrate the certain result of the popular desire to rebel. Then I was told to say: “This symbolic prophecy has been designed to impress the fact that Egypt and Ethiopia shall be led off into exile to Assyria. What then will be the dismay and terror of the inhabitants of this region

when those on whom they are relying for support in their rebellion against their over-lord are so utterly helpless!"

4. Moab's Past Calamity soon to be Repeated (Isaiah 15:1 to Isaiah 16:14) Recall, O men of Judah, the word of prophecy uttered many years ago^[42] against Moab.

[42] See Isaiah 16:13. By Hitzig and many interpreters it is thought that this earlier prophecy referred to the subjugation of Moab about 775 B. C., by Jeroboam II. It is notable for its paranomasia (16 cases).

Moab's great calamity (Isaiah 15:1-9). Moab's two chief cities have been captured and destroyed in a night. As the news spreads northward, with bared heads and shorn beards her people crowd around the altars, or throng the roofs and market-places, overcome with grief. Even the warriors are unmanned. Alas for Moab! Her homeless fugitives, spreading the woeful tidings as they go, hasten toward Edom. But even a more terrible fate is in store for the bloody capital.^[43] [43] Dimon is probably an alteration of Dibon, so as to make a play on the word for blood (דִּמּוֹן). Her useless appeal to Judah (Isaiah 16:1-6). Send your tribute now to the king of Judah. Plead with him to adopt wise measures to give you protection until the danger is over, offering perpetual submission to the righteous dynasty of David. But Moab cannot be accepted. Her arrogance is too deep-seated. A vision of her utter ruin (Isaiah 16:7-12). Nothing, then, but sorrow, awaits Moab. Her far-famed vineyards are ruined. All sounds of joy and feasting are stilled. In time the men of Moab will be fully convinced of the uselessness of pleading with Chemosh, their god, for relief. Her present danger (Isaiah 16:13-14). This word which Jehovah spake so long ago is applicable to-day. He bids me add that within not more than three years Moab's recovered glory shall become contemptible, and what is left of her people shall be feeble.

5. The Judgment upon Egypt and its Outcome (Isaiah 19:1-25)

Jehovah's coming judgment will destroy Egypt's independence and fertility (Isaiah 19:1-10). Judgment impends upon Egypt Jehovah, riding on the swift-flying cloud, is about to cause her idols to quake with terror, and her people to collapse from fear. Vexed by internal anarchy and strife, and at a loss to know what to do, they will resort to sorcery, but without avail. Jehovah will give them up to a cruel foreign conqueror. The great river Nile also shall be dried up, and its branches and canals become shallow and stagnant. The verdure on its banks shall wither, the fishermen, who throng through its bounty, shall mourn, all those whose livelihood depends upon its products shall be sad. Her wise leaders shall lead her to destruction (Isaiah 19:11-15). A spirit of folly shall seize upon the sages of Egypt, so renowned for their wisdom, and so proud of their descent. The princes of Zoan and Memphis, the bulwarks of the ancient empire, shall, by foolish adventures, lead their people to ruin. In the desperate bewilderment of all classes in the state, the whole body politic shall, like one intoxicated, reel to destruction.

Egypt's future relations with Judah (Isaiah 19:16-25).^[44] But in Jehovah's day, when Egypt has distinctly recognized Jehovah's share in this judgment, and stands in such awe of him that she can scarcely endure the mention of Judah, his abode, she will understand and own his grace.

[44] Verses 16–25 are in prose, and are regarded by some scholars as an appendix composed by Isaiah at the close of his life, by others as post-exilic. Her five sacred cities, headed by Heliopolis, shall adopt the language of Canaan, and swear allegiance to Jehovah. Her acceptance of the

worship of Jehovah shall be symbolized by an altar in her midst and a pillar on her border. These shall be a token of Jehovah's protection. In time, through many experiences of chastisement and deliverance, her people shall learn to know him truly. A highway for traffic shall be open through Palestine from Egypt to Assyria, her hereditary foe. The three nations shall form a league for the blessing of the world. Egypt shall be called Jehovah's people, Assyria his handiwork, and Israel his heritage.

034. III. Isaiah's Activity At The Time Of Sennacherib's Invasion Of Palestine

III ISAIAH'S ACTIVITY AT THE TIME OF SENNACHERIB'S INVASION OF PALESTINE 1. The Death of Sargon and Related Events The influence of Isaiah was potent, as long as Sargon lived, to check the plans of the pro-Egyptian party in Judah. Even the short-sighted nobles could realize that the weak king Shabataka, who had delivered over to Sargon the leader of the revolt at Ashdod, could give them no protection against the invincible Assyrian. His sudden death in 705 B. C. completely changed the situation. In every quarter of his empire great districts rose in revolt In Palestine plans for united action were at once begun. Perhaps at this juncture should be dated the short but vigorous fragment in chapter 14, which tradition ascribed to the death-year of king Ahaz.[45]

[45] Cheyne refers it to the year 719, when Sargon had just received a reverse at the hands of Ummanigas, king of Elam, aided by Merodach-baladan, so serious that he did not venture to attack Babylonia again for eleven years. If 719 was the death-year of Ahaz, this identification would seem very probable. The fate of Philistia compared with that of Judah (Isaiah 14:28-32). O Philistia, do not give yourself up to universal rejoicing because the power from which you have suffered so greatly has been shattered. It will only be exchanged for something just as deadly. Under Jehovah's protection, his own people will be perfectly secure, but thy children will be cut off. Lament aloud, for on your northern border the smoke shall arise from villages aflame, when the serried ranks of Assyrian soldiery approach! What answer shall we give to Philistia's ambassadors? "We put our trust in Jehovah, whose purposes for Zion cannot be annulled." The prophet's influence could no longer prevent open expressions of sympathy with the spirit of revolt. The party which favored an alliance with the other Palestinian states, and with Egypt, led by the astute and ambitious Shebna (Isaiah 22:15), gained the upper hand in the council of state. A formal alliance with Tirhakah seemed to give assurance of a successful resistance to any attack from Assyria. Doubtless some time intervened before the decisive steps were taken. The probabilities were discussed again and again. Isaiah's addresses preserved in chapters 28-32 belong to this period. He complained of the secrecy of the negotiations of the conspirators, and of their senseless and wilful disregard of the divine share in Judah's affairs. He argued so powerfully against the folly of trusting in Egypt that he finally won a partial victory. Shebna was removed by king Hezekiah from his position as prime minister, and replaced by Eliakim, who probably represented the political ideas of the prophetic party. The exact date to be given to each utterance is unknown. Probably chapter 28 is as early as 704, while chapters 30, 31, may be dated in the latter part of 702 B.C.

2. The Plea against the Egyptian Alliance (Isaiah 14:28-32; Isaiah 18; Isaiah 22:15-25) (1) A Warning to the Magnates of Jerusalem (Isaiah 28:1-29)

Samaria's imminent (723 B.C.) destruction (Isaiah 28:1-4). Years ago, just before Samaria's fall, I delivered this prophecy, announcing the fate soon to overtake that city of revelers: "Woe to

beautiful Samaria, whose tower-crowned summit and vine-decked slopes remind one of a reveler whose flushed temples are wreathed by a chaplet of flowers! Her carousal is nearly over. Jehovah is about to send one who, like a destructive tempest or an overwhelming flood, shall sweep over her, dashing to earth her crown of pride. As quickly as one devours an early fig shall the rapacious Assyrian destroy the loveliness of Samaria. Her possible future (Isaiah 28:5-6). In the distant future, however, when Jehovah is the glory of his people, he will not only satisfy their craving for beauty, but will be the source of justice and valor.” .

Jerusalem (704 B.C.) no better than Samaria (Isaiah 28:7-8). Apply this prediction to yourselves, besotted nobles and leaders. Jerusalem to-day is an image of Samaria then. Even priest and prophet are reeling homeward from the sacrificial feast at which they have been plotting treason. The peevish complaint of the drunken magnates (Isaiah 28:9-10). When I, making my way into your midst, appealed once more in Jehovah’s name for faith in his protecting care and a rejection of entangling alliances, you said, in tipsy derision: “Whom does this fellow presume to teach? Are we newly weaned infants? He is forever prattling monotonously his wearisome advice!”[46]Isaiah’s retort (Isaiah 28:11-13). Let me warn you that Jehovah, whose servant you are mocking, will teach you through instructors whose words will sound just as intolerable, and whose power will be irresistible.

[46] The Hebrew of verse 10, “çav l■çav, çav l■çav; qav l■ q■v, q■v l■ q■v; z’■r sh■m, z’■r sh■m,” is an imitation of baby-talk. Some think that the words have no meaning, being merely imitative.

Only a policy based upon faith in God can be permanent (Isaiah 28:14-22). You rulers who scoff at divine protection, and think by your cunning but faithless diplomacy to save yourselves from destruction, and to prevent the Assyrian army from reaching you, let Jehovah remind you through me that he called our nation for some great purpose, that this purpose is unalterable, and that faith in him is our only safety. Any course of action which does not conform to justice and righteousness will be utterly useless. The judgment shall visit you repeatedly; you will understand it then only too well. The bed you are making will never fit you. Reluctantly will Jehovah have to carry out his decree of destruction upon his own people, if you persist in your evil course.

God’s methods with men—a parable (Isaiah 28:23-29). Let me utter a parable. Does not the farmer, with a wisdom which Jehovah himself has implanted, cast in the appropriate seed after plowing, and vary his mode of threshing in accordance with the grain? So Jehovah will deal with his people in the way which is best adapted to their character.

(2) Jehovah’s Purpose for Ariel, his Altar-hearth (Isaiah 29:1-24)

Jerusalem’s coming siege and sudden deliverance (Isaiah 29:1-8). Ho! Ariel, city of David and altar-hearth of God I let a year or two pass by; let such feasts as these run their accustomed round.[47] Soon shall the light-hearted people moan and bemoan[48] their fate, for Jerusalem shall be indeed an altar laden with victims. Besieged by a great army, humiliated and almost exhausted, thou shalt suddenly be delivered by Jehovah’s power. Thy enemies shall vanish like a dream; from their visions of spoil they shall be rudely awakened.

[47]This sermon was probably uttered on some great festal occasion.

[48]So Cheyne imitates the two words of similar sound in the Hebrew.

Why her people cannot realize the message (Isaiah 29:9-16). Are you dazed by this message, O people? Are your eyes blinded to its significance? Is not Jehovah's word a book which some of you will not read, while others cannot? Your religious attitude is wholly formal; no wonder that his dealings with you seem so wholly inexplicable. Your self-styled leaders, plotting in secret, seem to actually suppose that they are outwitting God. What stupid perversity! The future blessings of Israel (Isaiah 29:17-24.) The time will soon come when the land shall be marvelously fruitful, when all shall see and hear Jehovah's will, when the common people shall have much joy, when tyrants and scorners and crafty men shall cease. He who was Abraham's redeemer will not leave Israel to shame and fear. He will so manifest himself that all shall reverently receive instruction concerning him.

(3) The Utter Folly of Seeking an Alliance with Egypt (Isaiah 30:1-33)

Egypt is a weak reed to lean upon (Isaiah 30:1-7). Woe to my rebellious sons who are cementing an alliance with Egypt in defiance of my will, seeking the protection of Tirhakah! Although he is active in despatching messengers from one end of his land to the other, yet nothing but shame will come to those who trust in his help. What is the use of sending ambassadors with costly gifts to brave all the dangers of the desert, in order that we may win the aid of such an inefficient people? Egypt's help amounts to nothing; she is Madame Brag-and-stay-at-home. The sad consequences of the rebellious disposition of the people (Isaiah 30:8-17). Jehovah has bidden me write these prophecies down as a testimonial to the spirit of disobedience shown by my people. They wish to hear only congenial and pleasant oracles. "Do not dwell so much," you say, "upon the Holy One of Israel and what he requires." And now, since you prefer to rely upon your crooked policy, rejecting God's word to you, this wilful sin, of so little moment in your own minds, shall bring disaster just as surely as a bulge caused by a breach in a lofty wall tends toward its sudden and awful collapse. Your destruction will be like that of a potter's vessel,—so shattered that no fragment is found large enough to carry a live coal or hold a sup of water. Have I not repeatedly, in Jehovah's name, urged that, by keeping aloof from entangling alliances, and by calmly relying upon him, you would show yourselves truly strong? But you reply, "No, we will fly from all danger on the swift horses of Egypt." You shall fly indeed in a panic-stricken mob before a handful of pursuers, until your paltry remnant is left as solitary as a beacon on a hilltop. The blessings which a timely repentance might entail (Isaiah 30:18-26). Jehovah is waiting to see whether, after all, you will force him to execute judgment; he is listening for your cry of penitence. Though he may bring you to distress, yet he himself will be your teacher and guide. You will cast away with loathing your costly images. Then he will abundantly bless you with rain and rich crops, and well-fed oxen, and running streams. So bright and joyous will be that happy time that the moon will seem to shine with the brilliance of the sun, and the sun to be sevenfold brighter.

Jehovah must first destroy the Assyrian (Isaiah 30:27-33). Before the glorious prospect can be fulfilled, Jehovah must manifest himself in destructive might against the Assyrian. His aspect will be like a fierce tempest, and his righteous judgment resistless as a torrent, sifting nations like chaff, checking them as with a bridle; but, while his majestic voice is heard in the thunder and the stroke of his arm in the lightning, there will be a song of rejoicing among you, as at the Passover procession in honor of the Rock of Israel, for your foe he will destroy. Such a holocaust as he

delights in shall be offered. The pyre is deep and wide, and the wood abundant Jehovah's breath shall kindle it.

(4) Egypt's Help in Contrast to that of Jehovah (Isaiah 31:1 to Isaiah 32:8)

Egypt is at best but human (Isaiah 31:1-3). When, notwithstanding my appeals, the alliance had been made, I uttered this last message: "Woe to those who put their trust in the horses and chariots of Egypt, as if the coming conflict was to be a mere measuring of strength between two empires. They forget Jehovah, and that he is carrying out an unchangeable purpose. If he chooses, both they and their helper shall perish.

Jehovah an ideal protector (Isaiah 31:4-5). "What a defender he would be! As undaunted as a lion calmly guarding his prey, though surrounded by a group of shouting shepherds; as tender and watchful as a tiny mother-bird hovering over her nest

He will gladly succor his repentant people (Isaiah 31:6-9). "O children of Israel, return to him against whom ye have sinned. As soon as you realize his true character, your hand-made idols of silver and gold will be cast away with contempt. Then you need not fear the Assyrian. Jehovah himself will fight in your behalf, for Jerusalem is his altar-hearth."^[49]

[49] The word for "fire" in the Hebrew probably suggests the mystic name applied to Jerusalem at the beginning of chapter 29.

Judah under Jehovah's care (Isaiah 32:1-8).^[50][But he will never be contented with merely saving this nation from destruction. It will be transformed. Its king shall govern righteously; its officials of state shall give just judgments; every noble shall be a protector and comforter of the needy. Their moral perceptions shall be clear, and their expression of them prompt The true character of each man shall be recognized. The fool will expose himself by his atheism and his selfishness, and the knave will reveal his knavish^[51] tricks and his impositions upon the defenseless poor, while the truly noble man will be known by his noble deeds.] ^[50] Many scholars regard this section as a later appendix, perhaps postexilic.

[51] The word rendered in A. V., "instruments," sounds very much like the word for "churl."

(5) A Warning to the Careless Ladies of Jerusalem (Isaiah 32:9-20) The light-hearted women will mourn over the ravaged land (Isaiah 32:9-14). Self-indulgent women of Jerusalem, careless of stern realities of the present or future, let me tell you that, in a little over a year, you will assume the garb of mourners, wailing for your ravaged vineyards and desolate fields and ruined city. The temple-hill shall become a lurking-place for wild beasts, a pasturage for flocks. The peaceful future (Isaiah 32:15-20). It is not Jehovah's will, however, that this desolation be made permanent Under the renewing influence of his spirit, the land shall once more become fertile and its people righteous. They shall rest tranquilly and securely. First there shall be a destructive judgment, then a happy, industrious, and peaceful community.

(6) A Message to the Ethiopian Ambassadors,—Jehovah can Protect his People (Isaiah 18:1-7) Not many months passed before the report came to Palestine and Egypt that Sennacherib was collecting a mighty army to chastise us for our rebellion. Tirhakah did not delay to send ambassadors to Hezekiah announcing that his army would be in readiness, and encouraging the king to make a manful resistance. In the very presence of the king and court, I gave them this

answer: The charge to the envoys of Ethiopia (Isaiah 18:1-3). Ah! ambassadors of that distant Ethiopia, where buzzing insects abound, who have come in swift skiffs of reed,[52] depart again to your people, tall and glossy of skin, universally feared, ever victorious, secure in their well-watered land, and say, "O dwellers upon the earth, when you hear the signal for battle, listen." Jehovah is merely biding his time (Isaiah 18:4-7). For Jehovah has revealed to me that he is looking on in perfect quiescence, waiting while the Assyrian harvest matures. Just before it is fully ripe, when her plans of conquest seem to be complete, her hosts shall be cut down as branches are cut with knives; their dead bodies shall be left as carrion for unclean beasts and birds. Then Ethiopia shall pay homage to Jehovah on Mount Zion.

[52] The word "saying," inserted in verse 2, should be inserted at the very end of the verse.

(7) The Downfall of Shebna, the Vizier (Isaiah 22:15-25)

Shebna to be disgraced, deposed, and banished (Isaiah 22:15-19). At last my pleadings had effect with the king. He began to have less faith in the alliance with Egypt. I was then directed to denounce his wily chief-minister, Shebna, the leader of those who had intrigued for Egypt, and who had been my constant opponent. Deeming himself secure against all hostility, he had even dared to have a stately sepulchre built on a prominent site near Jerusalem. Going thither, and confronting him, I said: "By what right do you, a man of foreign birth, assume to make yourself a sepulchre here? Jehovah will seize you, and carry you away, together with your splendid horses and chariots. The promise to Eliakim (Isaiah 22:20-23). You shall be deposed from your office, and Eliakim, one whom God approves, will be appointed in your place. He shall administer his trust for the good of his people, and shall have supreme authority, and shall confer honor upon his family. (His whole family, worthy and unworthy, shall be supported by the credit of his name, until by their abuse of trust it no longer supports them.)"

3. Assurances that Jehovah will Defend his People (Isaiah 10-12; Isaiah 14:24-27; Isaiah 17:12-14) As soon as king Hezekiah, by appointing Shebna to the less important office of secretary, replacing him by Eliakim (Isaiah 36:3), had proved his loss of confidence in the policy of foreign alliance, and his desire to act as befitted one who ruled in the fear of Jehovah, Isaiah began to emphasize the certainty of divine protection. He still assumed that the situation was critical and the national distress acute, but inspired confidence by dwelling upon the impossibility of destruction, because Jehovah is still in need of Zion and all that it represents.

Hezekiah could not withdraw from his relations with the surrounding states of Palestine. The vassal king of Ekron, Padi, dethroned by his revolting subjects, had been sent to Jerusalem for safe keeping. This dangerous commission insured Assyrian attack. With energy and skill he strengthened the defenses of Jerusalem. The inscription of Sennacherib adds that he reinforced the garrison with a force of Arabs and other mercenaries. While these measures were being taken, we may suppose that the following oracles of encouragement were delivered.

(1) The Certain Overthrow of Assyria, Jehovah's Tool (Isaiah 10:5-34)

Jehovah's plan contrasted with Assyria's purpose and claims (Isaiah 10:5-11). Behold the Assyrian, the instrument[53] by which I chastise nations which deserve punishment, commissioning him to conquer and subjugate for me. In his pride he forgets the source of his power, and is only bent on satisfying his own ambition for conquest, saying boastfully, "Am I not

invincible? Are not the governors I appoint the equals in authority of any hereditary king? Have I not captured the strongest cities of Syria? If their deities could not save them, shall Jerusalem and her idols escape?"

[53] The expression "in whose hand" is meaningless, and spoils the parallelism.

Jehovah will punish such arrogance (Isaiah 10:12). Such insulting annoyance must be rebuked for the sake of Jehovah's honor. When, therefore, his people have been sufficiently purified by chastisement, Jehovah will suitably punish the Assyrian's pride. The Assyrian's assertion of strength and wisdom (Isaiah 10:13-14). Again he ascribes his remarkable success to his own strength and wisdom, ignoring Jehovah's guidance. "Moved by my sagacious insight," he declares, "I change the boundaries of nations, secure their wealth, and remove their inhabitants, terror-stricken, with as much ease as one gathers eggs from an abandoned nest."

He is but a tool (Isaiah 10:15). What an absurd claim that he is his own master! He is only Jehovah's tool! Suppose that an axe or a saw were to boast of its sharpness or strength apart from its user, or that a cane should try to brandish the man who owns it. The effect of Jehovah's putting forth of power (Isaiah 10:16-19). Jehovah will exhibit his power by stripping the Assyrian of his greatness, so that he shall be as a sick man who has lost his strength. Though his armies may seem as numerous and mighty as a forest, Jehovah's flame will so consume them in a single day that a child may count those that are left. The remnant will be steadfastly loyal (Isaiah 10:20-23). Convinced at last of Assyria's true place, the "remnant" of my people shall steadfastly rely upon Jehovah alone; for although, as our fathers said, Israel is to be as numerous as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of this people shall return. Jehovah's righteous judgment is decreed. The disciples therefore need not fear Assyria (Isaiah 10:24-27). So then, O fellow-disciples, do not fear this approaching foe, even though he may treat you as harshly as Pharaoh did your fathers in the land of Egypt. In a little while Jehovah's judgment will be completed by his destruction. He will smite Assyria as Ephraim smote the Midianites at the rock of Oreb. He will overthrow her even as the hosts of Pharaoh were overthrown at the raising of Moses' rod. And then his burdensome tribute and the subjection to his authority shall cease forever. The rapid and resistless advance of the Assyrian toward Jerusalem (Isaiah 10:28-32). He will surely advance upon Jerusalem. I seem to see his rapid and resistless march straight down from the north through the passes of Benjamin.[54] He has reached Ai and passed by Migron. Before he attempts to get through the pass of Michmash, he stores his surplus baggage. At Geba he bivouacs for the night. Now the road is easy and short. The inhabitants of Ramah and of Saul's Gibeah flee in terror. O daughter of Gallim, shriek aloud; listen and fear, O Laishah; take up the cry, O Anathoth. The inhabitants of Madmenah and Gebim hurriedly gather their possessions for instant flight He does not halt until, at Nob, he overlooks the city, and brandishes his clenched hand in anger against Mount Zion.

[54] The last four words of verse 27, "because of the anointing," make no better sense in the Hebrew than in the English. The text is certainly corrupt. Perhaps it should read, "There cometh up from the north the Destroyer" (Smith), or "He hath come up into Benjamin" (Mitchell). His sudden destruction (Isaiah 10:33-34). But, just at the moment of his triumph, Jehovah shall strike him down. The lofty Assyrian cedars, like a forest for multitude, shall be cut down by one more majestic still.

(2) The Messianic Age to Follow Assyria's Downfall (Isaiah 11:1-16) The royal scion of David's line (Isaiah 11:1). The Assyrian cedar sends forth no shoot from its withered stump, but out of the stock of the almost ruined Davidic family I see a fair and fruitful Branch sprouting, an ideal king. His characteristics (Isaiah 11:2). By Jehovah himself he shall be endowed with the perfect qualities of a ruler,—wisdom and insight, prudence and heroism, acquaintance with God's will and a willingness to do it. Their practical manifestation (Isaiah 11:3-5). Taking delight in every manifestation of true character, and endowed with keen discernment, he shall not judge from appearances, nor from testimony, nor will he tolerate any abuse of justice. The wicked will have cause to fear him, for righteousness shall be his garment. The reign of peace (Isaiah 11:6-9). Then shall begin an era of peace, when even nature will be redeemed, when wild animals will lie peaceably at the side of their natural prey, so docile that they will follow a little child. Side by side will the cow and bear, with their young ones, graze. Even the poisonous serpent will become the harmless playfellow of the child. The spirit that prompts to destruction shall be unknown in Palestine, for every one shall know Jehovah. The whole world will seek this king (Isaiah 11:10). Then shall the whole world give honor to the habitation of the king, for they shall come up to him to receive instruction. The return of the exiles (Isaiah 11:11-12). [In that day Jehovah shall, for the second time, put forth his power to redeem his people from many different countries, signaling the nations to restore the scattered exiles.

Samaria and Judah shall co-operate (Isaiah 11:13-14). After the restoration, all internal strife between the two kingdoms shall entirely cease. Uniting their forces, the reconciled brethren shall pounce upon the Philistines on the west, and plunder the desert tribes. They shall subdue their neighbor nations, so that by Israel's supremacy the world may be made to serve Jehovah. The miraculous highway for the journey (Isaiah 11:15-16). Jehovah shall miraculously prepare a passage-way for the returning exiles from Egypt and Assyria by drying up the arm of the Red Sea, and by so dividing up the great Euphrates that one may walk across in sandals.] (3) Two Hymns of Thanksgiving (Isaiah 12:1-6) A song of faith (Isaiah 12:1-3). Then, O redeemed community, you shall sing. "I will praise thee, O God, for now that thy anger is turned thou dost comfort me. God has been my helper; I will give him my trust. Let us constantly rejoice in his presence." A song of praise (Isaiah 12:4-6). "Praise Jehovah, hallow his name, magnify him among men. Sound his praise, for he hath wrought wondrous things. Great is he in power and goodness, a friend and protector in your midst."

(4) Two Fragments concerning Assyria's Destruction (Isaiah 14:24-27; Isaiah 17:12-14)

It is in accordance with Jehovah's world-plan (Isaiah 14:24-27). Surely it is my sworn purpose to break the power of the Assyrian on the hills of Canaan, so as to free my people from this galling tribute and stern authority. I do this in pursuance of my eternal plan for the universe; it is necessary for the good, not merely of Judah, but of the world. My purpose is fixed; it cannot be altered.

It will be sudden and complete (Isaiah 17:12-14). Listen to the noise of the advancing hosts of Assyria, recruited from many nations. It is like the roaring of the surging sea. Though they seem like an overwhelming flood, Jehovah will rebuke them with his voice of thunder. They flee, they scatter and perish. At eventide all are in fear of them; before morning they have disappeared. So Jehovah does to those who would plunder his people.

4. The Crisis at Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-14; Isaiah 33; Isaiah 36; Isaiah 37)

2 Kings 18:13-16. Sennacherib, in the year 701 B. C., marched with a huge army to the west. Advancing along the Mediterranean coast, he soon received the submission of half the petty princes of Palestine. Proceeding to Philistia, he captured Ashkelon. Passing on to Ekron, he not only besieged that city, but inflicted a defeat at Eltekeh upon an Egyptian army sent to its relief. Meanwhile a detachment of the army had been despatched to Judah. It was irresistible and destructive. It captured forty-six "cities," a huge body of prisoners, and a vast amount of spoil. Hezekiah was shut up in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage." At this juncture, overpowered by fear, the king, his people, and his mercenaries, submitted, and sued for pardon. Sennacherib laid upon him a very heavy fine. According to the Assyrian report, he even forced Hezekiah to send some of his own family to the harem of his conqueror. The troops departed. The city, although stripped of its treasures, seemed secure from further danger. A thrill of reckless joy swept over the people. They gave themselves up to unrestricted feasting and merriment. The prophet Isaiah, however, who felt no sympathy with this outbreak, uttered this warning word:

(1) Jerusalem's Indifference to God Invites Further Judgment (Isaiah 22:1-14) The prophet's distress at the popular expressions of joy (Isaiah 22:1-4). What, O citizens, do you mean by this demonstration on the house-tops? Is it a time for joy, when our deliverance has been so ignoble? Your warriors have not been slain in battle, but ignominiously taken prisoners. Alas! I am overcome by inconsolable anguish. The future day of calamity (Isaiah 22:5-7). For I see still before us a day of tumult and trampling and confusion,[55] when the Assyrian auxiliaries shall lay siege to the city, when your most fertile valleys shall be full of troops.

[55] A series of three remarkable assonances in the Hebrew. Their readiness to do anything but trust Jehovah (Isaiah 22:8-11). A while ago, when you realized the defenseless condition of Judah, with what zeal you inspected the armories, carefully examined the defects in the wall of the citadel, arranged for a good water supply, and tore down houses, in order to strengthen the wall! All this you did, but you were regardless of Jehovah's relation to the welfare of the city. This sin unpardonable (Isaiah 22:12-14). The danger in which we stand should have impelled you all to mourning and fasting and reflection; but what do I see?—riotous mirth and feasting. Truly Jehovah assures me that your sin is inexpiable.

(2) Sennacherib's First Demand—Isaiah's Promise (Isaiah 36:1 to Isaiah 37:8)

Soon after receiving, at Lachish, the submission and tribute of Hezekiah, for some reason, not altogether clear, Sennacherib determined after all to take possession of Jerusalem. He sent several officers with a small army to demand its unconditional surrender. To the Judean representatives the Assyrian spokesman urged that Egypt could not be depended upon, and that Hezekiah had offended his own deities. He also set forth the extreme folly of resisting the demands of a king who was not only powerful, but commissioned by Jehovah, Israel's god. When entreated to discuss the subject in the Aramean tongue, he preferred to make his plea in Hebrew, so that the multitude could understand, and said:

"Listen, O people; let not Hezekiah persuade you that he or his god can deliver you from our power. Make peaceable submission now, and you shall dwell in peace and safety until we conclude our campaigning, and remove you to a better land. How can you possibly escape? Is

there a single country whose god has delivered it from our hand?" The people kept silence, and the representatives of king Hezekiah brought him the words. Dismayed and despairing, he sent a notable deputation to Isaiah, saying, "This is a day of distress and chastisement and rejection. We cannot meet this crisis by our wisdom. Will not Jehovah rebuke these insolent words by delivering us?" The prophet replied: "This is Jehovah's message. Ignore these boastful words. Sennacherib shall not harm thee. I will so fill him with a spirit of uneasiness that he shall hear a mere rumor of Tirhakah's approach, and hurry homeward, there to meet with a violent death." So Hezekiah refused the demand of Sennacherib, and the envoys departed to inform him.

(3) Jerusalem's Security against the Treacherous Foe (Isaiah 33:1-24)

Woe to the faithless Sennacherib (Isaiah 33:1). Woe to you, O treacherous and aggressive foe, for you shall be paid in kind when your hour cometh! An appeal to Jehovah (Isaiah 33:2-6). O Jehovah, be thy people's defense and strength. Thou canst readily scatter and spoil our enemies. To fear thee is our true wisdom and a pledge of our deliverance from all evil.

Judah's distressing condition (Isaiah 33:7-12). Behold the warriors of Assyria boasting, our ambassadors in distress, the land laid waste, the perfidious Sennacherib, the disheartened country! What a sad prospect! But Jehovah resolves to assert himself, and scatter these invaders, whose very breathings of passionate vengeance shall be fires to consume them. The judgment and its diverse effects (Isaiah 33:13-16). Note this act of judgment, you that are far away or near. To those in Zion who have constantly scorned my teachings, it brings only terror. "How," they exclaim, "can we live in the presence of such a God, who is a consuming fire?" Absolutely secure are the truly righteous in thought, word, and deed. They inhabit a fortress which can never be starved into surrender. The coming age (Isaiah 33:17-24). In the coming day the King for whom we all are looking shall be seen in his beauty. We shall be reminded by contrast of this time of terror, of how officers exacted the tribute, and of how they surveyed the city. No more will the speech of the fierce invaders grate upon our ears. Jerusalem, the center of our worship, shall be peaceful and unharmed, protected by Jehovah; for he is our Judge, Lawgiver, and King, and he will be also our Deliverer. Jerusalem has been as helpless as a ship with tacklings loosed, and mast unshipped, and sails unspread; but soon her people shall seize upon abundant spoil; even the cripples shall bear their share. There shall be in her no more sickness, for all shall have their sins forgiven.

(4) Sennacherib's Second Demand, Hezekiah's Prayer, and Isaiah's Confident Prediction of Jerusalem's Security (Isaiah 37:9-35) As Isaiah had predicted, the Assyrian monarch soon heard that Tirhakah was advancing against him with a great army. Jerusalem was one of the strongest fortresses in Western Asia. Not wishing to run the risk of leaving it in his rear, he made one last effort to subdue it by intimidation. A second demand was sent "Do not be deceived into thinking that your god can deliver you out of my hand. What nation or what king has ever been saved in that way?"

It was a supreme crisis. A refusal to surrender meant a terrible revenge, if the angry king returned.

Hezekiah received the letter, and, taking it to the temple, prayed that Jehovah would hear these reproaches and boasts, and deliver his nation from the Assyrian's clutches for his own name's sake.

Then Isaiah brought to him this word of God: “Hear the answer to your appeal. Jerusalem, undefiled, laughs you, O Assyrian, to scorn;[56] she defies you. Against whom have your reproaches been uttered and your pride expressed but against Israel’s Holy One! When you boast of the ease with which you have triumphed over obstacles of every sort, can it be that you do not know that it was all because I conferred upon you the power? All that you do is under my control. To prove it, I will force you, like an unruly animal, back to your place. This, O Hezekiah, shall be your sign; For two years the regular operations of agriculture will be suspended, then prosperity will come. The promises that I have so often reiterated shall then be fulfilled. Meanwhile this king shall not besiege the city at all. He shall return as he came; for I will defend Jerusalem for my sake, and in order to fulfil the promises given to David.”

[56]From verses 22–29 the utterance takes the form of a splendid elegy, for example,

“Thee she despises and at thee is mocking—Zion, the virgin!

Behind thee her head she is wagging—the maiden, Jerusalem.”

(5) The Final Catastrophe (Isaiah 37:36-38)

While Sennacherib’s main army was on the borders of Egypt, a sudden pestilence broke out which caused 185,000 to die in one night. Affrighted by such an evil-omened event, the king withdrew in haste to Assyria, making no further attempt to subdue Jerusalem. Some twenty years later he was murdered, while at worship, by his own sons.

035. The Message Of Nahum

THE MESSAGE OF NAHUM

036. I. The Prophet Of Nineveh's Fall

I THE PROPHET OF NINEVEH'S FALL The prophecy of Nahum the Elkoshite is notable in many ways. It is a poem of great vividness and force; it portrays with the touch of an eye-witness the horrors of offensive warfare in ancient times; it sets forth the consciousness of a nation rather than the counsel of a prophet; it breathes out bitter vengeance rather than hopefulness. Whatever it utters after the manner of the other prophets is a sort of foil which adds to the impressiveness of the denunciations. Of the author we know practically nothing. Even his name, "Consolation," may be merely a suggestion of the character of his message to Israel. The village, Elkosh, has been variously identified with Al-Kush, somewhat north of the site of ancient Nineveh; with Elkese, a village of Galilee, mentioned by Jerome; and as a village of Southern Judah. The first-mentioned locality is attractive in its suggestion that Nahum was an Israelite, expatriated a century before, but still loyal to his ancestral ideals, and that, as an eye-witness, he described with faithfulness the closing scenes in the career of fated Nineveh. Much, however, can be urged to break the force of these reasons, and, in fact, the question is unimportant and indeterminable. The utterances preserved in the Book of Nahum are not easily adjustable to a particular time. They represent the feelings of nearly a century. When Sennacherib, in 701 B. C., suddenly returned to Assyria, he did not leave behind him an independent Judah. Jerusalem was inviolate, but the nation was a vassal, and so remained for three-quarters of a century. The prophecy was not delivered earlier than 660, for Nahum uses as an illustration the case of Thebes (No-amon, Nahum 3:8), which was captured, in spite of her fancied strength, by Asurbanipal in 663 B. C. On the other hand, it cannot be later than 606, the year of Nineveh's destruction. Between these dates the prophet must have lived. The only clue to the exact date of the predictions is their contents, which describe a hopeless outlook for haughty Nineveh.

Such an outlook could hardly have been imagined before the closing years of Asurbanipal's long (668–625) and brilliant reign. Egypt then successfully revolted. The resolute and hardy mountaineers, the Medes, became dangerous foes. The Scythians swept down from the distant north, spreading unparalleled desolation through the wide and fertile Mesopotamian plains. While none of these foes ventured to attack the capital city, they robbed it of much of its prestige. When the great king died, his nation came to an end as speedily as did Northern Israel after the death of Jeroboam II. Almost at once, according to Herodotus, the Medes attempted an assault of Nineveh, but were obliged to abandon the attempt because they were summoned back to defend their own homes. Nearly eighteen years later, about 608 B. C., they tried again, and within three years captured the city, and put an end to the Assyrian empire.

It seems probable that the words of Nahum were called forth by one of these two crises. Scholars are fairly divided upon this point. In either case, they were probably antedated by the sermons of Zephaniah; but, since Nahum's theme "expresses the feelings not of this or that decade in Josiah's reign, but the whole volume of hope, wrath, and just passion of vengeance which had been gathering for more than a century, and which at last broke out into exultation when it became certain that Nineveh was falling,"[57] it may with propriety be read in immediate connection with

the great crisis in Judah's relation to Assyria.

[57] George Adam Smith, in "The Book of the Twelve," II, 88. The Book of Nahum contains two prophecies of Nineveh's downfall, introduced by an impressive portrayal of Jehovah's attributes. The attempt has been recently made[58] to show that the introductory portion (Nahum 1:1-15; Nahum 2:2) is, in its present form, a rearrangement of what was originally an alphabetical acrostic poem. This is interesting, if proved to be true. Since, however, the rearrangement did not seriously affect the course of thought, the whole question will be ignored in the paraphrase. It may be added that Nahum delights in imitative words and in paranomasia which baffle reproduction.

[58] The work of Gunkel and Bickell is clearly set forth in "The Book of the Twelve," II, 81-84. Their results are accepted in the main by Nowack and Cornill. Is the short prophecy but a wild cry for vengeance? Must we pity, or honor, a prophet of Israel for giving expression to it? The answer is not difficult when we remember that, to a devout man of Judah, eager to promote God's will as taught by the earlier prophets, Assyria was the one great obstacle in the way. Before Israel could accomplish any service for God, her oppressor must cease. The glow from her burning palaces became the rosy dawn of a new day. From only a superficial point of view was his message one of vengeance. To Judah it carried comfort, encouragement, and confidence.

037. II. Jehovah's Nature A Pledge Of His Vengeance Upon The Wicked (1:1–15; 2:2)

II JEHOVAH'S NATURE A PLEDGE OF HIS VENGEANCE UPON THE WICKED (Nahum 1:1-15; Nahum 2:2)

Jehovah's stern attributes (Nahum 1:2-3a). Jehovah is a God of vengeance and a jealous God. He asserts himself in defense of his rightful dignity against those who have long been ill-treating his people. He inflicts deserved chastisement upon those who hinder his righteous purpose. He makes every allowance, he delays his disciplinary action to the very last, but eventually he gives the wicked their deserts. Their manifestation through nature (Nahum 1:3-6). The whirlwind and the storm are tokens of his presence; he treads upon the darkening clouds. At his voice of thunder the great deep is rolled back, and the rivers made dry. With the hot wind of the desert he parches the most fruitful fields. Terrific earthquakes and trembling mountains are signs of his awe-inspiring presence. Who can brave his just anger in all its fierceness? It devours like molten lava, which beats down every obstacle in its swift rush. The completeness of Jehovah's judgments (Nahum 1:7-12). He protects those who put their trust in him, but overwhelms those who are rebellious,^[59] and thrusts them into darkness. What do you think of Jehovah? He is thorough-going in his correction. Although his foes are as hard to destroy as a tangled thorn-hedge soaked with moisture, he will devour them as fire consumes dry stubble. Out of thee, O Nineveh, Sennacherib came forth long ago, who defied Jehovah and plotted evil; but, though his foes were like the ocean for multitude and in power, Jehovah would overcome them. He promises to give thee such an affliction that it need not be done a second time.

[59] Adopting the reading "those who rise up against him" in place of "the place thereof." A promise to Judah of speedy deliverance (Nahum 1:13). "I am now about to deliver thee, O Judah," saith Jehovah, "from the oppressive yoke of the Assyrian; I will loose thy fetters."

Assyria's sentence (Nahum 1:14). O Assyria, Jehovah himself commands that your nationality cease, and that your temples, dishonored by the loss of their idols, become your shameful tomb.

Peace and exaltation for Judah (Nahum 1:15; Nahum 2:2). Behold, O Judah, your fallen foe! The messenger is hastening with the glad tidings of peace. Hold your feasts of rejoicing and pay your vows, for the enemy shall never again raid through your borders; his end has come. Jehovah will exalt the dignity and strength of Judah to the standard of that of Israel in her best days. The plundering of her choice possessions shall be no more.

038. III. The Capture And Plunder Of The Lion's Lair (2:1, 2:3-13)

III THE CAPTURE AND PLUNDER OF THE LION'S LAIR (Nahum 2:1;Nahum 2:3-13) An ironical warning cry to Nineveh (Nahum 2:1). O Nineveh, your time has come. Your destroyer is in sight. Guard well the fortifications, keep sharp watch of the road by which the enemy advances, gird yourself for bitter, bloody warfare, for the death-struggle is at hand.

Appearance of the invading army (Nahum 2:3). How brave a show the hostile army[60] makes with the copper-covered shields and scarlet mantles of the warriors, and the dazzling glitter of the chariots, with their burnished plates gleaming as they dash to and fro, while the horsemen prance about, brandishing their long lances.

[60] Probably referring to the invaders. A skirmish in the suburbs (Nahum 2:4). In the wide stretches outside the inner walls, the armed chariots meet in deadly conflict; they hurry across the open ground swift as the lightning, glistening in the sunlight as if they were fiery torches. The hurried but ineffectual preparations for defense (Nahum 2:5). Now the king bestirs himself, and summons those whom he has honored with rank and authority to the defense. They, half stupefied with debauchery, stumble as best they may to the walls; but it is too late. The battering-ram is in place, its protecting roof shielding it. The capture of the city (Nahum 2:6-7). Crash go the iron gates! Those at the royal palace are overwhelmed by terror and despair. Huzzab[61] is discovered, seized, and carried off in shameful guise, while her maidens, mourning like doves, beat their breasts.

[61] An obscure word. It refers probably to the queen. The flight of the inhabitants (Nahum 2:8). Through all her history, Nineveh has been like a huge reservoir into which flowed the nations of the earth. But these are not her children, to whom she may look for defense. When the breach is opened, they disappear like the rush of water through a broken dyke. Nothing stops their precipitate flight. Although summoned to make a stand in defense of the city, no one looks back. The sacking of the city (Nahum 2:9-10). Now, O invaders, take the vast spoil of silver and gold, treasures without number, heaps of precious articles. There is no limit to them. Alas! great Nineveh is absolutely laid waste.[62] Every survivor is overcome with weakness; their faces are ghastly pale with fear.

[62] The remarkable trio of similarly sounding words, "bukah, umebukah, umebull■kah," is rendered by G. A. Smith void and devoid and desolate; by Ewald, desert and desolation and devastation; by Gandell, sack and sacking and ransacking. To Jehovah is this judgment due (Nahum 2:11-13). Can this trembling city be the lair of the dreaded lion which no one dared molest? He foraged at his pleasure for his whelps, and filled his cave with prey. The explanation is simple. Jehovah has at last determined to bring her to judgment. He will destroy that invincible army, the secret of her power to bully and plunder all nations. No more shall her haughty ambassadors cajole or threaten; her spoliation is at an end.

039. IV. The Certainty Of Nineveh's Fate (3:1-19)

IV THE CERTAINTY OF NINEVEH'S FATE (Nahum 3:1-19) The well deserved capture of Nineveh, the harlot city (Nahum 3:1-4). Woe to the city of blood and falsehood and endless robbery! Her time of reckoning has come. An army is at her gates! Hear the crack of the charioteer's whip and the rumbling of the wheels, the galloping horses, and the rattle of the chariots bounding along. See the 'horsemen as they charge, their swords flashing in the air, their polished spears glistening. The contest is fierce, the battle-field a charnel-house, the bodies of the slain heaps over which the victors stumble. And why this carnage? Because she has used her prestige and her charms in alluring and bringing to ruin every nation under heaven. She is a corrupter of the world.

Jehovah will deal with her as she deserves (Nahum 3:5-7). At last, O Nineveh, you must reckon with Jehovah himself. He will deal with you as pitilessly as your own brutal soldiery has been wont to deal with hapless captives. Since you have delighted to play the harlot, a harlot's punishment shall you have. Shamefully exposed and covered with filth, you shall be pilloried for all to gaze at,—a fate so terrible that many shall shrink from looking upon you, so well deserved that none shall be found to pity you. Her defenses will prove useless (Nahum 3:8-13). Do you listen scornfully to this threat, saying in your heart, "My defenses are secure. Who can capture me by assault?" Are you stronger than the mighty Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt, situated on the broad Nile, which she considered a sure defense, while Ethiopia and all the provinces of Egypt lent her aid, and Put and the Lybians came to her assistance? Yet, all these availed nothing; she was carried off captive. The cruel Assyrian soldiers massacred her weaker population, while her nobles were laden with fetters and only spared from slaughter that they might become abject slaves. So shall you be drunken with the cup of God's wrath, and be entirely powerless to make a defense. In vain will you seek a safe refuge from your enemy. Your fortresses, apparently so strong, shall be like ripe figs which drop the moment they are touched. Your defenders lose all courage at the news that the entrances to your land have been forced and the fortresses burned. At the critical moment her defenders will completely fail her (Nahum 3:14-17). The danger is now at your doors. Make every preparation for defense. Take care that the supply of water is ample; strengthen the defenses. Hasten to tread the clay and mold the bricks to repair all breaches. Put forth your utmost effort It is of no avail! When you are most active, fire shall consume your palaces, and the sword your people. However many your numbers, however numerous your traders, they shall depart as quickly as the locust which sheds its skin and flees. Your princes and officers too shall be like the locusts which, though torpid when the day is cold, come to life with the first rays of the brightening sun, and take their rapid flight. So will these worthies seek shelter at their first opportunity. Her fall irretrievable and unlamented (Nahum 3:18-19). Your real kings, O Assyria, are long since dead; your nobles are at rest All have been slain, your people hopelessly scattered on the mountains. There is no recovery for the nation; your wound is fatal, your ruin irretrievable. Yet no one will mourn for you. Rather will every man that hears the rumor of your downfall rejoice and exult, for where can one find a people on the earth which has not felt your unceasing brutality!

040. The Message Of Zephaniah

THE MESSAGE OF ZEPHANIAH

041. I. The Prophet And His Surroundings

I THE PROPHET AND HIS SURROUNDINGS

During the closing years of Hezekiah's life, whether they were two or ten, the prophetic party led by Isaiah appears to have had undisputed control in Judah. They carried through a reform of public worship the extent of which cannot be certainly determined. The remedy most in favor for the existing evils of worship and of government seems to have been a centralization, as far as possible, of all authorized activity at Jerusalem. Be that as it may, not long after Manasseh ascended the throne there was a reaction, supported by the king himself, in favor of the earlier freedom of worship, with all the objectionable practices which Isaiah had condemned. We can only conjecture the cause of this reaction. Isaiah had probably passed away; the hopes which his glowing promises had excited may have been too definite and literal, or the prophetic reforms may have been too precipitate and sweeping. At all events, a bitter and bloody persecution of the prophets and their adherents was sanctioned. Possibly Micah 6:9 to Micah 7:6 reflects this melancholy period. The years of quiet isolation that followed were fruitful years for prophecy. Heroic men (2 Kings 21:10 ff.) who proclaimed the judgment of God upon such ruthless wickedness were not wanting; but the greater number of the men of God used their enforced seclusion as a time for arranging and copying the valued sermons of the earlier prophets, for putting into practical and most effective form the precepts of national and social life which had been handed down from Moses, for tracing out and editing the records of the nation's history, and, especially, for reflecting upon and reformulating the principles of the divine government over men. Thus, when another opportunity came, they were ready to grapple with Judah's spiritual problems from a broader point of view. The utterances of Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk, are the fruitage of this half-century of thinking. The reigns of Manasseh and his son Amon lasted about fifty years. They were vassals of Assyria, and, with one slight exception, entirely submissive. Manasseh even introduced the star worship of Nineveh, and made it popular. In 639 B. C., Amon's little son, Josiah, was placed on the throne by a revolution, the exact reason for which is not clear. Whatever its cause, it gave the prophetic party renewed recognition. The little king came under the influence of the prophets, and was educated into sympathy with them.

Close to the king at this time was Zephaniah, himself a relative through his direct descent from Hezekiah. His royal birth, however, did not prevent his unsparing condemnation of the share of the princes of the blood in the nation's degeneracy. Like his favorite author, Isaiah, he was a clear-eyed citizen of Jerusalem, referring repeatedly to its different quarters, its types, and its perils. Though but little older than the young king, Zephaniah's earnest, thoughtful face must have inspired those who knew him with confidence in his zeal and wisdom. His prophecies show that he was an eager student of the writings of Isaiah, although the altered circumstances of his age gave his thoughts a different form.

It was about the fourteenth year of King Josiah's reign, in 625 B. C., that Zephaniah was impelled to give his powerful support in public addresses to the reforms which Josiah was aiming to carry

through. He complains that the nobles and other leaders are still maintaining all the abuses of the past, so that even the professed believers in Jehovah are becoming skeptical of any success in bringing about reform. Such a state of affairs was in itself a trumpet-call of God to the truly prophetic soul, yet such a one would delay to utter his message until he could see an indication of God's preparation for his work.

Just as the prophets of the eighth century saw in the Assyrian the scourge of God, so Zephaniah beheld some unnamed "guests" (Zephaniah 1:7) preparing to partake of Jehovah's sacrificial banquet. It is generally agreed that he had in mind the Scythians, a people like the Tartars, who, according to Herodotus, broke out from the northern mountains like a storm-cloud, and ravaged all Western Asia as far as Egypt. Since they made their way, about 626 B.C., to the very border of Egypt, they must certainly have been a menace to all Palestine.

It was to bring home to his people the awful nearness of God's purifying judgment, and to urge them to repent before it should be too late, that the young prophet lifted up his voice in the streets of his city.

042. II. Sermons Concerning The Coming Judgment

II SERMONS CONCERNING THE COMING JUDGMENT 1. The Day of Jehovah a Peculiarly Distressful Day for Judah (Zephaniah 1:2 to Zephaniah 2:3)

Jehovah's wrath against all created things (Zephaniah 1:2-3). Jehovah, the righteous One, supreme Ruler of the universe, is forced to announce a message of judgment against all who oppose his will or his ways. "I will sweep away," he declares, "everything on the face of the earth, man or beast, fowl or fish, that contributes to the spread of wickedness in the earth. Its manifestation in Jerusalem (Zephaniah 1:4-6). "Especially in my city, Jerusalem, will I stretch out my hand to smite. I will cut off every vestige of Baal worship. I will purge from the official roll both the idolatrous priests and the unfaithful priests of my sanctuary. I will cut off all those who worship the heavenly bodies, as well as those who pretend to worship Jehovah, while they continue to render homage to cruel Moloch. The same judgment will overtake those who have openly renounced allegiance to me."

Jehovah's sacrificial feast (Zephaniah 1:7). Hush! it is Jehovah's judgment day. He draweth near to offer Judah as a sacrifice. His guests for the sacrificial feast—those dreaded, unknown foes from the north—he hath already purified, and they await his bidding. The victims will be the nobles and princes (Zephaniah 1:8-9). When the sacrifice is ready, I, the Lord Jehovah, will seek out for punishment all those who are responsible for Judah's wickedness. I will visit retribution upon those nobles and princes who encourage all manner of extravagance, clothing themselves in costly foreign apparel, and upon the officials that use their nearness to the king as a license for violence and spoil, dishonoring the name of their royal master. The merchants (Zephaniah 1:10-11). On that fatal day, when the guests come to the banquet, a great wail of despair and terror shall come from the fish-gate in the northern wall, where they will enter, and from the newly built quarter of the city, where the wealthy live; and shrieks of alarm shall come from the heights. Howl, O dwellers in the merchant quarter, for when the foe appears your treasures and goods will be the first to be seized. The disheartened and skeptical "believers" (Zephaniah 1:12-13). On that day, saith Jehovah, I will search Jerusalem through and through. None shall escape, for all the dark retreats shall be carefully searched. I will lay hold of those who have lost their zeal, who are listless, self-indulgent, skeptical of all achievement, and indifferent about God. Their wealth others shall take; their houses shall be despoiled; whatever they have planned for their selfish and cowardly ease they shall lose. The characteristics of Jehovah's day (Zephaniah 1:14-18). This fateful day of Jehovah comes speedily. It is almost at hand. Listen! It shall be a day when even the hardened warrior will weep, for then the wrath of God against evil shall be outpoured, bringing distress and hardship, devastation and destruction, a day when all nature in sympathy shall be shrouded in clouds. On that day will be heard the blast of the war-trumpet and the warriors' battle-cry; for the army which Jehovah has invited to the feast shall capture the fortresses and strong cities. Jehovah will bring men from distress to helpless perplexity. They have sinned beyond forgiveness, and shall be punished without pity. Nothing can deliver them from the judgment. It is to be world-wide and complete. A warning to repentance and zeal (Zephaniah 2:1-3). Therefore, O nation which

has too long been indifferent to Jehovah, take this opportunity to repent sincerely and serve him, before his anger bursts forth in fury and scatters you like chaff.[63] Seek him also, you that are humble and obedient. Strive earnestly to excel in righteousness and meekness, that you may be secure in that fearful day.

[63]Zephaniah 2:1-2are very obscure. The above seems to be the general meaning, but it involves one or two uncertain readings.

2. The Day of Jehovah, a Day of Judgment against Nations[64] (Zephaniah 2:4-15)

[64] This whole passage was probably written originally in the elegiac meter (see p. 36). Now onlyZephaniah 2:4-5;Zephaniah 2:13-15, are intact.

Against Philistia (Zephaniah 2:4-7). In the day of Jehovah his judgment will be carried out against the nations, who have deserved his wrath, and first upon Philistia, near the sea. Gaza, the busy city of traffic, and Ashkelon, shall each become an utter desolation.[65]Ekron and Ashdod shall be taken by storm, and completely ravaged. The Philistines shall cease to be a nation. Their fertile land shall be turned into pasturage, a resort for the shepherds of Judah, when Jehovah brings back his own people from captivity to dwell in the land.

[65] The assonance here defies imitation.Gazzah gazubah; Ekron te'qer.

Against the spiteful and arrogant children of Moab and Ammon (Zephaniah 2:8-11). Jehovah[66] has been listening all this while to the bitter insults of the people of Moab and Ammon against Judah, and he has seen their seizure of her territory. Wherefore he will destroy them as completely as Sodom or Gomorrah of old, turning over their fertile territory to nettles and barren salt-pits. When the men of Judah are restored to their native land, they shall also possess these countries. Jehovah will do this because of the pride and arrogance of these heathen peoples. By such deeds he makes himself known to the nations. They will thus see how impotent are their gods, and will worship him alone.

[66]Zephaniah 2:8-11not being in meter, are regarded by some scholars as an interpolation.

Against Ethiopia (Zephaniah 2:12). O people of distant Ethiopia, you also shall be the victims of the avenging sword which Jehovah will order to be drawn from its sheath.

Against haughty Nineveh (Zephaniah 2:13-15). Especially will he reckon with the haughty mistress of nations, Assyria. He will extend his hand to smite her, and make her an utter desolation. Behold, then, the light-hearted city, Nineveh, so confident of her strength, so superior in resources, so incomparable, How hath she become a desolation, A lair of wild beasts!

Every one passing by her hisseth, Shaking his hand.

3. The Day of Jehovah, a Means of Redemption for Jerusalem (Zephaniah 3:1-13)

Jerusalem deserves a judgment (Zephaniah 3:1-2). Woe to Jerusalem, rebellious against Jehovah, polluted by bloodshed and iniquity, filled with outrage and oppression! She is disobedient; she refuses instruction; she has no faith in God; she draws not near to him. Her leaders utterly corrupt (Zephaniah 3:3-4). What wonder that she is so, when we consider her leaders! Her princes are as ravenous as lions, her judges as voracious and insatiable as wolves of

evening, her prophets are arrogant boasters and men of immoral conduct; her priests, instead of guarding the sanctuary, profane all things holy, and, instead of maintaining the pure interpretation of the law, do violence to it.

She is insensible to the evidences of Jehovah's character and purpose (Zephaniah 3:5-7). Jehovah makes Jerusalem his dwelling-place. He repeatedly exhibits his righteousness through his word and works, but the wicked man sees nothing of all this, and is unaffected by it. Repeatedly he claims, "I have executed judgment on other nations from which Judah might have taken warning. I thought that she would humble herself, and receive instruction, and keep in mind henceforth my commands, but only the more zealously did her people do evil." The day of universal judgment coming (Zephaniah 3:8). Therefore, wait until the great day of Jehovah's manifestation, when he comes to bear witness of what he has seen. On that day there will be a universal judgment of all nations; for it is his fixed purpose to execute upon them that penalty which they richly deserve.

Causing the nations to be converted (Zephaniah 3:9-10). ["Then," Jehovah declares, "will I purify the peoples, that they may be worthy to invoke my name, and may serve me whole-heartedly. Even from far distant Ethiopia shall my people come with offerings."]

Judah, reduced to a remnant, shall serve' Jehovah (Zephaniah 3:11-13). On that day, O chosen people, so completely will you forgo evil deeds that no recollection of them will call up a blush of shame; for all your self-confident and haughty ones shall be removed, and those who are left, though few in number, and lowly and poor, shall be trustful, honorable, truthful, peaceful, and happy.

043. III. The Song Of Zion Redeemed (3:14-20)

III THE SONG OF ZION REDEEMED (Zephaniah 3:14-20)

Jehovah's protecting presence with Zion (Zephaniah 3:14-15). [Sing and shout aloud for joy, O Jerusalem. Your judgments are over, your foes defeated; Jehovah, your king, is in your midst; all your troubles are at an end.

Removes all fear (Zephaniah 3:16-17). In that day Jerusalem will have no cause for fear or despondency, for Jehovah, who dwells in Zion, is mighty to deliver her out of every trouble. He will rejoice over every chance to show his love and happiness.

Restoration and glorification for the Hebrew race (Zephaniah 3:18; Zephaniah 3:20). "At that time," Jehovah promises, "I will gather together the Israelites now dispersed among the nations, who are longing for the sanctuary and for the sacred feasts. I will then do all that I have ever promised. I will heal and restore my afflicted ones, and will make them respected and renowned wherever they have been humiliated."]

044. Jeremiah's Prophetic Activity During The Reign Of Josiah

JEREMIAH'S PROPHETIC ACTIVITY DURING THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

045. I. Jeremiah, The Young Reformer

I JEREMIAH, THE YOUNG REFORMER A brisk walk of an hour northward from Jerusalem along one of the great highways which radiate from the sacred city, brings one to the little town of Anâta, the Anathoth of the Hebrews. It is unattractive to-day, with its few poor hovels, and it must have been insignificant also in antiquity (cf. Isaiah 10:30). Although shut off from Jerusalem by hills, it figured as one of the northern military out-posts of the capital. In the days of Solomon, Abiathar, a descendant of the priestly house of Eli, was banished thither (1 Kings 2:26); and it is referred to elsewhere (Joshua 21:8) as the residence of certain priestly families. To one of these families belonged Hilkiyah, the father of Jeremiah. It is easy to imagine that, on the day of his birth (which he later, in a time of deep despondency, bitterly cursed), heavy clouds shut out the warm sunshine, and the descending rains converted the filth, which is never wanting in an Oriental town, into slippery slime,—a true suggestion of the unpleasant environment amidst which he was destined to spend his long life.

Concerning his boyhood, we have some hints in the opening chapters of his prophecy. In the character of his parents he recognized an important element in his preparations for the work of a prophet. Possibly some one of his ancestors belonged to that group of disciples who drank in and treasured the teachings of the great Isaiah. Jeremiah's sermons demonstrate that he was also a careful student of the earlier prophets. With Hosea, whose language and ideas made the deepest impression upon him, he must have recognized the closest kinship, in experience as well as in thought. For both lived in the deep shadow of a great national catastrophe which they were powerless to avert; both were rejected by their contemporaries, and both, capable of the most intense happiness, were denied all the joys which their age held dear.

During Jeremiah's boyhood, spent in the latter days of Manasseh's reactionary reign, that which was purest and best in his nation's experience was found in the past. The heathenism which reigned all but supreme in court and in temple made the life of a true prophet a living sacrifice. If, however, the revelation already vouchsafed to the Hebrew race was to be preserved, and if that nation was to move forward instead of hopelessly reverting to heathenism, such a sacrifice was absolutely necessary.

Appreciating facts like these, it is not difficult to understand the soul struggles reflected in the chapter which tells of Jeremiah's call. When the final decision was made, about the year 626 B. C., he must have been still a young man of twenty or twenty-five, since for over forty years following that event he continued to preach uninterruptedly to his countrymen. Those forty years witnessed more startling changes than any other four decades in Hebrew history. During the entire period, Jeremiah was in reality the most prominent figure in Judah's life. His prophecies, so full of historical allusions, are the best and fullest sources for the knowledge of that period. Through all the varying changes of party and political fortunes, he proclaimed the same eternal truths, adapting them, as necessary, to new conditions. Naturally he frequently repeats himself. As with Hosea's sermons, the situation and the prophet's feelings were too intense to favor logical

development and literary finish; but through all of Jeremiah's sermons one may trace the evidence of an ever-deepening appreciation of the sublimest truths vouchsafed to man. Despised, often persecuted, without the consolations of wife or children, sometimes discouraged, but never daunted, this great soul, faithful to the commands of Jehovah, gave his all as a voluntary offering for his race and for humanity, thus presenting the most conspicuous example in the old Hebrew state of service perfected through suffering and complete self-surrender. His earliest sermons, which are preserved in the collection made during the fourth year of Jehoiakim, reveal the important part which he enacted in connection with the movement which culminated in the great reformation of 621 B.C. under Josiah. At first the prevailing idolatry, which survived from the days of Manasseh, almost appalled him; but this condition only brought out into brighter contrast later successes, crowned by the public acceptance of the Book of the Covenant,—practically our present Book of Deuteronomy. Associated with him was a faithful band of prophets like Zephaniah, and priests like Hilkiah, all united in one noble purpose to reform the religious life of their nation. The foes from the north, described in chapters 4–6, are probably the dread Scythians, who, about 626 B.C., came sweeping down the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean, furnishing in the terror-stricken Judeans an audience, and in themselves an effective text, for such prophets of reform as Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The short section preserved in verses 1–8 of the eleventh chapter (Jeremiah 11:1-18), probably contains extracts from sermons preached by Jeremiah about the year 621 B.C., in connection with the institution of reform measures under Josiah. They are the only reminders of what must have been one of the most active and happy periods of the prophet's life.

046. II. Jeremiah's Call And Commission

II JEREMIAH'S CALL AND COMMISSION The call to service (Jeremiah 1:4-5). These are the thoughts which Jehovah placed in my heart when he first called me to be his prophet: "From your earliest days I have surrounded you with holy influences, and have stood in peculiarly intimate relationship with you. Now I have commissioned you to be my ambassador to proclaim my will to the nations." The response (Jeremiah 1:6-8). To this call to service I replied: "Alas, O Lord, I am not gifted as a speaker, and my youth and inexperience unfit me for the great task." But Jehovah encouraged me with the assurance: "Whatsoever I shall ask you to do, that will you be able to accomplish. Be not afraid of those whom you will be called upon to address, for I will ever be present to deliver you." The divine commission (Jeremiah 1:9-10). Then, symbolizing my preparation for the prophetic office, Jehovah touched my mouth, and declared that he had placed his word therein. He further added that my mission would be to denounce and to proclaim the destruction of the nations to which I was sent, but that I should also announce their ultimate restoration. A vision of assurance (Jeremiah 1:11-12). Then there rose before my troubled mind the vision of an almond-tree, which first awakens from the deep slumber of winter, and which stands as the symbol of watchfulness. With that vision came the assurance from Jehovah that thus would he ever be watchful to speedily fulfil his word which I should proclaim. A vision of overwhelming judgment (Jeremiah 1:13-16). Again before my mind rose the picture of a huge caldron in the north about to spill its seething contents upon the land. This, I soon learned, symbolized the fiery flood of war which Jehovah was about to turn upon Judah; for by foreign powers would the sentence which he was about to pronounce upon his apostate and idolatrous people be executed.

Further assurance of divine protection (Jeremiah 1:17-19). When the divine command came to declare the truth revealed to me, there came also the assurance that, although king, princes, priests, and prophets, would bitterly oppose me, like a strong fortress I should stand out against them, invincible, because guarded by Jehovah.

047. III. Reform Sermons

III

REFORM SERMONS 1. The Story of Judah, the Unrepentant Prodigal (Jeremiah 2:1 to Jeremiah 3:5) The innocency of the earlier days (Jeremiah 2:1-3). Jehovah commanded me to go, and in his name remind the men of Jerusalem of the innocency which characterized the earlier days of their nation's history, and which the eternal heart of love holds in such fond remembrance. Then the bond of mutual affection between him and the people whom he set aside as sacred to himself was unbroken. Woe to the nation which then presumed to wrong his chosen ones!

Subsequent infidelity (Jeremiah 2:4-13). Listen, O Hebrew race, to the charge which Jehovah brings against your fathers. Following their own wicked inclinations, they soon forgot all his tender care for them. This fruitful land, which he gave them as a heritage, they proceeded forthwith to pollute. The priests, whose duty it was to instruct the people in the law of Jehovah, have questioned his very existence; the rulers, whose duty it was to lead the people, have dishonored him; the prophets, whose duty it was to proclaim his will, have spoken in the name of Baal. The entire heathen world does not present such a strange anomaly. Though their deities are vain creations, no pagan peoples have exchanged their gods for those of their neighbors. Let heaven and earth behold with wonder and with horror. This people have forsaken Jehovah, the source of all life, and have placed their trust in idols, the worthless works of men's hands! The punishment well merited (Jeremiah 2:14-17). Was it because Israel, like a slave, was subject to the caprices of his master that his land has been wasted by foreign conquerors, and his cities burned and left uninhabited? You all know the real reason. The Egyptians shall likewise devour your strength, O Judeans, for you have deserted Jehovah, and these shall be the consequences.

Judah's political and religious crimes (Jeremiah 2:18-28). Why have you sought entangling alliances, first with Egypt and then with her foe, Assyria, irreverently turning your backs upon Jehovah, who is your true protector? He declares: "From your earliest days you have broken my commandments, and have refused allegiance to me, preferring the vile service of the gods of your heathen neighbors. The fault is not mine; for I created you perfect, and established you in this land. Whence this sad perversion of your character? The moral stain is too deep to be removed by external cleansing. It is folly for you to say that you are sinless. Degenerate are all your tendencies. Like a beast, your animal passions rule you, leading you into gross idolatry. Rulers, priests, prophets, and people, have, in secret at least, descended to fetish worship. As among the heathen, each city has its patron god. In the time of danger and distress, they shall be cruelly deceived who trust in these creations of their own hands. Their hypocrisy (Jeremiah 2:29-37). "Having sinned so deeply, do you dare plead your case against me? All my efforts to discipline and instruct you have met with contempt. The prophets whom I sent to teach you have fallen victims to your sword. And yet, have I ever neglected my people Israel? You are the ones who have forgotten me through these long years, devoting yourselves to idolatrous exercises, sucking out the blood of the innocent Most hateful of all is the self-complacency with which you assert that you

have done no wrong. I, Jehovah, will reveal your perfidy. The new alliance with Egypt will bring to you only disaster.

Empty words insufficient to secure pardon (Jeremiah 3:1-5). "How contrary to instruction and the commands of the law it is for a man to take back a divorced wife; and yet you think that you can forsake me, and indulge in all the lewd rites connected with the worship of idols, and then return to me guiltless. In vain do you cry, 'My father,' trusting that because of the kindness which I showed you in your youth, and because of my compassion, I will forgive you, even though your wicked deeds give the lie to your professions."

2. Promises to Israel and Judah, if they will Repent (Jeremiah 3:6 to Jeremiah 4:2)

Judah the more culpable (Jeremiah 3:6-11). On another occasion, during the reign of Josiah, Jehovah gave me this message: "Thou hast seen the apostasy of the northern kingdom, and how it has failed to learn the lesson of repentance. Judah's treachery, however, is more unpardonable than Israel's apostasy, for the men of the south were warned by the terrible fate which overtook the northern kingdom, and yet, while they hypocritically profess to be contrite, they persistently go on sinning.

Pardon and restoration for Israel (Jeremiah 3:12-15) "O northerners, when once you acknowledge the error of your ways, I will forgive your sins; and, again accepted as my covenant people, I will bring you back to Jerusalem. I will also set over you righteous rulers and teachers to guide and instruct you.

Extension of the old covenant (Jeremiah 3:16-18). "When the numbers of the faithful remnant of the Hebrew race have increased, the narrow limitations of the old covenant, which was symbolized by the ark, will be broken down, and the ancient forms of worship will be abandoned; for then Jehovah will no longer be conceived of as dwelling in one especial place. Jerusalem shall be the center of his world-wide rule, which shall be joyfully recognized by all peoples. No longer shall men oppose their own stubborn wills to that of the Eternal. [Then shall the Judeans, who are soon to be scattered, be gathered from the lands of their captivity to inhabit and enjoy this fair portion of the earth which was assigned to their ancestors.]

True contrition, the one and absolute condition (Jeremiah 3:19-25). "Thus it is my purpose not only to give you a princely heritage, O Israelites, among the people of the earth, but also to adopt you as my own. Alas! O nation Israel, how your apostasy is defeating my gracious intentions! Yet, the moment you truly repent, I will remove all traces of your sins. Approach me with the genuine prayer of contrition, saying: 'We come unto thee, who art the true, the only God. The heathen deities whom we have worshiped are a delusion. Thou art indeed the saviour of our nation. Grossly have we and our fathers sinned against thee in devoting our best gifts to base idols, disobeying thy gracious commands. In shame we hide our faces.' The fruits of contrition (Jeremiah 4:1-2). "If thus, O Israel, you will confess your sins, confirming your words by your deeds, then shall the heathen world beholding such loyalty be speedily attracted to Jehovah, and with you enjoy his rich blessings."

3. The Judgment Approaching from the North (Jeremiah 4:3 to Jeremiah 6:30)

Repent while there is time (Jeremiah 4:3-4). Give heed, O Judeans, to Jehovah's words of warning: "Overcome your evil tendencies, and open your hearts to my transforming influences, lest I bring upon you that overwhelming destruction which you so richly merit." The approach of the foe (Jeremiah 4:5-18). Spread the alarm! The dread foe, who is to execute Jehovah's judgment, is already at hand. Flee, O Judah, to your walled cities. Like a fierce lion this destroyer of nations is rapidly advancing to devastate your lands. Lament, for no mercy will be shown. Surprise and horror because of the magnitude of the calamity which threatens shall overwhelm all classes. Yet there is no mistake on the part of Jehovah. Your deeds have called down this fate upon you. Repent, do right, and the catastrophe may yet be averted.

Destruction, overwhelming, well-merited, and unavoidable (Jeremiah 4:19-31). As the prophet of the people, I am overcome with terror and grief, so sudden and horrible is the disaster which impends. Yet I cannot intercede for them, since it is due to their folly. All nature is affected by the fearful judgment. It is Jehovah's purpose, by the hands of these pitiless foes, to render the land a barren waste, although he will spare a few. Vain shall be the measures by which the people will seek to deliver themselves. Amidst unutterable woes, shall proud Jerusalem fall before the murderous invaders. The universal corruption of Jerusalem precludes pardon (Jeremiah 5:1-9). If a righteous man could be found in this wicked city, Jehovah would gladly spare it; but so vitiated is the atmosphere that all are affected by the prevailing hypocrisy and impiety. The leaders are as corrupt as the misguided masses. In view of their black record in the past, and their present disobedient attitude, Jehovah can do nothing else than give over his careless, adulterous people as a prey to these hunters of men. The command to destroy the guilty people (Jeremiah 5:10-19). Advance, therefore, destroyers. Northern Israel and Judah alike have spurned Jehovah, and laughed to scorn his prophets who warned them of coming retribution. The Lord will confirm the words of his messengers; but woe to those who doubt. The instrument with which he will execute vengeance is a powerful ancient nation, courageous, bloodthirsty, and speaking a foreign tongue. Like a locust scourge, these insatiable invaders will destroy everything before them. Only a remnant of Jehovah's people will survive to taste the bitterness of slavery in a foreign land. The persistent wickedness of the people and of their leaders (Jeremiah 5:20-31). Can you not see and appreciate the danger which impends? Do you feel no awe in the presence of Jehovah, who rules supreme in the natural world? Alas! there is no reverence in their hearts. Sin has blinded their eyes. They are so intent upon defrauding their fellows that they disregard their duties both to God and to their neighbors. Superlative impiety! The prophets in the name of Jehovah tell lies, and abet the priests in their unjust practices, while the masses rejoice in such leaders as these.

It will soon be too late for deliverance (Jeremiah 6:1-8). Sound the alarm throughout the whole land. Jerusalem's fate is sealed. The hills upon which the city is built shall again be uninhabited; the quiet resort of shepherds, as in the days before it was built. Already the besiegers are completing their plans for the capture of the wicked condemned capital. Will you not avail yourselves, O Jerusalemites, of an opportunity to save by repentance your homes from bitter desolation?

Only retribution awaiting this defiant, misled people (Jeremiah 6:9-21). Let the work of destruction begin at once, and be complete. They heed not. The message of the true prophet has become odious to them. Their contemptuous attitude toward truth arouses only righteous indignation. There is no hope, for greed rules them all. The official priests and prophets teach falsely. Instead

of boldly pointing out the guilt which is proving the nation's ruin, they have lulled the people into their present fatal indifference by saying, "All is well," while, in fact, nothing is well. For their perfidy they feel no compunctions. Therefore they shall share a like fate with their victims, the masses. In vain has Jehovah pointed out clearly, by the mouths of his true prophets, the cause which he wishes his people to follow, and which alone can bring them to peace; but they have defiantly refused to listen. After such conduct, let them not think that his favor can be purchased with rich oblations and sacrifices. The approaching invader (Jeremiah 6:22-26). I assure you in the name of Jehovah that a great nation is sweeping down upon you from the distant north. A cruel, merciless host are they, all-engulfing and as irresistible as the surging sea. Already a rumor respecting them has reached your ears and chilled your hearts. You would do well bitterly to lament, because of the terrible flood of invasion which may burst upon you at any moment. The nation incapable of moral elevation (Jeremiah 6:27-30). Jehovah has commissioned me to test the character of this nation, and I have found it completely wanting. All are rebellious in their attitude toward Jehovah, and deceitful in their relations with each other. It is useless to attempt to eliminate the evil elements from the good, for they are indissolubly united. The result is that the whole nation is worthless, and has already been rejected by Jehovah.

4. Enforcing the Nation's Covenant with Jehovah (Jeremiah 11:1-8)

Jeremiah as an apostle of the covenant (Jeremiah 11:1-8). The aim of my earlier sermons was partially realized. In the face of impending calamity, the people, outwardly at least, turned to Jehovah, and listened to the injunctions of his faithful priests and prophets. The new lawbook, distinctly defining the duties and obligations of the prophet of Jehovah, was brought forth from the temple, publicly read, solemnly accepted by the assembled Judeans, and promulgated as a law. At that time Jehovah prompted me to remind the people of that sacred covenant, from the earliest times the basis of the peculiar relation between him and their race, and to enjoin upon them, under penalty, carefully to heed its every injunction. To the divine command I was responsive, and went forth on a preaching tour through the cities of Judah, and especially in the streets of Jerusalem, to explain and enforce the terms of the old covenant made with our forefathers when they came from Egypt. In my teaching I pointed out how they, alas! disregarded Jehovah's earnest exhortations to obedience, although it was the supreme duty and privilege of the later and more enlightened generation to avoid the grave mistakes of the past, and to enjoy to the full the blessings attendant upon doing his will.

048. The Message Of Habakkuk

THE MESSAGE OF HABAKKUK

049. I. The Date Of The Prophecy

I THE DATE OF THE PROPHECY

Respecting the date of the short prophecy which bears the superscription, "The Oracle which Habakkuk the Prophet did see," neither the title nor contemporary records give any testimony. The distinct reference to the Chaldeans, in the first chapter, as an active world-power, with which the Judeans are already well acquainted, indicates that it must be later than the great battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., when the supremacy of southwestern Asia passed for the first time into the hands of these new conquerors. The same chapter reflects the amazement and horror with which the people of Palestine viewed the rapid advance of the Chaldeans. There is little doubt, therefore, that the present prophecy comes from the closing years of the seventh century B. C. The conditions in Judah, referred to in the opening verses, are those which we know resulted from the weak, reactionary policy of the selfish Jehoiakim. The prophet was one of that remarkable group of inspired workers who, like Jeremiah, had witnessed the glorious reformation of Josiah and the peace and prosperity which followed in its train, and who had survived to see all that glory swept away and their beloved land spoiled by foes from within and from without. As a patriot and a faithful follower of Jehovah, he voices the cry of anguish and doubt which must at that time have burst from many lips; as an inspired prophet, he answers that cry with the firm assurance of faith. The lyric ode, preserved in the third chapter, and dedicated "to Habakkuk the prophet," has so many affinities, in language and in thought, with post-exilic psalms, that it is regarded by many as the work of a later writer. Whether the conclusion be accepted or not, it must be admitted that it completes the thought of the book, and therefore amply justifies its present position. In sublimity of thought and of diction, it is surpassed by few passages in the Old Testament

050. II. A Dialogue Between The Prophet And Jehovah.

Theme—"How Long Shall The Wicked Be ..."

II A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PROPHET AND JEHOVAH. THEME—"HOW LONG SHALL THE WICKED BE ALLOWED TO TRIUMPH OVER THE RIGHTEOUS?" (Habakkuk 1:1toHabakkuk 2:4) The prophet's cry of despair (Habakkuk 1:2-4). How long in vain, O Jehovah, shall we beseech thee to put an end to the deeds of bloodshed and wrong which constantly offend our eyes and chill our hearts? Surely thou seest that it is impossible for a righteous man to secure justice before the public tribunals. Why dost thou thus allow evil to triumph over right?

Jehovah's reply (Habakkuk 1:5-11). Open your eyes, O prophet, and behold the nation rapidly advancing through which I purpose forthwith to inaugurate a new epoch, undreamed of in human history. Already these energetic, pitiless Chaldeans are launched on their career of spoliation and of conquest. Like fierce beasts of prey, their cavalry are sweeping all before them. Kings, armies, and strong fortresses are powerless to check their destructive advance. Their rule, however, shall not endure forever, for they make their own might their god. Overwhelming pride shall prove the source of their downfall. The prophet's deeper perplexity (Habakkuk 1:12toHabakkuk 2:1). Yea, Lord, we know that thou art eternal, and that we shall not be utterly destroyed. We recognize that thou, who art just and omnipotent, hast sent forth this new world-conqueror as thy instrument of judgment; and yet, how canst thou, the altogether Righteous, remain silent while these impious Chaldeans, by deceit and violence, destroy men and nations far less deserving of such a fate than are they, the destroyers? How long wilt thou allow them, unchecked, to prey upon helpless peoples, growing fat upon the plunder which their merciless armies have stripped from the victims of their swords? I can only wait and watch until Jehovah gives me an answer to these crushing questions, which are pressing upon the hearts of the faithful, and which are threatening to destroy all faith in his power or in his willingness to deliver in the time of danger and stress.

Jehovah's message of comfort (Habakkuk 2:2-4). Inscribe the message, O prophet, upon tablets, and make it so plain that its contents can be apprehended at a glance; for it shall soon be confirmed by the events of history. "Pride dominates these rapacious Chaldeans, therefore their ultimate downfall is certain; but the righteous, because of their moral integrity and believing fidelity, which are the absolute essentials of life, though now crushed and oppressed, shall surely survive the present crisis."

051. III. Reasons Why The Downfall Of The Chaldeans Is Assured (2:5-20)

III REASONS WHY THE DOWNFALL OF THE CHALDEANS IS ASSURED (Habakkuk 2:5-20)
Their false pride and lust for conquest (Habakkuk 2:5-8). The Chaldeans are intoxicated with self-pride. Like the drunkard, they have only a false, distorted view of reality. Their appetite for rapine and conquest is as insatiable as is Sheol itself. The time will speedily come when the nations which are now the victims of their rapacity shall taunt them, saying, "Woe to this robber, laden with unrighteous plunder! At last his day of retribution has come. He himself, at the hands of the peoples spoiled by him, shall experience the wrongs which he has so ruthlessly inflicted." Their selfish, unprincipled policy (Habakkuk 2:9-11). Woe to that selfish nation which seeks to add to its own strength and resources by plundering other peoples. The crimes thus committed will cry out to heaven for redress, and certain vengeance shall overtake the Chaldeans. Their base methods and ambitions (Habakkuk 2:12-14). Woe to that unprincipled nation which rears its proud capital through the toil and life-blood of conquered races. It is not in accordance with Jehovah's purpose that men should thus vainly sacrifice their energy and their innocence to attaining material power and possessions. Instead, it is the Lord's will that the knowledge of his character and grace become the common and treasured possession of every human being. Their heartless treatment of their neighbors (Habakkuk 2:15-17). Woe to that merciless nation which causes the peoples about to reel and to fall insensible, like one who has drunk a poisonous drug, that it may exult in their downfall. It, in turn, shall know the taste of Jehovah's wrath; and all its present glory shall be changed to humiliation and shame. The wanton crimes committed against this fair land of Canaan shall be visited upon its guilty head. Their foolish idolatry (Habakkuk 2:18-20). Woe to that superstitious nation that trusts in images of wood and stone, dead, dumb idols, made by the hands of artisans, and incapable either of instructing or of delivering their devotees. How utterly different is Jehovah, the God of spirit, who abides in his holy sanctuary! Let all creation stand in silent awe before him.

052. IV. The Prayer Of Faith—A Lyric Ode (Habakkuk 3)

IV THE PRAYER OF FAITH—A LYRIC ODE (Habakkuk 3) The invocation (Habakkuk 3:2).

I heard thy message, and I was affrighted.

Thy work revive yet again, O Jehovah;

Ere long reveal thyself strong to deliver;

Mercy forget not when judgment thou sendest The Almighty will come as of old, The Supreme from his ancient abode, The response (Habakkuk 3:3-6). With his glory the heavens are spread And his praise fills the earth, far and wide; For his splendor is like the clear light;

He has rays coming forth from his hand, And therein has he hidden his strength. The dread pestilence goes on before, Burning fever pursues in his track;

Now he stands, and behold the earth rocks, At his glance mighty nations do quake, And the mountains eternal fall down.

Low before him the ancient hills bow.

God to-day, as of old, is the same. The purpose of Jehovah's advent (Habakkuk 3:7-15).

Egypt's sons in sad plight I behold Lo, the men of wild Midian fear!

Art thou, Lord, again wroth with the streams, That in terror before thee they flee? Is thy fury now turned toward the seas, That thou drivest thy swift steeds, the clouds, Which thy chariots of victory draw? That thou barest thy bow for the strife, So that cleft are the seas by thy stroke? In thy presence the mountains retire, The great floods seek in fear to depart, The abyss also lifts up his voice, The proud heights raise toward heaven their hands, Both the sun and the moon cease their course, At the gleam of thy bolts, as they fly, At the flash of thy spears, as they glance.

Since in anger thou treadest the earth, And in fury thou smitest thy foes. To deliver thy sons art thou come, To deliver thine own art thou here.

Wicked foes hast thou cast to the earth, Their last hope hast thou torn from their hearts. Their defenders are smitten with spears—

They who come as a tempest to smite And devour the afflicted with joy.

Thou hast trodden the sea with thy steeds;

Finite man in thy presence is weak.

Effect of the revelation upon the prophet (Habakkuk 3:16-19).

I heard the message, and fain would I tremble, Quivering seized me, beholding the vision, Courage departed, my bones lost their power, Terror and fear, at first, wellnigh o'ercame me.

Calmly and peaceful I wait, while destroyers Ruthlessly ravage the lands of my nation.

Yea, though the fig-tree put forth no new blossoms, Though on the vines no fresh fruitage is springing, Though the green olive rewards not the labor, Though the tilled fields do not yield a fair increase, Though the last flocks be destroyed in the sheep-folds, Though all we cherish be swept from our country Yet, as for me, glory I in Jehovah.

I will rejoice in Jehovah, my Saviour.

God is my strength, my delight, my defender;

He will uphold, will protect, will exalt me, Filling my soul with a joy never dying.

053. Jeremiah's Activity During The Reign Of Jehoiakim

JEREMIAH'S ACTIVITY DURING THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

054. I. The Changed Situation

I THE CHANGED SITUATION The twelve years of the reign of Josiah which followed the reformation were the brightest in the history of Judah. Immunity from foreign attacks enabled that worthy prince and his able advisers to organize the resources of his little kingdom, and to extend its influence until the southern part of the territory, formerly belonging to the northern Israelites, fell under his sway. More important still, the prophetic party, who included in their ranks all who truly worshiped the Jehovah of the prophets as opposed to the Jehovah of whom the ignorant masses conceived, found in Josiah a strong champion; for he advanced, by the influence of the throne, and, if need be, by the sword, the principles inculcated by the prophets in their sermons and by the priests in the written law. The effect of a half-century of idolatry could not, however, be effaced in one moment, nor even in a decade. The tendencies toward a more sensuous nature-worship were inborn in the popular heart, while the austere moral demands of the new prophetic religion were too exalted to be clearly appreciated by the masses, and too counter to all their cherished traditions not to arouse their secret antagonism.

While prosperity crowned the efforts of the reforming party, blind popular discontent found no open expression; but when Josiah, who had gone out against the Egyptian king, Necho, confident that Jehovah would give him the victory, fell, slain on the plain of Megiddo, that opposition became apparent.

After Necho had brushed aside the foolhardy king, who sought to hinder him in his eastward march, he hastened onward to meet more important foes. The prophetic party improved this respite to raise to the kingship Shallum, a younger son of Josiah, who assumed, on ascending the throne, the name of Jehoahaz. They undoubtedly hoped that he would be able to revive the shattered fortunes of the kingdom, and carry on the religious policy so nobly instituted by his father; but the disaster on the plain of Megiddo destroyed their influence with the majority of the people. The masses clamored for the old régime which had been set aside by Josiah, while the return of Necho within a few months deprived the prophetic party of the last vestige of power. Recognizing that Jehoahaz represented the supporters of his enemy, Josiah, the Egyptian king carried off the young Judean monarch in chains to the land of the Nile. Jeremiah refers touchingly to this incident in chapter Jeremiah 22:10-12 of his prophecy. "Lament not over the death of Josiah, but wail for his son Shallum (Jehoahaz; cf. 2 Kings 23:30, and 1 Chronicles 3:15), who has been carried away into the land of captivity, where he shall die, never again rejoicing his eyes with a view of his native land."

Jehoiakim, Josiah's eldest son, was appointed king by Necho in place of Jehoahaz. For the patriotic prophetic party a worse choice could not have been made. Not only was the new king lacking in sympathy with reform and in ability as a ruler, but he also soon showed himself a foe to the true prophets and a champion of the old, half-heathen party which had survived from the days of Manasseh, and which now was in the ascendancy. He seems to have lacked completely all patriotic ambitions. Although he reigned at a time when Canaan was the coveted possession for

which the Egyptians, led by Necho, and the Chaldeans, led by Nebuchadrezzar, were struggling, he made national interests entirely secondary to his personal greed and to his passion for splendid buildings. In vain Jeremiah exhorted him to rule righteously, that his family might enjoy the blessings promised them, and that the overwhelming judgment, which Jehovah would otherwise visit upon Jerusalem and Judah, might be averted (Jeremiah 21:11 to Jeremiah 22:9). In chapter Jeremiah 22:13-19, the prophet presents an estimate of the young king's character, which is confirmed by other references: "Woe to that ruler who builds his palace with funds gained by unjust exactions and unfair decisions, who forces his subjects to toil for him, and pays them nothing; whose dominant ambition is to rear a large and magnificent residence. Do you think, Jehoiakim, that it is essential that you as a king surpass all other potentates in the splendor of your palace? Your father was deemed by all a successful king,—and why? Because he was a just ruler, giving his first attention to those who needed his help. This is Jehovah's will. But you are intent only upon securing dishonest gains. You hesitate not at murder and cruel oppression.

"Therefore, this shall be your fate: your dead body shall be cast out like that of a beast Neither your kindred nor your family shall mourn your death. No one shall be found to say a kind word concerning you, when you are dead."

Under such a ruler as Jehoiakim, Judah began to take that sudden and fatal plunge which ended in her ruin. It was an age when the most optimistic could do little but mourn. To the patriot and the enlightened prophet, who was enabled to estimate the true trend of events, the folly and the crimes of the period appeared by contrast all the more lamentable because outlined against the almost ideal reign of Josiah. We have reason to believe that Jeremiah preached constantly throughout the reign of that noble prince; but when he collected his earlier sermons, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, it was for the purpose of laying them before this king. Naturally, the addresses of denunciation and warning, such as would be best adapted to the moral needs of that depraved ruler, were selected. The result is, that we have little information respecting what must have been the brighter and more hopeful side of Jeremiah's character and work. In the reign of Jehoiakim the circumstances were even more hopeless than when he entered upon his career of reform under Josiah. Now the people stood in the full light of the reformation, enforced by the teachings of the prophets. Their return to idolatry, therefore, was a deliberate turning of the back upon higher truth. In so doing, they showed their sodden contempt for the exhortation of the true prophets. Instead of enjoying the support of Josiah, Jeremiah was constantly the victim of the secret opposition or the open persecution of Jehoiakim. Most of all Jeremiah must have felt the lack of the companionship of that earnest body of true priests and prophets whose place was filled for the most part by fawning tools of the king. These men, prophesying in the name of Jehovah, undermined the influence of the true ambassadors of the Highest, and ultimately wrecked their state. Earlier hatred of Jeremiah broke forth into personal persecutions. Fiercer denunciations and a more hopeless tone now characterize his prophecies. A deep despondency not infrequently seized him. Through those trying years, however, he continued fearlessly to proclaim the eternal truths which make his sermons messages for all times.

055. II. The Reaction Against The Prophetic Teaching

II THE REACTION AGAINST THE PROPHETIC TEACHING 1. Judah's Return to the Old Heathenism (Jeremiah 11:9-17)

Unpardonable sins (Jeremiah 11:9-17). Gradually the conviction forced itself upon me that the reformation of Josiah had not taken hold upon the hearts of the people. First in secret, now openly under Jehoiakim, they have revived the degenerate heathen customs and superstitions which the Book of Deuteronomy forbade. The old Canaanitish gods continue to command the homage of the Judeans, and of those who survived from ancient Israel. Thus they again are grievously transgressing the terms of the sacred covenant between their nation and Jehovah. Each city has its patron god, while even in the streets of Jerusalem, under the shadow of Jehovah's temple, as in the days of Manasseh, altars are set up to Baal. Let them not think that they will escape Jehovah's judgment for this shameful treachery and apostasy, or that their idols will deliver them. It will be useless for the faithful prophet to intercede, since Jehovah will grant no mercy to such shameless offenders. Their presence and their offerings in the temple, instead of securing his favor, only pollute his sanctuary the more. The destruction of this once fair nation, from which Jehovah expected so much, has already begun, and its apostasy will bring it rapidly to completion.

2. The Plot against Jeremiah at Anathoth (Jeremiah 11:18 to Jeremiah 12:6)

Treachery of Jeremiah's fellow-citizens (Jeremiah 11:18-23). Not suspecting treachery, I retired from the revolting sights of opposition, which confronted me in Jerusalem, to the quiet of Anathoth, my native town. Little did I dream that my friends would try to intimidate me into silence, and would even lay plans to drag me down to death. If Jehovah had not opened my eyes to the danger, like an innocent lamb I should have fallen a victim to their deceitful hate. Indignant at the outrage, I prayed: "O thou righteous Judge, punish the perpetrators of this crime." Soon the assurance came that an overwhelming judgment would ere long overtake them. His complaint (Jeremiah 12:1-4; cf. Jeremiah 17:14-18). As I meditate upon these and similar wrongs, O righteous Lord, perplexing questions disturb me. How canst thou permit men to commit crimes like these with apparent impunity? Thou knowest how I have labored and suffered for thee. How long wilt thou grant prosperity to them, while I have only persecution? Let misfortune fall heavily upon those who deserve it so richly, and who defy thy divine authority.

Greater trials in store (Jeremiah 12:5-6). To my cry of despondency, Jehovah replied: "If you are daunted and discouraged by the attack of your townsmen at home, how will you bear the assaults of the infuriated populace at Jerusalem, and the woes which will befall you as a prophet of truth when war relaxes all law and order? Still closer shall strike the blow. Your own kinsmen are plotting against you, and are trying to frighten you from the path of duty. Trust them not"

3. A Temple Discourse—Condemnation of Judah (Jeremiah 7:1 to Jeremiah 8:3)

The scene (Jeremiah 7:1-2). Early in the reign of Jehoiakim, Jehovah's spirit within led me, on a great feast day, to take my stand near one of the chief gates of the temple court, where the people were

pouring in from all parts of the land of Judah, and in his name to deliver this message: "If your beloved state is to be preserved from destruction amidst the deadly perils which threaten on every side, there must be a radical reform in your religious life. Not ceremonialism, but moral uprightness, will save (Jeremiah 7:3-7). Deceive not yourselves by pointing to this temple, and by saying that it is the Lord's, and is therefore inviolable; think not that you can shield yourselves from disaster by ceremonial service. I will tell you plainly the form of service which alone is acceptable to me: in the courts impartially dispense justice toward the weak and defenseless in the community, be kindly considerate, hold human life sacred, and abstain from all idolatry. If you conform to these reasonable demands, then will I give to your state that immortality which you crave for it. Their present course leads to destruction (Jeremiah 7:8-15). "Alas! you are trusting to fatal fallacies. You sin against all the laws in the Decalogue, and persuade yourselves that you can then come up to this sanctuary with blood-stained offerings in your hands, and be absolved from all your crimes. Do you consider that my holy temple was designed to be an assembling place for highwaymen? Such, at least, you make it. Recall the complete destruction, at the hands of the hated Philistines, which overtook my ancient sanctuary at Shiloh, where, for so many years, my ark rested. That shrine was as sacred as is this one; but, because of the wickedness of your fathers, I caused it to be transformed into the ruin which you behold to-day. Even so, because of your crimes, will I level this temple to the earth. You shall be carried away into captivity, as have been your northern brethren.

Intercession useless while they persist in their idolatry (Jeremiah 7:16-20). "Let no one intercede for this people, for it will be in vain. Men, women, and even the children, devote themselves zealously to the worship of other gods, as though their sole aim was to arouse my indignation. They have succeeded in so doing, and my consuming wrath shall be visited upon all which they hold dear.

Morality, not ceremonialism, enjoined by Jehovah (Jeremiah 7:21-28). "Continue to bring your sacrifices to the temple, if the practice gives you pleasure. Only do not deceive yourselves by thinking that it means anything to me. When I led your fathers forth from Egypt, I laid upon them no commands concerning offerings and sacrifices. My only injunction was that they conform in their lives to the standards of faith and practice which I had and which I should reveal to them. To make clear my will I have sent to them many and faithful prophets; but they have paid no attention to my commands, and the later generations have been more defiant than the earlier. Therefore, expect not, O Jeremiah, that they will heed your words, for they have lost the power of appreciating truth." The judgment (Jeremiah 7:29 to Jeremiah 8:3). Condemned are you as a nation, O Judeans. Tophet, down in the valley of Hinnom, where many a Jewish child has been burned to death by its parents as a victim to the loathsome heathen superstitions which you still cherish, shall be the scene of the great judgment. "Valley of slaughter" shall it ever after be called, because there shall lie exposed the corpses of the thousands slain. The dead also shall share in the universal retribution, for their bones shall be dragged from their graves to moulder beneath the stars which they worshiped. The few who survive shall in their misery envy the dead their immunity from suffering.

4. The Prophet's Impeachment and Trial (Jeremiah 26:7-24)

Effect of his temple discourse (Jeremiah 26:7-9). While Jeremiah was delivering this scathing sermon of denunciation, the wild rage of the crowds, which pressed close about him, was aroused. At the close, the people, led by the official priests and prophets present, laid hold on him, charging him with treason and blasphemy in prophesying that the temple and Jerusalem were destined to be laid in ruins. The charge against the prophet and his defense (Jeremiah 26:10-15). Being informed of the popular demonstration against the prophet, the princes hastened from the palace to the temple, and took their seats by the entry of the new gate of the sanctuary for the purpose of hearing the case. The priests and prophets present forthwith demanded that Jeremiah be put to death, because he had dared to predict the destruction of their city. To the charge he replied: "I was divinely commissioned to prophesy as I have. Your duty it is to heed and obey, for then the doom which impends will be averted. To that end has Jehovah sent me. I am in your power. Put me to death if you wish. Only remember, that in slaying a God-sent prophet, you will bring upon yourselves and upon your city a grievous burden of guilt."

Citation of precedents and acquittal of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:16-24). Influenced by the words and the calm demeanor of the prophet, the princes, seconded by the people, acknowledged the truth of his defense, and declared him unworthy of death. At this crisis also certain of the older and more experienced men recalled two well-known precedents: "In the days of Hezekiah, Micah, the Morashtite, in public predicted in equally unequivocal language the complete destruction of Jerusalem.[67] Instead of putting him to death for blasphemy, the king and the people of Judah listened to his warnings, and the judgment which he predicted was averted. If we put Jeremiah to death we would commit a heinous crime against our nation.

[67]Micah 3:12.

"You all shudder when we remind you of the fate of Uriah of Kirjath-jearim, who, a short time ago, uttered the same prophecy against this city and land. Prompted by a resentful spirit, Jehoiakim our king and his counsellors sought to put him to death. Hearing of it, Uriah fled to Egypt, but Jehoiakim brought him back and slew him, and cast his body into the potter's field. We have shed enough of the blood of the prophets." By these arguments and through the powerful influence of his friend Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, Jeremiah was saved from death at the hands of the mob.

056. III. Messages Of Denunciation And Warning

III MESSAGES OF DENUNCIATION AND WARNING 1. Indifference in the Face of Certain Judgment (Jeremiah 8:4 to Jeremiah 9:22)

Moral insensibility of the nation (Jeremiah 8:4-12). When a man falls down, his first effort is to get on his feet again. This people are in the depths of moral degradation, and yet, instead of attempting to rise, they only endeavor to deceive themselves into believing that they have not fallen. No one of them thinks of repenting, and of admitting that he has broken God's laws. Instead, they pervert their divinely given instincts, and set up their own wisdom as final, while their scribes deliberately falsify the written law, so that it conceals rather than reveals Jehovah's will. Priest and prophet unite in so misleading the people that they are incapable of distinguishing between the words of the true and those of the false prophets. With their perverted law and messages, the leaders have lulled themselves as well as the nation into a fatal sense of security, so that they unblushingly commit the grossest crimes. A dread awakening awaits them (Jeremiah 8:13-17). Since there is no hope of reforming, Jehovah can do nothing else than destroy these wicked servants, root and branch. When they hear the roar of the mighty foe advancing from the north, their false sense of security will be changed to terror and despair. Then Jehovah will spare not, but will complete the judgment.

Lament of the prophet over the fallen nation (Jeremiah 8:18toJeremiah 9:6). As I behold the dread fate awaiting my country, I am overwhelmed with sadness. I can picture the doubts and the remorse which will then take possession of all hearts. When it is too late, they will bitterly regret the supreme opportunities which they are now spurning. Is there no way of saving this nation at once from its sins before it is forever too late? Anguish inexpressible fills my heart because of the sickening tragedy which I am forced to witness. Gladly would I endure the privations of desert life, if I could escape the sight of the crimes which are daily enacted in every part of the land. When my countrymen open their mouths it is to utter lies; they are adept only in deceiving; their entire energy is devoted to doing iniquity, so that they find no time to think of God and of truth. The impending doom a cause for general wailing (Jeremiah 9:7-22). Such shocking degeneracy can only be remedied by the most drastic measures. Jehovah will send invasion, drought, desolation, and exile to accomplish the work of purification. Soon these woes will descend upon your land, and then in the presence of disaster and death you will all join me in bitterest lamentation.

2. The Proper Attitude in the Face of the Great Danger (Jeremiah 10:17-25)

Prepare for exile (Jeremiah 10:17-22). Hold yourselves in readiness to leave, as captives, this city which you regard as impregnable. In imagination I can hear the piteous wails which you will utter when the calamity overtakes you, and the bitter reproaches you will heap upon your impious, incompetent rulers, because they have betrayed you. Already the dread news comes from the north that the foe is advancing, carrying desolation in his track.

Prayer in behalf of the people (Jeremiah 10:23-25). In the presence of such a danger, let this be your prayer: "Thou, O Lord, art infinite, and we are helpless in thy hands. Discipline us as thou seest best, but restrain thy anger, lest we be completely consumed. Rather visit thy fury upon the heathen who defy thee, and seek to destroy us, thy people."

057. IV. The Approach Of The Chaldeans Under Nebuchadrezzar

IV THE APPROACH OF THE CHALDEANS UNDER NEBUCHADREZZAR 1. Defeat of the Egyptians by Nebuchadrezzar at Carchemish in 605 B. C. (Jeremiah 46:2-12) The first picture of the battle (Jeremiah 46:3-6). Marshal all your forces, O Necho; put them in battle array; bring your cavalry into line; complete the final arrangements; now for the onset. What! your army turns back! your mighty warriors flee! Terror seizes the Egyptian host. Vain are their efforts to escape; beside the Euphrates have they fallen. The second picture of Egypt's overthrow (Jeremiah 46:7-12). Behold Necho's mighty army, rolling on like a swollen torrent, devastating everything which lies in its track. In his pride the Egyptian king expects to overrun the whole earth, destroying and conquering all the nations. Let the host advance—cavalry, chariots, bowmen, Ethiopians and warlike Lybians—to meet their fate, for this day Jehovah has determined to execute vengeance upon them for the many wrongs which they have perpetrated. Vain are your efforts, O Egyptians, to retrieve your fallen fortunes. Your prestige among the nations is gone. Before a mightier foe you shall bite the dust.

2. The Divine Judgment upon the Nations Executed by Nebuchadrezzar (Jeremiah 46:25; cf. Jeremiah 47-49)

Occasion of the sermon (Jeremiah 25:1-2). In the year 604 B. C., soon after the Chaldeans conquered the Egyptians at Carchemish, and Nebuchadrezzar ascended the throne of Babylon, Jeremiah delivered the following prophecy in the presence of the Judeans.

Judah's rejection of Jehovah's messages (Jeremiah 25:3-7). For twenty-three years I have faithfully and zealously delivered to you, O Judeans, the messages which Jehovah has given me. Other prophets have been equally true, but all our calls to repentance have been fruitless.

Nebuchadrezzar is Jehovah's servant appointed to execute his judgment (Jeremiah 25:8-14). Therefore Jehovah has given to Nebuchadrezzar rule over powerful peoples, and has selected him as his servant to subjugate and to destroy you, O rebellious nation. He is "the foe from the north," of whom I so often warned you and your wicked neighbors. [For a limited period (seventy years) the Chaldeans shall exercise absolute sovereignty over Palestine. Then shall come their hour of retribution, and other world-powers shall absorb them.]

Extent and significance of Nebuchadrezzar's rule (Jeremiah 25:15-38). Jehovah also commanded me, by giving the wine-cup of his fury in turn to the different nations of the earth, symbolically to indicate that the conquests of Nebuchadrezzar are to be universal, that they are in accordance with God's will, and that they are intended to punish the crimes of the victims. Rulers, as well as subjects, shall experience the horrors of this world-wide judgment, so long delayed and so terrible in its realization.

058. V. The First And Second Collections Of Jeremiah's Prophecies

V THE FIRST AND SECOND COLLECTIONS OF JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES 1. Origin and Fate of the First Edition (Jeremiah 36:1-26; Jeremiah 45) The work of editing (Jeremiah 36:1-4). In the memorable year 604 B. C., Jeremiah was commanded by God to write down on a roll of parchment all the prophecies against Israel and Judah and the foreign nations which he had delivered hitherto. The aim in so doing was that he might continue to teach, although it was no longer permitted or safe for him to preach in public; and that perchance the people, in the face of the danger which threatened from the east, might yet be affected by the warnings which his sermons contained, and so seek that forgiveness which Jehovah was eager to grant, when once they repented. Accordingly, Jeremiah summoned his faithful scribe, Baruch, who wrote as the prophet dictated.

Public reading of the prophecies (Jeremiah 36:5-8). When the work was complete, Jeremiah, who could not go himself, commanded Baruch, in the hope of influencing the people, to read the roll in their presence as on a fast-day they were gathered from all parts of Judah at the temple.

Baruch's discouragement (Jeremiah 45:1-5). Baruch did as directed, but he, like his master in the beginning of his ministry, was overwhelmed with deep despondency, and complained that his life was bereft of all joy and peace, and that only sorrow and pain were his lot. To this wail Jeremiah replied in the name of Jehovah: "True, your lot is a sad one, but it is a time of universal judgment. Being a citizen of this guilty land, you must expect to suffer. Do not hope for prosperity, and you will not be disappointed. Jehovah, however, promises that, in the midst of all perils to which you will be exposed, your life shall be preserved." The second public reading of Jeremiah's prophecies (Jeremiah 36:9-10). In the spring of the following year, when the people of Judah were gathered together at the temple again to observe a solemn fast, that they might secure Jehovah's favor in the time of danger which followed the victory of Nebuchadrezzar at Carchemish, Baruch read from the collection of Jeremiah's prophecies.

Reading before the nobles and Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:11-26). A certain noble, Micaiah, the grandson of Josiah's famous chancellor, Shaphan, and the nephew of Ahikam, who earlier befriended Jeremiah when he was attacked by a mob (Jeremiah 26:24), was impressed by the reading. Possibly feeling added responsibility because the reading took place in his room, he reported it at once to the other nobles who were assembled in the hall of the chancellor at the palace. They then summoned Baruch, and commanded him to read the roll again. The contents seemed so important that they decided to lay them before the king. When they were assured that there was no fraud, but that Baruch had written as Jeremiah had uttered the prophecies, they advised him and his master to conceal themselves where no one could find them. Then, leaving the roll in the room where they had heard it read, they reported its purport to Jehoiakim. He thereupon ordered it to be brought; and it was read in his presence. As fast as it was read, however, he showed his contempt by cutting off the different sections of the roll with his knife, and by casting them into the fire which burned on a brazier near by. Fear of the king restrained his

nobles from expressing any horror at his impiety. Three of them, however, endeavored to dissuade him from destroying the roll, but in vain. He gave orders to seize Jeremiah and Baruch, but they were in concealment, so that his efforts to apprehend them were unsuccessful.

2. The Second and Larger Edition (Jeremiah 36:27-32)

Prophecy against Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:27-31). Again the divine command came to Jeremiah to replace the roll of his prophecies, which had been burned by the king, and to add this new prophecy concerning Jehoiakim: "Since he has defied Jehovah in showing his contempt for the message of his prophet, he shall have no descendants to occupy the throne of Judah, while his corpse shall be denied an honorable burial. Upon him and upon his people will come all the woes which have been predicted." The work of re-editing (Jeremiah 36:32). Comforted by the assurance of Jehovah's unfailing support, Jeremiah, with Baruch, his scribe, prepared a new edition of his prophecies, much fuller than the one which Jehoiakim destroyed.

059. VI. Reiterated Messages Of Warning And Exhortation

VI REITERATED MESSAGES OF WARNING AND EXHORTATION 1. Dialogue between the Prophet and Jehovah (Jeremiah 14, 15) A drought the occasion of the prophecy (Jeremiah 14:2-6). The people of Judah break forth into universal lamentation. Wails of anguish rise from every lip. The nobles, as well as the poor, suffer from thirst, for all the customary supplies of water are exhausted. So parched is the ground that the work of the husbandman is fruitless. The beasts of the field, overcome by hunger and consuming thirst, forget their natural instincts. All nature seems to gasp for breath.

Prophet's prayer for mercy and deliverance (Jeremiah 14:7-9). This calamity is deserved, O Lord. We cannot urge our deserts, but can only appeal to thy merciful character, as we cry to thee for deliverance. Many are our sins against thee, and thou alone art our Saviour in a time of distress like the present. Why art thou silent, O Jehovah, as one who is indifferent or powerless, while we are thus grievously affected? We know that thou art ever present. Sinful though we are, we are thy people. Save us, gracious Lord, for grim death stares us in the face, if thou avert not this terrible drought

Jehovah's refusal (Jeremiah 14:10-12). Then answered the just Ruler of the universe: "Too long and too persistently have this people followed their own rebellious, base inclinations, to be lightly exculpated from the effects of their crimes. Crave not pardon for them. Their fasting and offerings will not win my favor, for their deeds call for judgment. War, famine, and pestilence shall execute it."

Prophet's excuses (Jeremiah 14:13). Thy words, alas! are true, O Lord; but consider how this people have been misled by the false prophets, who have declared in thy name that war and plagues would not, could not come, thus, by vain promises of peace, luring the ignorant masses on to their destruction.

Jehovah's reply: "Prophets and people must suffer" (Jeremiah 14:14-17). Again came Jehovah's response: "Without commission from me have the false prophets spoken. Deceptive is their message. By the sword and by famine, which they declare will never come, shall these traitors to God and the community die; unburied shall their bodies lie beside those of their wives and children, the victims of their protector's perfidy. Well, O true prophet, do you weep day and night over the irremediable corruption which is destroying your nation."

Prophet's renewed petition (Jeremiah 14:18-22). In imagination I behold the carnage of war and the victims of famine; but wilt thou, merciful Jehovah, give us over to complete destruction? In the name of my people, I beseech thee to consider how cruelly we have been deceived by our lying prophets. Miserable sinners though we are, in thy mercy reject us not. Although we have broken our part of the covenant with thee, for thine own honor among the nations redeem thy promises to us thy people. Thou art the Creator and the Ruler of the universe. All things are possible with thee, and to thee we look for pardon and for deliverance.

Jehovah's reply: "No more mercy" (Jeremiah 15:1-9;Jeremiah 15:12-14). To my earnest cry Jehovah answered: "Though my holiest prophets of old were present to join their petitions with yours, it would be in vain. I cannot deliver this wicked, rebellious people. Already their judgment is decided. Death, war, famine, and captivity shall each claim their victim. The scars left on the character of the nation by the idolatrous practices introduced by Manasseh are too deep to be effaced. Fruitless have been the methods of discipline whereby I have sought to reclaim my people. Their stalwart husbands and sons have been mown down before the foreign conqueror, and yet those who survive have not profited by the warning. Therefore they must all share a like fate. Let them not delude themselves with the hope that the might of the irresistible Chaldeans can be broken.[68] I have already given my people over into the hand of their foes, whom they will serve in the land of captivity."

[68]Jeremiah 15:12-14are here introduced immediately after verse 9. If they are from Jeremiah, this was probably their original position.

Prophet's personal complaint (Jeremiah 15:10). Alas that I was ever born! for it is my fate constantly to kindle opposition. I have wronged no man, and yet I am the object of universal hatred and attack.

Jehovah's assurance (Jeremiah 15:11). Then to my heart came Jehovah's message of comfort: "Be not discouraged, for I will uphold and vindicate you. The time will soon come when those who now attack you will eagerly solicit your intercessions."

Prophet's further complaint (Jeremiah 15:15-18). O Lord, thou knowest how I am wronged, and how doubts all but overcome me. Forget not thy servant, who for thee has suffered unjust calumnies. Take vengeance upon my persecutors. Gladly I received thy revelations, and consecrated myself to thy service. Recognizing the solemnity of the commission which thou gavest me, I have avoided all scenes of festivity. Thy message of judgment has completely filled my heart and dominated my life. Why hast thou not vindicated me? After all thy assurances, wilt thou leave me to be the object of my enemies' derision?

Jehovah's further assurance (Jeremiah 15:19-21). To my cry of despair Jehovah replied: "If you will dismiss your doubts and overcome your human weakness, you shall continue to be my ambassador, speaking to your nation with full authority from me. In time they will believe your words. Do not pervert the truth that you may thereby win popular favor. I will give you strength to endure all their hostile assaults, and I will deliver and gloriously vindicate you, if you prove faithful."

2. Extracts from Prophecies Announcing Impending Judgment (Jeremiah 16:1 to Jeremiah 17:13)

Prophet's life a constant sermon (Jeremiah 16:1-9). Do you sometimes wonder, O Judeans, why, contrary to our customs, I live alone, without the consolations of wife and children? It is in accord with Jehovah's will, for any children whom I might beget would only grow up to experience the horrors of war, famine, and captivity, which shall overtake all the inhabitants of this accursed land. That I may still further impress by my daily life the message which is constantly on my lips, I never share in the universal custom of mourning with the friends of the dead, for it is unseemly that I, his prophet, should manifest a pity for you, his defiant, condemned people, which Jehovah himself does not feel. Soon a disaster shall overtake you that shall be so overpowering that, in your dumb anguish, no one shall think of lamentation or of consolation. In accordance with the same divine

prompting, I never indulge in joyful merry-making, for it ill befits Jehovah's prophet to join with you as you dance on the edge of a chasm which will speedily engulf you, destroying all sources of mirth and rejoicing.

Causes of the coming calamity (Jeremiah 16:10-13). Anticipating your queries as to why Jehovah has determined thus to destroy you, he has commissioned me in his name to declare that it is because of your apostasy. Stubbornly you have refused to obey his law, while with all your hearts you pay homage to gods other than the true one. Ample opportunity will be given you zealously to serve these heathen deities in the lands of exile. Expect, however, no mercy from Jehovah.

Exile inevitable (Jeremiah 16:14-18). [The future is not entirely hopeless, for, though exile is surely coming, he purposes ultimately to bring the scattered Israelites back to the land of Canaan, and, in so doing, to accomplish a work which will completely eclipse the famous deliverance from Egypt.]

All nations ultimately to recognize Jehovah (Jeremiah 16:19-21). Jehovah will, for the present, give up his people as a prey to pitiless foes, who will unsparingly wreak upon them the vengeance which they so richly merit. Many are the perils and pains of the present, yet thou, O Lord, dost deliver me, for I put my trust in thee. Even so, when their mistaken superstitions, inherited from the past, are dispelled, heathen peoples from distant parts of the earth shall turn unto thee with reverence and faith. At last the scales shall fall from their eyes, and they shall realize the folly of worshiping as deities creations of their hands. Then wilt thou reveal to them thy omnipotent power, and they shall appreciate thy true character. The penalty of sin (Jeremiah 17:1-4). Alas! the crimes of the people of Judah have left an indelible impression upon the national character. All their inherited tendencies are toward idolatry. The Omnipotent himself is powerless to turn them from their wicked course. He can only destroy. Hence he announces his determination to deliver his beloved city and people to the ravages and violence of the foreign conqueror. The one source of escape (Jeremiah 17:5-13). If you would escape the impending calamity, give heed to the principles which regulate Jehovah's universe. Doomed to destruction is he who looks to finite man for defense, and who ignores the power divine. Barren and joyless shall be his life. But he who puts his confidence in God shall prosper, and be unaffected when danger and disaster approach. It is indeed strange that all do not perceive and profit by these truths; but the natural tendencies of mankind are perverse. They may deceive each other, but not Jehovah, who sees everything in the human heart, and rewards accordingly. How vain and foolish, therefore, is the conduct of those who amass great fortunes by false means, thinking in their ignorance that they will profit thereby! Thou, O Jehovah, art the true glory and hope of thy people. Disgrace and oblivion shall be the fate of all who forsake thee, the source of life, peace, and joy.

060. VII. Illustrated Sermons

VII ILLUSTRATED SERMONS 1. The Lesson from the Potter (Jeremiah 18)

Jehovah's influence in human history (Jeremiah 18:1-10). Rejected by rulers and people, I was led, in my time of discouragement, to learn from the potter important lessons concerning the providential rule of the world. As I watched him shaping the pliant clay, remodeling the imperfect vessels until they conformed to his ideal, Jehovah revealed to me the manner in which he is able to mold at his will the nations. At the same time I realized that man may render God's work imperfect. The fulfilment of all predictions, either of good or of evil, are conditioned upon the conduct of those respecting whom they are made.

Judah's future hopeless, simply because she will not reform (Jeremiah 18:11-17). Therefore, O Judeans, learn and apply the practical lesson. Jehovah has announced that he will destroy your nation, but the desolation is conditioned on your continued sinning. Change those conditions by repenting, and, in accordance with his eternal purpose, you will yet be delivered. Alas! you are doomed, because you are so set in your evil ways that you make no effort to reform. Heathendom offers no such example of horrible apostasy as do his people. Contrary to all natural analogies, they have abandoned their traditions to adopt gross superstitions. Therefore they give Jehovah no opportunity to show his mercy. Nothing remains but to give them over to that judgment which they have brought upon themselves.

Plots against the prophet (Jeremiah 18:18). Instead of being moved to repentance, the leaders of the people urged them to pay no attention to the unpleasant truths presented by Jeremiah, assuring them that many other priests, wise men, and prophets, would be left to give them religious instruction, if this troublesome prophet were put out of the way. They even took measures to accomplish this end by preferring false charges against him.

Prophet's prayer for vengeance (Jeremiah 18:19-23). Aroused beyond the point of human endurance by their machinations, Jeremiah prayed in his anger: "Thou seest, Lord, how these men have tried by base treachery to take my life. Thou knowest also how I have repeatedly interceded for them. I do so no more. Visit upon them all the horrors of war. Show no pity."

2. Symbolic Declarations of Coming Ruin (Jeremiah 13:1-14)

Symbolism of the linen girdle (Jeremiah 13:1-7). At the instigation of Jehovah, I purchased a linen girdle, and wore it for a time about my waist, carefully preserving it from all contact with anything that might soil it. Then the divine command came to bury it beside the river Euphrates, and leave it there for a time. The result can be imagined. When I dug it up again, the girdle, which I had cherished so carefully, was ruined, so that it was worthless.

Application to the Judeans (Jeremiah 13:8-11). This is the explanation of my strange proceeding. The linen girdle represents the people of Israel and Judah whom Jehovah chose and brought into a peculiarly intimate relationship with himself, protecting them from contact with whatever might

defile, that they might worthily represent and glorify him. But they stubbornly refused to obey his commands, and paid their homage to other gods. Therefore, as my girdle was ruined by being buried beside the Euphrates, so shall they lose all their strength and beauty as a nation; for Jehovah has determined to cast them aside, and to allow them to languish in captivity beside the same great river.

Symbolism of the filling of the winejars (Jeremiah 13:12-14). Jehovah further directed me to utter in the presence of the people the trite proverb, "Every jar shall be filled with wine." When they contemptuously retorted, "Of course it will," I added, giving a deeper meaning to the commonplace, "Jehovah will fill all the inhabitants of the land with the wine of his righteous judgment, so that kings, priests, and prophets shall reel like drunken men. None will he spare."

3. The Lesson of the Broken Earthen Bottle (19) The complete ruin of the nation (Jeremiah 19:1-15). On another occasion, that I might impress my message upon unwilling hearers, I was divinely impelled to provide myself with an earthen bottle, and to invite certain of the representatives of the people and of the priests to go down with me into the valley of Hinnom, beside the gate of the potsherd, and there to proclaim to them: "O leaders of Judah, Jehovah declares that because of the hideous heathen orgies which you and your fathers have practiced here at Tophet, in this valley of Hinnom, he will bring upon you a judgment far exceeding anything yet known to human experience. This scene of your crimes shall witness your punishment. You shall know the extreme horrors by plague and siege. Even as I break this earthen bottle into a thousand fragments, so will Jehovah shatter Jerusalem; every place where heathen rites have been practiced shall become like Tophet here, defiled with all loathsome uncleanness." Returning, Jeremiah preached the same sermon in the temple court in the presence of the assembled people.

4. Humiliation and Despondency of the Prophet (20)

Imprisonment of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:1-2). When Pashhur, the chief officer of the temple guard, heard Jeremiah uttering these prophecies, he beat him, and put him into stocks in the watch-room of the northern gate of the temple court, leaving him there until morning.

Sentence upon Pashhur and the nation (Jeremiah 20:3-6). The next day, when released by Pashhur, the prophet, as did Amos at an earlier time in similar circumstances, directed against the official a prophecy applicable also to the nation of which he was a prominent representative: "The most appropriate name for you would be 'Terror on every side,' for you shall be encircled and overtaken by terrible perils. You shall see your friends die by the swords of the Chaldeans. Those of your nation who survive, together with the treasures of the city, shall be carried off as spoil to Babylon. You, who by your false predictions have misled the people, shall be among that unhappy band of captives who shall die and be buried in the land of your enforced exile."

Bitter complaint of the prophet (Jeremiah 20:7-18). Thou, O Jehovah, who art irresistible, didst persuade me to assume the duties of a prophet, in the fulfilling of which I am being subjected to ridicule and indignities. I have but one message, and that is, "Judgment and destruction are coming." No wonder that the people dislike the message and the messenger. And yet if I resolve to say nothing I am still more unhappy, for, whenever I behold their needs and mistakes, it is painful to refrain from declaring the truth which thou hast revealed to me concerning this erring people. Foes attack; perils thicken; trusted friends fail, and seek to betray me; yet, while I am often

disheartened, I am never afraid, for thou, the Almighty, art defending me. My persecutors, I know, will ultimately be overtaken by disgrace and calamity; but I sometimes long, O thou Vindicator of the righteous, to see that judgment speedily executed. As I think of my unhappy lot, I also often wish that I had never been born to such a life of sorrow, and I curse the day of my birth.

5. The Lesson Drawn from the Fidelity of the Rechabites (35) An example of obedience (Jeremiah 35:1-11). During the latter days of Jehoiakim's reign, when the Aramean hordes set loose by Nebuchadrezzar had driven the wandering Rechabites from their haunts east of the Jordan to seek refuge within Jerusalem, I was impelled to conduct them into one of the rooms connected with the temple, and publicly to offer them wine to drink. As I had anticipated, they absolutely refused to partake, saying: "As a tribe we drink no wine, for so our honored ancestor Jonadab commanded us. Inspired by an intense antipathy for the corrupt and idolatrous agricultural civilization which flourished in Canaan, he further enjoined upon us not to build houses, nor till the soil, nor cultivate the vine, but to cherish the simple nomadic life and customs, that we might thus enjoy the blessing of long life. Those injunctions we have faithfully heeded, and we are now here in the city simply that we may escape the horrors of war."

Judah stands in unfavorable contrast (Jeremiah 35:12-19). Will you not, O Judeans, heed and profit by the example of the Rechabites? In accordance with the command of their forefather, Jonadab, they regulate their entire life, conforming in every detail to the instructions laid down by him. You, however, have been instructed plainly and repeatedly respecting the commands of your God, and yet you have persistently disobeyed his will and paid homage to other deities. Will you not abandon your course of crime and apostasy, and, as penitents, return to him? But no; your faces and your acts do not reveal the least contrition. You give Jehovah no opportunity to avert the painful sentence which he has pronounced against you. When he longs to send blessings, your deeds and attitude compel him to destroy you. Since these barbarian Rechabites have obeyed the commands of their ancestor, their tribe shall continue to flourish long after your disobedient nation has gone down to ruin.

061. Jeremiah's Activity During The Reign Of Zedekiah

JEREMIAH'S ACTIVITY DURING THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH

062. I. The Downfall Of Judah And The Closing Years Of Jeremiah

I THE DOWNFALL OF JUDAH AND THE CLOSING YEARS OF JEREMIAH

Jehoiakim only lived to see the beginning of the calamities which resulted from his folly and selfish indifference. He died in 597, during the first siege of his capital by the Babylonians, leaving to his queen and young son Coniah, or Jeconiah, who assumed the name of Jehoiakin, a baneful heritage of war. Possibly the dirge preserved in Jeremiah 22:24-30 was uttered by Jeremiah in connection with the accession of the boy king. "Jehovah declares that, even though Coniah was his most cherished and valuable possession, he would deliver him into the power of the Babylonians. Both the king and the queen mother are condemned to die in exile. Worthless, as a ruler, is the son of Jehoiakim. Neither he nor his descendants shall sit again on the throne of Judah."

Three brief months, while Jerusalem held out against its besiegers, Jehoiakin reigned. Then he was dragged to Babylon at the head of the prominent Jews, who constituted the first group of captives. Henceforth Jeremiah's interest was divided between his countrymen in Babylon and those remaining in Judah. Among the former were most of his friends and the best elements in the nation. Those who remained and directed the counsels of Zedekiah, the well-meaning but inefficient son of Josiah, whom the Babylonians appointed as a vassal king over the kingdom of his father, were as self-confident as they were ignorant of the art of statesmanship. In their sordid natures there was little respect for the messages of the true prophet. Besides, the circumstances of the period called forth a group of designing men, who counterfeited the formulas and style of the true prophets so perfectly that the unsuspecting masses were constantly misled by messages which purported to be divine. Whether these so-called "false" prophets were in every case pure impostors, or honest and merely self-deceived, cannot be determined. Their communications voiced so completely the hopes of the people that it is obvious why the masses accepted them, while they rejected the stern, unwelcome warnings of men like Jeremiah.

Hence the environment of the aged prophet was then even more unpleasant than during the reign of Jehoiakim. Zedekiah, it is true, retained a genuine respect for him, but the character of the king was so weak and his power so slight that his secret regard bore little fruit. On the other hand, Jeremiah's influence with the Jews who remained in Judah was diminished; he himself became the object of open and persistent persecutions. At first he succeeded in keeping the people from again rushing into foolish rebellion against Babylon. The empty promises, however, of Babylon's rival, Egypt, and the deceptive messages of the false prophets, at last, in 587 B. C., led the nation to take the fatal step.

Jeremiah, whose inspired insight enabled him to appreciate the absolute impossibility of Judah's coping successfully with the powerful armies of the great conqueror, Nebuchadrezzar, had but one message for king and people. "If you would save yourselves and nation, surrender at once." Naturally, he did not change this advice when Babylonian armies encircled Jerusalem and overran Judah. That he would thereby incur the charge of being without patriotism was inevitable. Tragic

indeed is the picture of the aged prophet, branded as a traitor and subjected to shameful indignities at the hands of the nobles, simply because his loyalty to God and to his nation would not allow him to be silent. Through it all he wavered not, although it was a thankless return for his life of complete self-sacrifice. As the end of the state which he loved so intensely drew near, an inspired hope concerning its future filled his soul, and found ever clearer and more frequent expression. If no prophet suffered more than he, certainly none saw farther into the very heart of the Eternal and recognized the character and loving purpose revealed there. Sitting among the ruins of Jerusalem, he proclaimed the new and universal kingdom of God which was to be established in the heart of the individual. Like all true prophets, he uttered his brightest predictions in the time of greatest national distress. Amidst the closing scenes he moved with the same simple grandeur. When the end came, and the king of Judah and his guilty advisers were carried off to Babylon, Jeremiah, who had constantly preached loyalty to Nebuchadrezzar, was allowed to remain behind with the few Jews who rallied at Mizpah about his friend, the faithful Gedaliah. For a brief time the little colony basked in the sunshine of a just rule. Jeremiah was the accepted pastor of the flock. Fugitives came streaming back, and prosperity promised again to abide with them, when suddenly all their peace was destroyed by the treacherous murder of Gedaliah and his supporters by the hand of certain renegade Jews. Despite the advice and exhortations of Jeremiah, the survivors of the massacre, fearing the wrath of the Babylonians, fled to Egypt. Thus it was that the closing days of the prophet were spent among the refugees in Egypt. At the Jewish colony in Tahpanhes, on the borders of Palestine, he made his home.

Among his countrymen in the land of the Nile he found a needy, although very unpromising, field for his prophetic activity. Repeated national disasters had sadly shaken their faith in the God of Israel, while the polytheistic tendencies amidst which they now found themselves proved wellnigh irresistible. As a result, the masses went back to the worship of the ancient deities identified with the sun, and especially the moon,—“the queen of heaven.” With all his early energy and courage, Jeremiah attacked the widespread apostasy. To impress upon the doubting Jews the fact that the national calamity which had overtaken them was in perfect accord with Jehovah’s eternal purpose, he predicted that the Egyptians also would soon fall before God’s messenger of judgment, Nebuchadrezzar.

Fearlessly he declared to those who had turned from Jehovah to the old heathen deities that they would be destroyed, and that only those who were faithful to their nation’s God would again see the land of their nativity. A bitter defiance is reflected in their answer to the prophet, which suggests that the tradition that he met a martyr’s death at their hands is not without foundation. Surely, having given to his nation and God his life work, and all that the world counts dear, it was in a sense a fitting sequence that he should pour out his life’s blood upon the same altar. The conditions of his age were such that he lived almost constantly under the shadow of his nation’s sins, and the calamities which followed in their train. At the same time he was a man “tempted in all points as we are.” Through all his varied experiences his humanity found frequent expression. That element, so conspicuous in his character, only deepens our admiration and love for him. But his humanity never turned him from the path of duty. With that calm courage which comes not from earth, but from heaven, he heroically accepted every responsibility, however great. Little wonder that the Almighty confided to him the deepest spiritual truths vouchsafed to any man before the advent of the Son of man. By life as well as by word of mouth he proclaimed them. Oppressed,

despised by his own, he “saw seed” in the generations which followed. Certainly no other prophet made such a deep impression upon later Judaism as did Jeremiah. He is one of the two or three inspired men who, perfected by suffering and by faithful service, stood on the threshold of the completed New Testament revelation.

063. II. Sermons Connected With The First Captivity

II SERMONS CONNECTED WITH THE FIRST CAPTIVITY 1. Exhortations to Repent before it is forever too Late. (Jeremiah 13:15-27)

Seek Jehovah's help in this time of danger (Jeremiah 13:15-17). Give heed, O Judeans, and humble yourselves before the Lord. Pay homage to him, and secure his favor before he causes this black storm-cloud, which lowers over you, to break in all its fury. But no; I can perceive from your actions that even now you will not bow your proud heads. Nothing remains for me to do but to mourn over the disaster, and the complete captivity toward which you, the chosen people of Jehovah, are hurrying.

Judah's humiliation (Jeremiah 13:18-21). Let the queen regent and the youthful king, Jehoiakin, descend from the tottering throne, for the crown is falling from their heads. Already the cities of Southern Judah are besieged by the foe, and there is no one to restore them. Already a large portion of the population is being carried away captive, and the rest will soon be compelled to follow. Behold, the long-heralded northern foe draws near to Jerusalem. Where are the powerful people entrusted to your care, O sacred city? What will you think of your boasted alliances with heathen nations when you are subjected to their harsh rule? Unutterable woes shall soon overtake you. If you seek the cause of your disgraceful humiliation, you will find it in the black record of guilt with which your past is darkened.

Nothing but just retribution (Jeremiah 13:23-27). But it is useless to attempt to turn you, O Judeans, from your evil course, for your sinful habits have crystallized into character. It were easier for the negro to become white, or for a leopard to lose his spots. Hence, since you are incapable of repenting, eager to pardon and save you though he is, Jehovah can only punish your neglect and treachery toward him by laying bare before the world all your guilt and infidelity, and by scattering you as exiles among the nations.

2. A Dirge over Fallen Judah (Jeremiah 12:7-13) The rejected and afflicted nation (Jeremiah 13:7-13). Jehovah has handed over this nation, which he loves so deeply, and for which he has done so much, to be spoiled by cruel enemies. The continued defiance of his people has at last exhausted even the patience of the Infinite. Now foreign foes shall complete the devastation begun by the selfish, traitorous rulers of Judah, who have preyed upon rather than protected their charge. Already plundering foes, unconsciously carrying out the divine purpose, have laid waste the whole land, and granted no peace nor mercy to its inhabitants. In vain do you sow your grain, O Judeans, expecting to reap the harvest; for the hand, not only of man, but of God himself, is against you.

3. Threats and Promises to the Heathen (Jeremiah 12:14-17)

Fate of the heathen conditioned upon their conduct (Jeremiah 7:14-17). To those heathen foes, who are attacking his people, Jehovah declares that he will cause them also to taste the horrors of exile. At length, however, he will be moved by that deep love and pity which he feels toward all

mankind, and will restore them each to his native land. If they will seek to act in accordance with his will as revealed to his chosen people, and will manifest as much zeal in worshipping and serving him as they did in influencing the Hebrews to acknowledge fealty to Baal, then shall they share with his restored people in the permanent enjoyment of his blessings. If they do not heed his gracious offer, then complete national annihilation shall be their fate.

4. Character and Future of the Jews in Judah and in Babylon (Jer 24) The two baskets of figs (Jeremiah 24:1-3). After the armies of Nebuchadnezzar had swept over Judah, leveling everything and carrying into captivity the youthful Jehoiakin, the nobles and the artisans, I beheld in a vision two baskets of figs. The one basket contained fresh, ripe, luscious figs; the other, worthless figs, unfit to be eaten.

Interpretation of the vision (Jeremiah 24:4-10). With the vision came this message from Jehovah: "The basket of good figs represents the Jewish captives, whom I have sent to Babylon, that they, by hard experience, may learn valuable lessons. I will watch over them. Out of their present affliction shall come great good, for I purpose to restore them to this land, nevermore to be disturbed. At last, in sincerity, they shall turn to me as their God, and I will again recognize them as my chosen people. The hopelessly bad figs represent the princes and the people, who are left in Judah with Zedekiah, and those who have found refuge in Egypt. Like worthless flotsam and jetsam they shall be cast about upon the face of the earth, objects of scorn and reproach to its inhabitants. They shall be the victims of war, want, and pestilence, until these dread agents of destruction have completed their fatal work.

5. A Letter to the Jewish Exiles in Babylon (Jeremiah 29)

Superscription (Jeremiah 29:1-3). This is the text of a letter from Jeremiah to the elders, priests, prophets, and people, held captive in Babylon, which was delivered by the hands of a messenger sent by Zedekiah to the Babylonian king:

Settle down for protracted residence in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-9). "It is Jehovah's will, O Jewish captives in Babylon, that you make permanent homes for yourselves in the land of your enforced sojourn. Cultivate the soil, build up your families and increase. Be loyal to the cities of your adoption, for your prosperity is bound up with theirs. Be not deceived by your false prophets, when they declare in the name of Jehovah that you will speedily be allowed to return; for their words are a delusion.

Promise of an ultimate return (Jeremiah 29:10-14). For two generations (seventy years) the Babylonians shall hold you in captivity. Then shall Jehovah lead you back to your native land, and realize both his loving purpose toward you and the fond hopes which you cherish. Above all, you shall then seek him contritely and faithfully, and he will not be found slow to respond.

Fate of those who remain in Judah (Jeremiah 29:16-19). Far preferable will be your lot to that of Zedekiah and the worthless crew who are left behind in Judah. Calamity after calamity shall overtake them, and they shall be the object of the scorn and attacks of the people among whom they will be scattered, for they turn a deaf ear to the earnest warnings of Jehovah's faithful messengers.

Judgment which is to overtake the false prophets in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:15;Jeremiah 29:20-23). Put no confidence in your lying prophets. Hear the divine sentence which will speedily be carried out against Ahab, the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah. The treason which they preach shall be reported to Nebuchadrezzar, and you shall be witnesses of their execution. Their crimes of deceit and adultery, and the judgment which overtook them, shall become a proverb among you.

Shemaiah the Nehelamite has written to the priest Zephaniah here in Jerusalem, declaring that the Lord has called him to the chief priesthood instead of Jehoiada, the present incumbent, and intimating that his first duty will be forcibly to silence the “mad prophets” who seek to dissuade the people from their hope of speedy deliverance from Babylon. Why did he not personally attack me, for I have urged you to settle in Babylon with a view to a continued residence there? This is Jehovah’s declaration respecting that base, intriguing prophet: “He has no commission from me, and he is seeking to mislead you with his lying words. He is a traitor against me, and as a penalty neither he nor any of his descendants shall survive to enjoy the blessings which I have in store for my people.”

064. III. Dispelling False Hopes Of Speedy Deliverance From Babylon's Rule

III DISPELLING FALSE HOPES OF SPEEDY DELIVERANCE FROM BABYLON'S RULE 1. The Folly of Rebellion (Jeremiah 27:1-22)

Let the nations submit to Nebuchadrezzar (Jeremiah 27:1-11). Early during the reign of Zedekiah, in the year 595 B.C., when the states of Palestine were sending embassies to each other for the purpose of forming a coalition against Nebuchadrezzar, Jeremiah was inspired to make five yokes, and to give one to each of the foreign messengers who came plotting rebellion. These they were to present to their masters the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, with the following message from Jehovah: "I am the creator and supreme ruler of the earth. I give authority to whom I please. Nebuchadrezzar, the Babylonian king, is performing a service for me. To him and his family I have granted for a period supreme control over the people in this part of the earth. The nation which does not submit to his rule shall experience the miseries of war, famine, and pestilence. Therefore heed not the deceptive messages of your perverse religious leaders, for, if you listen to their encouragements to revolt against Babylon, they will betray you. Rebellion means certain exile. Continue to submit to Nebuchadrezzar, and you will be allowed undisturbed to enjoy your lands."

Let not Judah be beguiled into rebellion (Jeremiah 27:12-22). Jeremiah gave the same warning to Zedekiah and the people of Judah: "Remain loyal to Babylon. It is suicide to rebel. Those prophets who encourage you to do so are deceivers, and speak without any commission from Jehovah. Their prediction that the vessels of the temple, which have been carried to Babylon, will soon be brought back is an idle dream. Even the few paltry ones which were left behind will before long be borne off to Babylon, where they shall remain until Jehovah sees fit to restore them."

2. Contest between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer 28)

Later, in the same critical year, Hananiah, a certain prophet from the town of Gibeon, publicly in the temple contradicted Jeremiah, declaring in the name of Jehovah of hosts, and using the characteristic formulas of the true prophets, that within two years Jehovah would bring back the vessels of the temple, together with Jehoiakin and the Jews carried to Babylon, and that he would break the power of Nebuchadrezzar. "Would that your prediction might be realized," was Jeremiah's rejoinder, "but remember, O Judeans, that many prophets in the past have uttered similar popular prophecies, which, alas, have proved false. The sole proof of the truth of a prediction is not whether its content is pleasing, but whether it is fulfilled."

Acted prophecies (Jeremiah 28:10-17). Stung by the implications contained in Jeremiah's reply, Hananiah tore off the yoke, which his opponent was wearing about his neck as a symbol of the captivity which he predicted, and broke it into pieces. Then turning to the people, Hananiah declared: "Even thus will Jehovah within two years break that rule which Nebuchadrezzar now exercises over the nations." Abashed by the boldness of his opponent, Jeremiah departed without

replying. Soon, however, he returned with this new word from Jehovah: "True, O Hananiah. you have broken the yoke of wood, but a yoke of iron shall take its place. Even so the nations may for a moment throw off the comparatively easy rule of Babylon, but the penalty of their rebellion shall be a much more grievous servitude. Since you, O prophet, have sought to betray this people by a false message, within a year shall you die the death of a traitor." In the seventh month of the same year the divine sentence was executed.

065. IV. Condemnation Of Judah's False Leaders

IV CONDEMNATION OF JUDAH'S FALSE LEADERS

1. The Base Rulers of the Present, and the Promised Messianic King of the Future (Jeremiah 23:1-8; cf. Jeremiah 33:14-26)

Guilt and punishment of kings and nobles (Jeremiah 23:1-2). An unenviable fate awaits you, O rulers of Judah, for, instead of faithfully guarding the interests of the people entrusted to your charge, you have preyed upon them. Their present disorganized condition is due to your incompetency and culpable misrule. Jehovah will hold you responsible for all these heinous wrongs which you have perpetrated.

Ultimate restoration of the faithful, and appointment of just rulers (Jeremiah 23:3-8; cf. Jeremiah 33:14-26). The same God of justice declares that he will gather the faithful ones among his exiled people, and restore them to their land. There they shall again grow to be a great nation. Over them he will place rulers, who will considerately and wisely guide them, so that they shall never again experience the terrors of invasion or the pangs of famine. In the coming years, when Jehovah's purpose is fully realized, he will cause to arise from the princely house of David—which now, alas! is so degenerate—a king who shall have all the vigor of the original stock. In striking contrast to the character of the corrupt leaders who are now wrecking Judah, shall be that of the righteous ruler whom Jehovah will place over his people. His reign shall be marked by impartial justice and prudent action. Success shall crown all his efforts. Under his benign rule Israel and Judah, as of old, shall be united, and shall enjoy uninterrupted peace and prosperity. His name "Jehovah is our righteousness" shall be a pledge that Jehovah, who alone is able, has vindicated the righteousness of his people before the world.[69] For the day is coming when the deliverance from Egypt shall be completely eclipsed by the exodus from the lands of the captivity.

[69] Note that in the parallel passage Jeremiah 33:16 the designation "Jehovah is our righteousness" is applied to Jerusalem.

2. False Prophets and False Prophecies (Jeremiah 23:9-40)

Corruption of the prophets and its effects (Jeremiah 23:9-15). When I meditate upon the ideal of righteousness which Jehovah has revealed to me, and upon the failure of this people to realize it, I am completely overcome. Prophet and priest have profaned their high calling. The prophets of Jerusalem are even worse than those of Samaria who prophesied in the name of Baal; for, while they pretend to be Jehovah's representatives, they do not hesitate to commit gross deeds of immorality. Instead of turning the people from their sins, they confirm them in their evil course by word and by example. The crimes of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were not more hateful in the sight of Jehovah. Wretched indeed shall be the fate of these base prophets when Jehovah's certain judgment overtakes them.

Warnings against the false prophets (Jeremiah 23:16-22). Heed not their words, for, having no message from Jehovah, they speak only what conserves their own selfish interests. They are constantly predicting deliverance from the attacks of the Babylonians, and encouraging those who reject Jehovah's commands. Being hypocritical deceivers, they insinuate that all prophets are base like themselves. They have aroused Jehovah's hot indignation by their faithlessness and treachery.

Jehovah penetrates their deceptions (Jeremiah 23:23-29). They deceive men, but not the omniscient Ruler of the universe. He sees how they beguile the people by claiming to have had prophetic dreams. The true message from Jehovah, instead of easing the conscience, ever sets before the people a higher ideal of living, thereby laying bare, by contrast, their own imperfections. It is a flame which burns out the dross, rather than a veil which covers up their guilt.

Command not to use the prophetic expressions, perverted by misuse (Jeremiah 23:30-40). Jehovah disowns and denounces those impostors who, without any communication from him, take their cue from each other. By employing the familiar terminology of the prophets, they deceive the masses, and work incalculable harm to their nation. They have dragged the prophetic expression, "the burden of Jehovah," in the mire until it is unfit for use. If the people sincerely inquire, "What is the burden of Jehovah?" let them know that they themselves are a burden which God will no longer bear. A grievous judgment shall descend upon the prophet or priest who shall henceforth presume to preface his predictions by the old formula, "the burden of Jehovah." The simple message in itself is enough to commend it. In inquiring concerning the divine will, use some other simpler expression, like "What has the Lord answered?" or, "What has he said?" but woe to the individual or people who employs the worn-out, perverted term!

066. V. Sermons And Events Connected With The Final Siege Of Jerusalem

V SERMONS AND EVENTS CONNECTED WITH THE FINAL SIEGE OF JERUSALEM 1. Jeremiah's Message of Warning to Zedekiah (Jeremiah 21:1-10) The occasion (Jeremiah 21:1-2). During the earlier days of the final siege of Jerusalem, king Zedekiah sent two of the nobles, Pashhur, the son of Malchiah, and Zephaniah, the priest, to Jeremiah to inquire whether Jehovah would deliver the Judeans from Nebuchadrezzar, who was attacking them.

Jeremiah's reply: "No mercy, no hope of escape" (Jeremiah 21:3-10). To the king's question Jeremiah replied in the name of Jehovah: "In vain do you take up your weapons in order to defend yourself from the attack of the Babylonians. Prompted by righteous indignation, the Almighty himself will fight against you with his dread weapons of pestilence and famine. The king and those who survive he will deliver into the power of Nebuchadrezzar to be slain. The only way in which you can save your lives is by surrender to the foe before the end comes; for Jehovah has determined to show you no mercy, but, instead, to hand you over to these, his agents of punishment."

2. A Second Message of Warning (Jeremiah 34:1-7)

Future of Zedekiah and of his people (Jeremiah 34:1-7). A little later, while Nebuchadrezzar, with his armies, was laying siege to Jerusalem and the few cities of Judah which still held out against him, Jeremiah reiterated the divine declaration that for the Judeans there was no possibility of escape. Respecting Zedekiah, he added: "You shall go as a captive to Babylon, but your life shall be spared, and you shall die and be peacefully buried."

3. Condemnation of the Perfidy Shown by the Judeans in the Treatment of their Slaves (Jeremiah 34:8-22) The fact (Jeremiah 34:8-11). In a moment of contrition, aroused by the imminent danger which threatened from the swords of the besieging Babylonians, Zedekiah and his nobles made a solemn agreement before Jehovah that they would observe a neglected law, and set at liberty the Hebrew slaves in their possession. At first they carried out their obligations; but later, when the danger was temporarily averted through the withdrawal of the besiegers, they broke their sacred promises, and forced their former slaves into the old state of illegal bondage. The divine sentence upon the shameless princes (Jeremiah 34:12-22). When these facts were known, Jeremiah was inspired to declare in the name of Jehovah: "One of the elements in the holy covenant entered into by your forefathers, when I delivered them from the slavery of Egypt, was that in the seventh year they would set free every Hebrew slave held by them. That agreement they failed to keep. Of your own free will you recognized the obligation, and made a solemn covenant with me, in fulfilment of which you for a brief period liberated your slaves. But, since you have not permanently set your brothers free, you shall yourselves be free to experience the bitter woes of war and captivity. Those grandees of Jerusalem and the common people, who have shamelessly broken that holy covenant with me, which they symbolized by passing between the severed parts of a calf

sacrificed for the purpose, shall soon fall before their bloodthirsty foes, and their bodies shall lie unburied where they fall. Before many days the Babylonian army shall return to complete the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. King and princes shall be taken captive, and this land of your nativity shall be left desolate and uninhabited.”

4. Faithful Prophesying in the Face of Persecution and Death (Jeremiah 37; Jeremiah 38; Jeremiah 39:15-18)

Conquest of Judah by the Babylonians inevitable (Jeremiah 37:1-10). During the latter part of the weak, godless reign of Zedekiah, at the time when the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was temporarily relieved by the approach of an Egyptian army under Hophra, the Judean king sent two officers to Jeremiah to inquire what Jehoyah had in store for them. The prophet replied: “The Egyptians will secure for you only momentary deliverance. Soon they will retire, and the Babylonians will advance to conquer and destroy your city. Deceive not yourselves with false hopes. Even though you should defeat these foreign foes, they will nevertheless accomplish your ultimate destruction, because Jehovah has decreed it.”

Arrest and confinement of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:11-16). During the same intermission of the siege, Jeremiah set out for his native town of Anathoth to take possession of some property which he had recently inherited. At the eastern gate of the city an official on guard arrested him on the charge of deserting to the Babylonians. Disregarding Jeremiah’s denials, the officer brought him before the rulers of the city. They improved the opportunity to be revenged upon the plain-spoken prophet. After scourging him, they shut him up in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which had been converted into a temporary prison. There he remained for many days. His partial release by Zedekiah (Jeremiah 37:17-21). At last, when the siege was renewed, Zedekiah inquired of the prophet, who had been conducted into his presence, whether there was any message from Jehovah. Unhesitatingly Jeremiah repeated his former declaration: “You shall surely be conquered by Nebuchadrezzar.” Improving the opportunity, the aged patriot then demanded why it was that he had been imprisoned, while the deceitful prophets, who had betrayed the nation into its present plight, were allowed to go free. At Jeremiah’s earnest solicitations, Zedekiah committed him to a more congenial place of confinement in the guard-house, and, while the supply lasted, gave him a daily allowance of bread.

Thrown as a traitor into a well to die (Jeremiah 38:1-6). During his period of confinement, Jeremiah did not cease to declare that to remain in Jerusalem meant a violent death, and that the only way to save one’s life was to surrender to the Babylonian, since the ultimate fall of the city was inevitable.

Hearing of his advice, certain of the nobles, who were most hostile to him, demanded Jeremiah’s death, urging that he was a traitor, and that his predictions weakened the courage of the soldiers and of the people. Zedekiah, confessing that he was powerless to oppose his imperious nobles, handed over his prisoner to them. They seized Jeremiah, and, without the semblance of a trial, let him down into a dry well in the court of the guard-house. There he was left in the mire to die.

Rescued at the instigation of an Ethiopian eunuch (Jeremiah 38:7-13). When a certain Ethiopian eunuch by the name of Ebed-melech learned what had been done to Jeremiah, he informed the king concerning the danger from starvation which threatened the intrepid prophet. At the command

of Zedekiah, the Ethiopian, assisted by a small detachment of men, carefully drew up Jeremiah from the well. Until the fall of the city, the prophet remained in the court of the guard-house.

Message of assurance for Ebed-melech (Jeremiah 39:15-18). While there he received a divine message for his brave deliverer, Ebed-melech, to the effect that, although the ruin of the city was imminent, he would be delivered from the foes whom he feared. Since he had proved true to Jehovah in serving his prophet, his own life would be preserved amidst the common dangers.

Jeremiah's final interview with Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38:14-28). In his perplexity Zedekiah again summoned Jeremiah into his presence. After the prophet had been assured that no harm would be done to him, whatever should be the nature of his reply, he declared that the one way in which the king could save his city and his own life was by surrendering to the Babylonians. Although recognizing the truth of Jeremiah's advice, the weak, selfish Zedekiah hesitated to accept it because, as he confessed, he feared the scorn of those of his subjects who had already deserted to the camp of Nebuchadrezzar. Assuring him that these fears were groundless, Jeremiah exhorted him to deliver himself and his wives and innocent children from the horrible calamity which otherwise awaited them. Zedekiah, however, was hopelessly dominated by his defiant princes. Instead of acting in accordance with Jeremiah's wise counsel, he made the prophet promise not to reveal to the nobles the nature of their interview. This promise Jeremiah redeemed, and remained under the protection of the king until the final capture of Jerusalem.

067. VI. Messages Of Consolation

VI MESSAGES OF CONSOLATION 1. An Earnest of Ultimate Restoration (32)

Symbolic purchase of land (Jeremiah 32:1-15). During the final siege of Jerusalem, while Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard-house, his cousin visited him, with the request that he purchase a certain part of the family estate at Anathoth. Recognizing in this demand a divinely given opportunity for impressing his prophetic message in the presence of many witnesses, he caused a formal bill of transfer to be drawn up, and paid the stipulated sum, although the land was already in the possession of the besieging Babylonians. Then he gave command to Baruch to store away the deed where it would be preserved for many years. "For," as he added, "Jehovah has revealed to me that land in Judah shall again possess a marketable value."

Prayer for further assurance (Jeremiah 32:16-25). After the transaction had been completed, Jeremiah prayed this prayer: "O Creator and Ruler of the universe, merciful and just, all-wise and all-powerful, faithfully didst thou lead thy people in the past They, alas! sinned so grievously against thee that their present woes are but their just deserts. What, therefore, O Lord, is the full significance of thy command to me to buy this land which already is in the hands of relentless foes?"

Jehovah's answer (Jeremiah 32:26-44). Then Jehovah strengthened Jeremiah's wavering faith, declaring: "Do you think, O prophet, that there is anything too difficult for me, the supreme ruler of mankind, to accomplish? True, I will give the city over to the Babylonians, and they shall completely destroy it as a just punishment for the apostasy and persistent idolatry of its inhabitants. I will not, however, forget my people, but will gather them from the lands of their captivity, and cause them peaceably to inhabit those very cities which are now being laid desolate. More than that, they shall then unite in giving me their sincere and reverential worship. Then also will I enter into a solemn covenant with them, promising to establish them permanently in the land, and to bestow upon them all the blessings which my loving heart suggests. Then, throughout all the territory of Judah, men shall again buy and sell the land now wasted by Babylonian armies, giving written contracts even as you have just done."

2. The Bright Future beyond the Dark Present (Jeremiah 33:1-13)

Reiterated assurances of restoration (Jeremiah 33:1-13). On another occasion, while Jeremiah was still confined in the court of the guard-house, he received a second message of promise from Jehovah: "Useless are the frantic efforts of the men of Jerusalem to defend their tottering capital. Their bodies shall form a ghastly rampart about the doomed city. For a time I will give it up to judgment, but when war has done its purifying work I will rebuild and repeople it, and reveal to its inhabitants ideals of peace and righteousness undreamed of before. I will gather the scattered captives of Judah and Israel, and will establish them on their native soil, as in the days of the united kingdom. I will pardon the sin of the past, and remove its evil effects from their character.

Then will my name be honored among all people, because they shall see the glorious restoration of this city and land which I shall have accomplished. Instead of the present wails of despair, songs of thanksgiving shall rise to me from the lips of the happy, contented people whom I shall bring back to inhabit Jerusalem and the now desolate towns of Judah.”

3. Glories of the Restoration Contrasted with the Present Humiliation (Jeremiah 30:1 to Jeremiah 31:28)

Prophecies to be fulfilled in the future (Jeremiah 30:1-3). During the closing years of Jeremiah’s activity, after Jerusalem had been captured and destroyed, the divine command came to him to collect his various prophecies respecting the future of his nation and preserve them in written form; for it was Jehovah’s unchangeable purpose yet to bring back his exiled people to the land of their fathers.

Present terror to be succeeded by future peace (Jeremiah 30:4-11). These are the extracts from his sermons concerning Israel and Judah, which the prophet preserved: “True, terror now chills every heart. Fear blanches the faces of strong men. Never has the Jewish race experienced such calamities as at the present; but it shall not last forever. Jehovah will break the galling yoke of the conqueror, and deliver his people from their painful servitude. In the coming days, again united under a king of the royal house of David, they shall serve Jehovah. Fear not, therefore, O chosen race, called to perform a service for your God, since you have his assurance that he will destroy the nations who now hold you as captives, and that he will surely preserve you, after completing the purifying and educating process to which you are now subjected.

Present wounds and anguish, future healing and joy (Jeremiah 30:12-22). “Piteous is your present condition, with no champion to plead your cause, and no ally to help you. The disasters, however, which have fallen upon you, come at the command of Jehovah as a punishment for your persistence in sin. The tables shall soon be turned, and those who oppress you shall themselves feel the pains of conquest and captivity, while you shall be restored to Canaan. Out of its ruins another Jerusalem shall rise which shall equal the ancient city. Songs of thanksgiving and peals of laughter shall again be heard within these now ruined walls, while through its deserted streets shall surge a large and proud populace. The Hebrews will again be united under a ruler of their own race. Being chosen by Jehovah, he will know the divine will and worthily execute it. Then, O outcasts, you will be again in the old sense Jehovah’s people. The aim of the present judgment will be understood later (Jeremiah 30:23-24). “In that same glorious day you will at last appreciate the true significance of the present experiences and the principles which rule God’s universe. Jehovah’s judgment falls when it is deserved. Its aim is to discipline. When that end is accomplished, and not before, will your affliction cease.

Restoration of the northern Israelites (Jeremiah 31:1-9). “In the coming years, when Jehovah’s gracious purpose shall be realized, all surviving Israelites, united, shall again be known as his people. From the earliest days of their history, his love toward them has ever been strong and constant. As in those innocent days of Israel’s youth, he will again give her cause for merriment. On the long-deserted hills of Samaria, vineyards shall be planted. From hill to hill the watchmen shall send forth the cry, ‘Let us go down to worship at Jehovah’s sanctuary in Jerusalem!’ He will gather his scattered people from far and near. No physical infirmity shall prevent them from coming at his call. A sad but hopeful throng will he lead back, making easy and attractive the way

for their weary feet; for his love for his people is like that of a father for a child. In this universal restoration, the northern Israelites will not be overlooked, for Jehovah has not forgotten that in the earlier days they were the strongest and most prominent of the Hebrew race. The restored and united Hebrew race shall again enjoy peace and plenty (Jeremiah 31:10-14). "Let the whole world know that he, like a shepherd, will assemble those whom he has scattered so widely. Slaves though they are, he will secure their liberation. Leaving their sorrows behind, they shall return to enjoy undisturbed the rich products of Canaan and the social and religious privileges which it affords.

Pardon for the repentant northern Israelites (Jeremiah 31:15-22). "Jehovah has heard the bitter cries of lamentation which have for nearly a century and a half gone up from faithful northern Israelites because the citizens of their once powerful nation are either dead or scattered to the four winds. At last let them be comforted and refrain from weeping, for their prayers shall be answered in the return of the captives. Through all the long years, while they have felt themselves crushed under the ban of Jehovah's displeasure, he has been disciplining them. Now that they are truly repentant, the love and compassion which go out toward them from the heart of the Eternal will find expression in acts of restoration and blessing. The way is open for you to return, O exiles, if you will. Come back, wayward people, to your cities. Fear no more dangers, for under Jehovah's strong protecting care the men will be able to devote themselves undisturbed to their daily tasks, while the women will suffice to guard them from all attacks.

Conditions when the restoration shall be realized (Jeremiah 31:23-28). "When Jehovah has restored his people to the cities of Judah, as of old, they shall make pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the site of the temple of the God of justice and holiness. The hearts now hungering shall be satisfied with peace and plenty. As I came back to the dread present, my prophetic soul was enraptured by the visions of the blessings in store for my race. With them came the assurance from Jehovah that, as he up to the present had devoted himself to destroying and uprooting the two Hebrew kingdoms, so henceforth he would restore and guard them."

4. The New Covenant between Jehovah and his People (Jeremiah 31:29-40)

Responsibility of the individual (Jeremiah 31:29-30). In the new era, which is soon to dawn, the old fallacy that men are morally responsible for the sins of their ancestors, or for those of the community, will be disproved. No longer will the individual be able to avoid the consequences of his own crimes, but each shall be rewarded according to his acts. The new covenant within the heart (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Jehovah will also establish a new covenant with his restored people. It shall not be an external compact between himself and the nation collectively, like that which was established when he led the Israelites forth from Egypt, and which they have broken, but a personal covenant between himself and the individual. Then the laws which formulate Jehovah's demands, to which the nations solemnly subscribe, shall be written, not upon stones, but indelibly impressed upon the minds of each faithful Israelite. Thus shall the close, confidential relationship between Jehovah and his people be re-established. Since the divine law will be impressed upon the mind of every one, it shall no longer be necessary to impart it by public and private instruction. All, the humblest as well as the noblest, shall know the will of the Lord, and shall be personally conscious of having received his full forgiveness.

068. Appendix: Books Of Reference

APPENDIX BOOKS OF REFERENCE The extant literature for the study of the prophetic books is so numerous as to be confusing. The works which follow are mentioned for their helpfulness to the student who seeks to obtain a mastery of prophetic thought. Technical studies and works not translated into English are omitted. For the history of the two centuries spanned by the contents of this volume the student may be referred to Professor C. F. Kent's "A History of the Hebrew People: The Divided Kingdom," 1897, (Scribner,) or to the still briefer sketch by Professor C. H. Cornill of Konigsberg, "History of the People of Israel," 1898. (Open Court Publishing Co.) A more elaborate work is Kittel's "History of the Hebrews," Vol. II, 1896. (Williams & Norgate.) The father of the study of prophecy to-day was Professor W. Robertson Smith, whose articles on the prophetic books in the "Encyclopedia Britannica," and whose "Prophets of Israel," (D. Appleton & Co.), second edition, 1895, are almost as valuable as ever. For brief surveys of the Minor Prophets in turn, Farrar's "Minor Prophets," 1889, (Revell,) or Cornill's "Prophets of Israel," 1895, (Open Court Publishing Co.,) are acceptable, the former being more detailed than the latter. Kirkpatrick's "Doctrine of the Prophets," 1892, (Macmillan,) is of great value for its concise presentation of the characteristic teachings of each prophet. Without derogation to any of these, however, it may be said that the two volumes by Professor George Adam Smith, entitled "The Book of the Twelve Prophets," 1896-98, (Armstrong, "The Expositor's Bible,") are the best aid to the interpretation of the Minor Prophets to be purchased in English. One may also mention the very valuable analyses in Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," sixth edition, 1897. (Scribner.) For the study of Amos there are two excellent commentaries: one by Professor Driver, "Joel and Amos," 1897, (Macmillan,) the other by Professor Mitchell, "Amos: An Essay in Exegesis." For Hosea and Micah the most available commentaries are by Professor T. K. Cheyne in the Cambridge Bible series. For Nabum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah an admirable commentary has been written for that same series by Professor A. B. Davidson. Among the countless aids for the study of Isaiah, one may mention the clever sketch by Driver in the Men of the Bible series, entitled "Isaiah, His Life and Times," 1888, (Revell,) the commentaries by Professor Skinner, "Isaiah, Chapters 1-39," 1896, (Macmillan,) and by Professor Mitchell, "Isaiah: A Study of Chapters 1-12," 1897, (Crowell,) and the expository, yet historical, treatment by Professor George Adam Smith, "The Book of Isaiah , 1-39," 1889. For Jeremiah, Professor Cheyne has written a spirited sketch, in the Men of the Bible series, entitled "Jeremiah, His Life and Times." A moderately good commentary is that by Rev. A. W. Streane in the Cambridge Bible series.

069. Volume 2: The Messages Of The Later Prophets

The Messages of the Bible THE MESSAGES OF THE LATERPROPHETS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF TIME, ANALYZED, AND FREELY RENDERED IN PARAPHRASE, BY FRANK KNIGHT SANDERS, PH.D.

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070. Preface

PREFACE This volume completes the arrangement and analytical paraphrase of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament begun in the Messages of the Earlier Prophets. The hearty response of the public to that volume has encouraged the authors to continue and finish their task.

We cannot expect in a work like this to avoid criticism. Opinions differ widely regarding the exact dates to be assigned to particular prophetic addresses. Many will be led, for reasons that seem fair and convincing, to differ from the authors in regard to the proper setting of certain passages. Such candid criticism is only helpful and contributory to the desired result of establishing the true history of prophecy. This is the goal of modern scholarship. It is not of supreme importance to determine whether Isaiah, the son of Amoz, or one of his spiritual disciples, wrote chapters 24 to 27 of the book that bears his name; the one needful task is to ascertain the proper position of their contents in the development of Old Testament revelation. The authors have adopted the conclusions embodied in this volume after repeated and minute consideration of the data. While not infallible, it may be said that conclusions which in the main agree with those of such careful scholars as George Adam Smith, Kirkpatrick, Driver and Nowack cannot be regarded as without a reasonable foundation.

Three remarks may help to prepare the reader to appreciate the point of view of the authors in a rearrangement of the prophetic material which otherwise might impress some readers as unduly radical and even reckless. In the first place, as was intimated in Vol. I. (pp. 12, 84), the principle of arrangement is strictly historical. Every passage is arranged chronologically according to the period to which it refers. In no other way can the student of prophecy be enabled to estimate the progress of revealed truth. The fragmentary condition (see Vol. I., pp. 11–14) of the majority of the prophetic books and the absence of dates or clear chronological data compel the scholar to rest his final judgment on the authority of tradition and mere juxtaposition, or else upon a careful analysis and comparison of the subject-matter of a passage. The latter seems to be the only sure criterion. It is open to revision, but not to rejection.

Again the prophetic writings, historically studied, gain wonderfully in clearness, force, significance, and spiritual impression. The reader puts himself into the situation of the prophets, catches the glow of their convictions, and climbs the sublime heights of their hopes. He forgets the writers in their messages and comes face to face, not with the mouthpiece of Jehovah, but with his living word. The messages of the prophets thus become communications for to-day and for all times.

We may be permitted to add that a paraphrase knows no partisanship. It should be without color. This volume may prove useful even to those who hesitate to accept the historical conclusions of its authors. Their chief aim has been to render into expressive English the exact thought of each prophetic paragraph. The explanatory headings indicate the interpretation which is deemed to be on the whole the truest and most helpful. To the Reverend Samuel B. Sherrill, who has reviewed this volume in manuscript, we are indebted for valuable suggestions.

F. K. S.

C. F. K.

071. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

072. I. The Characteristics Of Exilic And Post Exilic Prophecy

I THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EXILIC AND POST EXILIC PROPHECY The beginning of the Babylonian exile marks a turning point in both Hebrew prophecy and history. The changed conditions and the new point of view gradually developed a new type of prophet. Although the distinctions between the earlier or pre-exilic and the later or exilic and post-exilic prophets must be interpreted broadly, they are clearly defined. The aims of the two groups of teachers were the same, but the earlier spoke to a nation and dealt with the problems of an independent state, while the latter addressed the scattered, discouraged, often oppressed remnants of their race. For a time the Jews were a people with only a past and a future; and, during all the period represented by the later prophets, they were subject to foreign masters, so that they had little or no political life of their own. Hence the prophets ceased to be active statesmen who devoted much of their time and thought, as did Isaiah and Jeremiah, to political questions. Instead, they reviewed the past history of their race to learn the lessons which it taught, or else devoted themselves to drawing up, as did Ezekiel, the constitution of an ideal state. The practical problems of social life, also, were no longer as important and insistent as they had been before the exile, so that, although they are not ignored, they are only treated incidentally. In the writings of the later prophets—as Professor George Adam Smith has well said—“political and social righteousness largely gives way to divine righteousness.” A people with few or no responsibilities could not by them be taught of God. Consequently great social teachers like Amos and Micah found few successors in the later period. The prophets also began to study intently the writings of their predecessors and to draw from them most of their conceptions of Jehovah, so that they brought to their race no startlingly new theological ideas, as did Amos and Hosea.

If the later prophets were not great statesmen nor social teachers nor original theologians, they were true to the prophetic ideal, and devoted themselves to the vital questions of their age. In so doing they attained their real greatness, and performed for their race and mankind an inestimable service. When the Hebrew state fell in ruins, the prophets turned from the nation to the individual. Hitherto they had addressed him only as an integral part of the commonwealth; henceforth he possessed an importance in himself, apart from the community to which he belonged. Thus the very circumstances which limited the activity of the prophets opened to them an unlimited field, which only the great prophet of Nazareth fully occupied. The daily interests and achievements of the people whom they addressed were personal, not national. If they were to meet the practical needs of their contemporaries they were obliged to a certain extent to turn pastors, and to deal more with religious and ethical than with political and social questions. In so doing they touched the hearts of the masses more closely than did the earlier prophets. They were also more intimately acquainted with the interests and problems of the individual. Consequently, like the sages and psalmists, they speak more directly to the heart of mankind, and their messages have an obvious and perennial application independently of their historical setting.

Since the life of Judaism constantly centred more and more about the temple at Jerusalem and its ritual, the later prophets, instead of denouncing mere ceremonialism as meaningless, as did the

earlier, held up the hands of the priests. They devoted much of their attention to emphasizing the importance of the temple and its service. In this they were doubtless influenced by the irresistible tendency of their age. They also recognized that conditions had radically changed since the days of Amos and Isaiah, and that a ritualistic type of religion was essential to the preservation of the integrity and faith of their race amid the terrible trials and temptations to which it was being subjected.

Sacerdotalism and legalism also supplied more and more the religious needs of the people, so that the demand for the work of the prophets became less and less. In the law the teachings and principles presented by the earlier prophets were preserved and enforced upon the minds of the people in a form which even the most obtuse could appreciate. Before the exile that process had begun, and at the great reformation of Josiah the Book of Deuteronomy was publicly adopted as the law book of the nation. This continued to be the constitution of the community in Palestine until Nehemiah and Ezra introduced at the great assembly a still more detailed and expanded code. Until that time, questions not settled by the Book of Deuteronomy were referred, in accordance with its injunctions, not to the prophets, but to the priests, for an authoritative decision (Haggai 2:11-13; Malachi 2:7).

Although the prophetic order continued to exist, and apparently to count a considerable number of prophets and prophetesses among its ranks (Ezra 5:1; Nehemiah 6:12; Nehemiah 6:14; Zechariah 7:3; Zechariah 13:4), it no longer enjoyed the prestige of earlier times. The prophets were ever conscious of the sceptical attitude of their hearers and recognized that their predictions would not be fully believed until they had been at least partially fulfilled (compare for example Zechariah 2:11 b; Zechariah 4:9 b; Zechariah 6:15 b). To the pernicious influence of the false prophets, who in the name of Jehovah had often misled the people, undoubtedly is largely due the destruction of the old popular confidence in the word of the man of God. No prophetic bishops appear, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, to have maintained for a long period over the community a growing influence. The personalities of the later prophets were also less prominent and distinct. The names of only five or six of them have been preserved. Of the private life of the prophets we know practically nothing. Ezekiel alone gives us a few details respecting himself. The date of a large part of the prophecies can be determined only by a study of the internal evidence. They represent bursts of prophetic eloquence evoked by great crises or problems. After their messages had been sent forth, the prophets quickly retired to the seclusion of private life. In all probability many of the prophecies were originally issued anonymously. A large proportion of them are clearly the product of study rather than the spontaneous expressions of the public orator. Haggai alone is an exception. The simple directness of his sermons is in striking contrast to the carefully developed, elaborate style of most of the later prophetic writings. The weird apocalyptic symbolism which in general characterized the exilic and post-exilic prophecies is evidence that their authors had ample time to develop the form as well as the content of their messages. The fact that they were anonymous undoubtedly explains why later editors appended them to older prophecies, in the language or thought of which they detected certain points of likeness. The same tendency that led them to associate the entire proverbial literature with the name of Solomon (Proverbs 1:1) influenced them to join many of these anonymous fragments to the original sermons of Isaiah, the prince of prophets. The task of assigning the different sections of such a book as that which bears the name of Isaiah to their original historical setting is difficult; but the resulting gain in vividness, clearness,

and reality abundantly rewards the trouble. Then the historical allusions which the different prophecies contain contribute, not to the confusion, but to the lucid interpretation of their meaning. They also in turn throw much light upon the development of that life and thought which was the background of the New Testament. The writings of the later prophets group themselves about certain critical epochs in the history of their race, such as the beginning and the close of the Babylonian exile, the rebuilding of the temple, and the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra, with long intervening periods of silence. Although the names of only five or six prophets are known, the work of at least twelve can be distinguished. The impartation of their divinely given message, not the enhancing their own fame, was their first and sole aim. The names of the earlier prophets were preserved because the performance of their mission brought them prominently into public life and their acts and words became a part of their nation's history. The later prophets spoke more privately to their race. Fortunately men preserved the message long after the man who delivered it had been forgotten. The history of exilic and post-exilic prophecy emphasizes the great fact that it is acquaintance with the truth itself, not with the one who imparts it, that is essential. The later prophecies are more general and contain less local and nationalistic elements than do the earlier. The experiences of the exile also forced the prophets to recognize the existence of other nations as a part of Jehovah's creation and as objects of his love. Gradually the missionary ideal found expression in their writings, and there rose before their enlightened vision the outlines of a universal kingdom in which all nations were to join in the worship of Jehovah. In the moments of their darkest distress this vision cheered and inspired them. The realization that their race was to be herald of that kingdom impelled them to spare no effort to prepare their countrymen for the exalted service.

Saddened and discouraged by the sins of mankind, they frequently proclaimed the necessity of a great world-judgment, in which the wicked would be condemned and the righteous vindicated. As they recognized the pitiable weakness and incapacity of the living representatives of the chosen people, they did not lose hope in the coming kingdom of God on earth; but they looked more and more for its realization through supernatural intervention. Thus the prophetic horizon was extended far beyond the boundaries of Palestine, of the ancient Semitic world, and of the earth itself. Dimly certain prophets also began to see the kingdom, not of flesh, but of spirit, which lay beyond the gates of death. By their broad outlook, by their regard for the individual, by their lofty ideal of service, by their universalism, and by their firm belief that Jehovah would surely establish his kingdom on earth, the later prophets completed the otherwise incomplete work of the earlier. Their messages are all the more precious and luminous because they come from the night of their nation's humiliation and distress, and voice mankind's inspired faith, not in the seen, but in the unseen.

073. II. The Decade Before The Final Fall Of Jerusalem And Its Two Great Prophets

II THE DECADE BEFORE THE FINAL FALL OF JERUSALEM AND ITS TWO GREAT PROPHETS The year 597 B. C. was of great significance to the Hebrew people politically and religiously. The obstinate, unreasoning confidence of his people Israel in Jehovah's protection which had blinded the eyes of the majority in Judah to the ruin toward which the state was drifting, and made them deaf to the earnest appeals of Jeremiah, began to be shaken, when the flower of the nation was transported to Babylon. Instead despair and a passionate desire to see the vengeance of God upon their bold, even contemptuous, oppressors took possession of their minds. The times seemed to them to be completely out of joint and Jehovah the one at fault. They failed to realize that their misfortunes were wholly due to their own short-sightedness, disloyalty, and corruption, and that nothing but a thorough-going national reformation could restore them to divine favor. They counted themselves rather the victims of adverse political and religious conditions. They considered their triumphant restoration to Judah the only possible way in which Jehovah's character could be vindicated and their own great wrongs righted. The prospect of an immediate deliverance, however, was anything but bright. They were completely and helplessly in the power of Nebuchadrezzar, because of the insensate folly and perversity of their late King Jehoiakim and his nobles. Placed on the throne of Judah about 608 B. C. by Pharaoh Necho, he became, by virtue of the crushing defeat which that sovereign suffered at the hands of Nebuchadrezzar two years later, a vassal of the Babylonian king. Under Jehoiakim's sway the kingdom of Judah became a nursery of insurrection and corruption. The young king was thoroughly selfish and incompetent. He dreamed of impossibilities; he was impatient of criticism; he was superstitious and vain. Swayed completely by his likeminded counsellors and resisting the disinterested warnings of Jeremiah, he trusted the promises of the king of Egypt and revolted from Nebuchadrezzar. Such an open defiance of his power could not be overlooked by one who aimed at the absolute sway of the western world. The great king in 597 B. C. marched westward to subdue his rebellious vassal. Before his army had effected the capture of the city of Jerusalem King Jehoiakim died, thus escaping the bitter consequences of his blunder. These were inevitable. In accord with the military policy of the Assyrians and Babylonians, Nebuchadrezzar not only took due vengeance upon the rebellious people and their leaders, but also made another formidable rebellion impossible by removing those who would naturally instigate and give it strength. As soon as the hapless young King Jehoiakin, three months a nominal sovereign, was forced to surrender, he, his attendants, officials, warriors, and thousands of his substantial subjects, among others the young priest Ezekiel and probably the youthful Daniel, were transported to Babylonia. The king was placed in confinement; a few were drafted into the service of the great king; the great majority were settled by themselves, not far from the city of Babylon. Here they were free, apparently, to live, undisturbed, a community-life of their own, to engage in industrial occupations, and to make the most of their opportunities. They even held intercourse with those who were left behind in Judah, but any word or act which tended to arouse discontent among those at home was sure to

incur severe punishment. In Judah Nebuchadrezzar had appointed Zedekiah, another prince of the royal Davidic house, to the throne, and had left the kingdom once more to itself, content with having crippled its power for mischief. For the remaining decade of Judah's history its people were living in these two widely separated and contrasting communities. The Jews in Babylon represented the strongest elements of the race and were compared by the prophet Jeremiah to good figs fit for use (Jeremiah 24). On them he based all his hopes for the future. The people left in Judah he likened to rotten figs, fit only for destruction. Well might he despair of them, for they gave little heed to his warnings and subjected him to constant persecution. They had no desire to confess, much less to repent of their evil ways, but defiantly persisted in the idolatry which he denounced. The heart and hopes of Jeremiah were with the other portion of the nation, far away beyond the trackless desert. He saw that the real future of his nation must be achieved through them. He counselled patience and submission, urging them to settle down in quiet and to pursue their normal life (Jeremiah 29), asserting that the exile would continue at least more than a generation (Jeremiah 29:10). That his words were read with respect is indicated by the indignant protest of Shemaiah, a man of standing among the exiles, who wrote to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29) urging that his action be rebuked by the ecclesiastical authorities in Judah. But God had raised up for these lonely and homesick exiles—unhappy in the midst of plenty, impatient under the slight restrictions laid upon them, haunted by the hateful thought that they dwelt in an unclean land—a faithful shepherd in the person of the prophet Ezekiel. He was one of themselves, dwelling in their midst, sharing their experiences, entering into their needs. It was he who held them together, kept alive a spirit of hope, fought their idolatrous tendencies and taught them broader views of the purposes and methods of Jehovah. During the decade between the first captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, however, his most prominent task was to throw a clear light upon the attitude of Jehovah toward Israel and to assert the absolute certainty of the downfall of the city and state. For some years Ezekiel uttered no word of which we have record. So far as we know, his ministry began in 592 B. C., five years after the deportation itself. For the latter half of the decade he labored earnestly to prepare his fellow-captives to understand the approaching catastrophe. They still believed that the holy city was inviolable, for there was located Jehovah's holy temple, which he could not allow to be destroyed. Hence Ezekiel's God-given task was to set in a clearer light the true character of the city and land, to indicate that, because of the sins of the inhabitants, Jehovah had abandoned his once-loved sanctuary, and to predict in unmistakable ways the speedy end of city, state, and temple. Every such plain utterance, unpalatable though it was, helped to save some Judean patriots from despair and infidelity when the crushing blow descended. It helped them to understand the great principles of the kingdom of God more clearly, and thus—even at the period when the true prophets had only denunciations and warnings for their hearers—prepared them to appreciate the future work of Israel among the nations.

074. Ezekiel, The Priest-Prophet Of The Exiles

EZEKIEL, THE PRIEST-PROPHET OF THE EXILES

075. I. The Prophet And His Prophecies

I THE PROPHET AND HIS PROPHECIES A recent writer has said that the prophet Ezekiel has “the most interesting personality in the great group of prophets.” He certainly deserves the place among the prophets of highest rank which has been given him. Yet this is not due to our intimate knowledge of his personal history. As in the case of his predecessors, Isaiah and Jeremiah, we do not know the circumstances of his early career nor of his death; it is from the events and utterances of his active life that we must form our conception of the man. His ministry opened in the fifth year of Jehoiakin’s exile (592–3) and continued over twenty years, until the middle of the period of captivity. He describes himself as the son of Buzi (Ezekiel 1:3) and a member of the aristocratic priestly caste in Judah. According to Josephus he was carried away from the home-land while only a youth; but many incidental facts indicate that this was mere conjecture on the part of the Jewish historian. The elders in the Babylonian community came to him at his own house for counsel; he even refers to the period of youth (Ezekiel 4:14) as somewhat distant. Adding to these the indications of broad culture and of a careful mastery of civil and ritual law and of the historical and prophetic writings of his people, we are led to the conclusion that he was a man of considerable maturity, and that it was partially for that reason that his words carried great weight in the exiled society. In one important characteristic Ezekiel was more prophet than priest; he was a growing man, a student of life as it unfolded before him. His published sermons are a rich storehouse of the ideas of the age—geographical, historical, legal, ethical, and religious. He even learned much from his Babylonian surroundings of which he made use in planning for the future development of his own people. In many ways, however, he differed from the prophets who preceded him. During the first five years of his ministry he seems, at first glance, to direct his gaze almost wholly toward his native land and its approaching fate, ignoring the community of which he was a part, and failing to exercise the leadership characteristic of the true prophet. But we note, on closer inspection, that he was a prophet in order that he might be a pastor. His declarations regarding guilty Israel were intended to affect the thought and the action of his own community even more than of the men of Judah. His faithful presentations of God’s attitude toward Israel was the true enlightening cause of the passive submission of the exiles to their lot and of their gradual participation in the opportunities afforded by Babylonia.

Ezekiel’s early training as a member of the order of the priesthood is indicated, not only by the breadth of his culture and by his personal refinement, but also by his respect for priests as a class in the community and particularly by the prominent place which he assigns to them in the future development of his nation (Ezekiel 44). His training also suggests the reason why he promptly recognized the necessity of a more exact and far-reaching legal organization of the future state which was so well wrought out by him in the closing chapters of the book. Hence in many ways he was rarely fitted for the much-needed task of anchoring the old ethical standards by new ritual requirements. The strength and depth of Ezekiel’s nature are best revealed, however, by a detailed study of his writings. While his wide acquaintance with the earlier prophets and his particular indebtedness to his immediate predecessor and teacher Jeremiah are very apparent, he

was his own master in every way. There is a distinct individuality in his methods as well as in his words. When he sought to make a deep impression upon his neighbors, his messages of judgment against guilty Israel were often prefaced and supported by acted parables of the most impressive sort (Ezekiel 4, 5, 12). His surveys of past history were effectively presented in elaborate allegories, which could not be forgotten. His hopes for the future took the form of striking visions (Ezekiel 37-48), which served as standing texts for stirring descriptions of the life that was to be. The book of Ezekiel is readily divided into two great sections, the first twenty-four chapters being devoted to the teachings and actions of the prophet prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. These two divisions of the book have been happily characterized as respectively destructive and constructive. In the latter half of the book a threefold arrangement is noticeable: chapters 25–32, a collection of predictions against various nations; chapters 33–39, a collection of comforting messages to Ezekiel's fellow exiles; and chapters 40–48, the vision of the reconstructed city and sanctuary. This regularity of arrangement exhibits the elaboration, symmetry, and artistic character of the book as a whole. The arrangement, as in the case of other prophetic collections, appears to have been made primarily on a topical rather than chronological basis. This is particularly obvious in the last half of the book. In general, however, the order is also that of original production. The prophetic book of Ezekiel has, without much doubt, come down to us substantially as Ezekiel or some one of his disciples arranged it. Its literary defects, no less than its merits, are of a kind which a man of priestly training would produce. The style, though stately and polished, is often prosaic and full of mannerisms. Ezekiel has no such poetic soul as Isaiah, although he makes frequent use of figures of speech (Ezekiel 15, 19, 26, etc.), is fond of plays upon words, and revels in imagery of every description. There is, nevertheless, an element of formalism in the prophet's attitude which is fatal to the choicest lyric productiveness. The book of Ezekiel is to be judged, not by its artistic arrangement, nor by its beauty of detail, but by its breadth of outlook, by its grasp of the true relation between the divine and the human, by its presentation of the possibilities of the future to his disheartened countrymen, and by its inspiring assurances that the times, far from being out of joint, were being directed by Jehovah, and that the Jewish race, by its very misfortunes, was making progress toward the goal ever present to the divine mind.

076. II. The Imaginative Element In Ezekiel's Prophecy

II THE IMAGINATIVE ELEMENT IN EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY A very characteristic element in the predictions of Ezekiel is his free but careful use of imagery and symbolism. Both are employed by other prophets. Abijah, for example, gives point to his assertion that Jeroboam had been chosen to lead the revolt of the northern kingdom by rending his new mantle into twelve pieces, ten of which he gave to the incredulous overseer (1 Kings 11). Isaiah, by walking thinly clad and barefoot (Isaiah 20), made a vivid prediction of the threatened captivity of Judah. When Jeremiah wished to impress upon his sceptical audience the destruction which Jehovah was about to visit upon the city of Jerusalem, he dashed an earthen jar to fragments in their presence. By such actions these incomparable preachers enforced their messages. Teaching by symbols not only insured the attention of their hearers and added to the impressiveness of their words, but often conveyed an idea the open expression of which might have been dangerous or inexpedient. Even more constantly do the prophets make use of various forms of imagery to illumine and beautify their addresses. Isaiah's parable which likened Judah to an unfruitful vineyard (5), or Micah's bold series of paronomasias (Micah 1:10-15), by which he announced the approach of danger, illustrate in strikingly different ways this tendency. All other prophets, however, are surpassed by Ezekiel in the use of figurative language. He rarely puts forward an idea without some embellishment. Sometimes he proposes a riddle to his hearers (Ezekiel 17), or utters a parable which he also illustrates by a symbolic action (Ezekiel 24), or he unfolds an elaborate allegory (Ezekiel 16), in each case making the figure of speech a mere means to the end of expressing his message more effectively. But he stands peculiar in his remarkable use of symbolism, especially of the vision, which is a higher form of the same mental tendency. He passes readily from the simpler forms of symbolism, like the metaphor, the parable, and some form of objective action, to the most complex, such as the allegory and the vision.

Ezekiel's visions appear to be carefully worked-out products of his own creative imagination. This is one difference between the inaugural vision of Isaiah and that of Ezekiel. Isaiah conveys effectively his sense of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah, but furnishes little else, while Ezekiel describes with minuteness of detail the appearance of the Divine. Isaiah, in connection with his prophetic activity, makes no further reference to his one vision, but Ezekiel repeatedly describes the divine glory in this form. Thus, whatever may have been the objective impression made upon Ezekiel at the time of his call and at other times, he seems to have leisurely thought out and expressed in literary form what seemed to him an adequate description of the details of the vision. Hence Ezekiel's use of the vision in prophecy is intended to be significant. Every detail must be scrutinized for its meaning.

It is of interest to note the probable sources of the details which enter into such a composite vision as, for example, that of the first chapter of his prophecy. It is a vision of God. The cherubim, wheels, arch, and throne are mere accessories. Some of them are furnished, no doubt, by the current symbolism of Hebrew poetry (Isaiah 19:1; Psalms 18:9-10). Others seem to be an elaboration of details already employed by Isaiah in his inaugural vision. Some were probably

suggested by the symbolism of Babylonian temples and palaces. Ezekiel freely used suggestions from every available source. So clear is the literary stamp upon the prophecies of Ezekiel that it is often difficult to determine what the prophet actually did or saw. Did he really lie for months upon his left side to represent the duration of the captivity of the northern kingdom (Ezekiel 4)? Was it, on the other hand, a mere parable, not acted at all? Did he, on another occasion, remove all the hair of his head and face (Ezekiel 5), and dispose of it by burning and in the other ways prescribed? It is possible, as Professor Moulton suggests, that the real action was very slight, serving as an introduction and illustration of the discourse that followed. Yet we may deem it probable that the prophet, for many years, acted as well as proclaimed his message, even symbolizing in various ways the great thoughts uppermost in his mind. The finest example of a detailed vision, never meant to be understood as other than ideal, is found in the closing chapters of his book. The prophet fitly crowns his work of consoling and cheering the discouraged exiles and his additional task of creating a new social and religious system by formulating what is at once a bold and brilliant prediction of a return to Judah and of the re-establishment of the state and a notable scheme of organization. This vision is a masterpiece of literary skill and of imaginative power and yet affords clear evidence of being something more. No careful reader can fail to appreciate the force of Ezekiel's frequent declaration that Jehovah spoke to and through him, when he realizes that through these seemingly prosaic details of organization the prophet formulated a working ideal of religious and social life for the generations yet unborn. Ezekiel was an exceedingly important factor in influencing his people to adopt the new religious point of view, which developed in course of time into Judaistic legalism. For the last results of this development he is not responsible; its helpful and useful features he strongly advocated. The prophet Ezekiel is thus a connecting link between the old and the new. He loved and understood his nation, but as a close student of her history he saw that her work under the old forms was done. The exile he looked on as a period of transition, a time of preparation for the larger future of which he was fully confident. He believed that Jehovah had revealed to him what the proper development of that future should be, in order to realize the unchanging plans of God, and he gave himself wholly to its expression. No prophet had a greater task; none fulfilled it with greater fidelity and success.

077. III. The Prophet's Call And Commission (1:1-3:21)

III THE PROPHET'S CALL AND COMMISSION (Ezekiel 1:1toEzekiel 3:21) 1. The Vision of the Divine Presence (Ezekiel 1:1-28) The time and place of the prophet's call (Ezekiel 1:1-3). It was the fifth year of the sorrowful exile of Jehoiakin and his people in far-off Babylonia, when I was dwelling in the Hebrew settlement on the banks of the stream known as the Chebar[1], that Jehovah revealed himself to me and called me to be his prophet. The fiery storm-cloud from the north, Jehovah's abode (Ezekiel 1:4). I seemed to see a great cloud approaching swiftly from the north, driven by a furious wind. A luminous splendor, which was produced by an inward fire that glowed with the brilliance of polished metal, surrounded the cloud. The four living creatures which support and guard his throne (Ezekiel 1:5-14). As I gazed I saw within it the forms of four creatures. Each had four faces, that of a man in front, of a lion on the right, of a bull on the left, and of an eagle behind. Each had four wings, two being extended above the heads, the tips touching those of its neighbors on either side, while the other two covered the body. Their limbs, which glistened like burnished brass, were straight and jointless, their feet shaped like the hoofs of a calf. Each had four hands concealed from view by the wings. Since a similar human face was looking outward toward each quarter, they seemed to be always moving straight ahead. In the midst of these creatures glowed the flame, emitting flashes like the lightning[2].

[1] A canal in the vicinity of Nippur, running west toward Babylon, mentioned in the cuneiform tablets recently discovered by the University of Pennsylvania expedition.

[2]Ezekiel 1:14is generally regarded as a gloss. The wheels which symbolize his constant movement (Ezekiel 1:15-21). I looked again and saw four similar wheels of the color of topaz, one beside each creature. Each wheel seemed to be double, consisting of two wheels cutting each other at right angles, so that in whatever direction the chariot moved four wheels appeared to be moving thither. The wheels, like the creatures, seemed alive. The eyes, symbolizing divine omniscience (Ezekiel 1:18). They were covered with eyes and moved whenever the creatures moved, responding to the same impulse. The throne and its divine occupant (Ezekiel 1:22-28). Supported by the heads and outstretched wings of the four creatures was an arch, transparent as crystal. Resting upon this was a throne resembling a sapphire, on which sat a human-like form, bright and radiant as the rainbow. I saw that I was in the very presence of Jehovah himself and fell upon my face in reverence.

2. Jehovah's Message of Mingled Discouragement and Cheer (Ezekiel 2:1 to Ezekiel 3:11) The prophet sent to disobedient Israel (Ezekiel 2:1-7). "Finite mortal," said a voice," arise and hear my message to you." A power divine pervaded my being; I arose in obedience to the divine summons, and received this commission: "I am about to send you to disobedient Israel to declare my will. Whether the people listen to you or not, they will eventually recognize your office. In whatever ways they threaten you by word or action making your life a burden, have no fear, but declare unflinchingly the truth.

Assured of divine instruction (Ezekiel 2:8toEzekiel 3:3). “Let no sense of weakness or unworthiness lead you to imitate this rebellious people in refusing to do my will. Lo, I will put into your mouth the messages you are to utter. To symbolize this commission, eat this scroll, which represents the oft-repeated messages of distress and woe which you must declare in Jehovah’s name.” I obeyed, but the bitter words seemed sweeter than honey, symbolizing that in the performance of the task allotted by Jehovah I would find true joy.

Encouraged to be fearless and faithful (Ezekiel 3:4-11). My mission was then made more clear. “You are to have an arduous struggle with unfaithful Israel. Your difficulties will not result from an inability to make your message understood, but from their stubborn unwillingness to obey. Jehovah will help you to be bold and steadfast, and to declare, without fear or favor, your God-given message to the Israelites in Babylonia.”

3. The Prophet Appointed as a Watchman The prophet removed to Tel-Abib (Ezekiel 3:12-15). At once I seemed to be lifted up and borne away toward the scene of my prophetic work. A mysterious sound as of rustling wings and moving wheels behind me comforted me by the indication of the ever-active power of Jehovah[3]. I departed, stirred to the heart by indignation at my unrepentant people, and strengthened by a sense of divine guidance. Arriving at Tel-Abib, where I was to begin my work, I sat seven days in silence, reflecting on the work before me. His function to be that of a watchman (Ezekiel 3:16-21). Then Jehovah made known to me that I was to be a watchman to give warning to my people of the crisis now at hand, to turn the wicked from the evil of his way, and to keep the righteous from falling into sin [3] By the change of one letterEzekiel 3:12is made to read “when the glory of Jehovah rose.”

078. Predictions Of Ezekiel Concerning The Certain Fate Of Jerusalem And Judah

PREDICTIONS OF EZEKIEL CONCERNING THE CERTAIN FATE OF JERUSALEM AND
JUDAH

079. I. Symbolic Prophecies Of The Coming Overthrow Of City And Land (3:22-7:27)

I SYMBOLIC PROPHECIES OF THE COMING OVERTHROW OF CITY AND LAND (Ezekiel 3:22toEzekiel 7:27) 1. The New Method of Prophetic Work (Ezekiel 3:22-27) The second vision of the Heavenly Presence (Ezekiel 3:22-23). For some time I performed with but little success my ministry of warning and exhortation among the exiles at Tel-Abib. His public preaching to give way to private teaching (Ezekiel 3:24-27). But one day, being bidden to go to a secluded valley, I again seemed to come into the very presence of Jehovah, who had laid his commands upon me. "Depart to your house and abandon this useless preaching. You shall not be permitted in public to utter your warnings to this incorrigible people until I again give you permission.

2. Symbolic Representations is of the Fate About to Overtake Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:1 to Ezekiel 5:17)

Unable to preach with freedom or success, I was encouraged to portray by symbolic actions the sad and certain fate which was to come to my beloved city. In these ways I forced the people to give unwilling heed to the messages which they had refused to consider. The representation of the siege of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:1-3;Ezekiel 4:7). On a tablet of clay I drew a sketch of Jerusalem besieged by active enemies. Between me and this pictured city I set up an iron plate, in token of the barrier between Jehovah and his people, and to signify that he was no longer their protector, dwelling in their midst, but their foe. The symbol of the captivity to endure for a generation (Ezekiel 4:4-6;Ezekiel 4:8). Then I represented in expressive symbol the sore punishment that awaited guilty Israel. For one hundred and ninety[4] days, a day for every year of exile, I laid myself down, as if bound and helpless, on my left side, in token of the penalty visited upon the northern kingdom, and for forty days, representing a generation, on my right side, in token of the fate of Judah.

[4] The reading of this number by the Septuagint in place of three hundred and ninety is very generally accepted as probable. The prediction of famine and of pollution (Ezekiel 4:9-17). While carrying out this symbolic action I was led to portray the extremities to which my people would be reduced. Making an unaccustomed mixture of all available grains with vegetables, and grinding them together into a coarse kind of flour, I prepared a food of which I ate sparingly, taking only a small measure of water.[5] Even this distasteful food I was told to bake publicly with loathsome fuel, in order to drive home to the hearts of all who saw me the awful deprivations of the coming siege, and the pollutions of a foreign captivity.

[5] Half a pound of food, about a pint and a half of water. The prediction of the threefold disaster impending (Ezekiel 5:1-4;Ezekiel 5:12). But the fourth symbol was yet more significant. With a sword of keen edge I was to remove my hair and beard, dividing the severed hair into three portions. One third I burned in the fire, representing the inhabitants of Jerusalem about to die of pestilence and hunger during the siege. Another third I cut in pieces with the sword to indicate that

as many would perish in battle. The last third I scattered to the winds, since my people were to be dispersed among the heathen. Not all were to perish, but some, after being subjected to purifying judgments, were to be preserved. The meaning of the four symbols (Ezekiel 5:5-17). And this was the explanation^[6] of these symbolic actions. Since Jerusalem, the favored city, the very centre of the earth, has surpassed all nations in deliberate wickedness, not even recognizing and living up to such standards as they maintain, she must be visited with exemplary punishment, so severe that the whole world will be impressed. The horrors of the siege, the distant exile, are but modes of punishment which give expression to Jehovah's righteous indignation because his people have polluted his very sanctuary with idolatrous rites. Jerusalem shall become a laughing stock to hostile nations, a desolation ravaged by wild beasts and robbers, an example of the just vengeance of the Almighty.

[6] Most scholars regard, "Therefore shall a fire come forth" (v. 4,) as a gloss, and read, with the Septuagint, "and say to the whole house of Israel."

3. The Certain Devastation of the Land of Israel (Ezekiel 6) The land with its guilty inhabitants deserving of devastation (Ezekiel 6:1-7). Jehovah also bade me denounce the land of Israel and its idolatries. "O land of mountains, ravines, and villages, whose hill-tops are dotted with altars, obelisks, and idols,^[7] wholly unable to protect you in the day of danger, Jehovah's message to you is one of menace. Only a demolition and devastation will cause you to recognize me and give me obedience. The remnant shall repent (Ezekiel 6:8-10). In the years to come, when a petty remnant of your people has survived the horrors of invasion and exile, they at least will remember me, and with breaking hearts will sincerely repent.

[7] An unknown word, meaning an object of worship. The present corruption not to be condoned (Ezekiel 6:11-14). "But Jehovah can only cherish the utmost horror and detestation of the present wickedness. As the champion of justice he bids me rejoice over the well-merited calamities which are impending. Not one sinner shall escape his wrath. By a judgment which will desolate the land from south to north,^[8] defiling every idolatrous shrine, he will manifest his power."

[8] Properly, "from the Wilderness to Riblah."

4. The Doom of the Nation^[9] (Ezekiel 7)

[9] The text of verses 1, 9 is in confusion, or else Ezekiel 7:3-4; Ezekiel 7:8-9 are refrains. Bertholet (Ezekiel) regards the original poem as a lyric of eighteen strophes of four lines each. The day of requital for the land and its inhabitants approaches (Ezekiel 7:1-9). Again came the necessity of proclaiming the dread message of approaching doom. "O land of Israel, for your abominations a requital is near at hand. Jehovah can show no pity, for you have shown no inclination to repent. Alas! only calamities are in prospect. The catastrophe draws near.^[10] There will be shouting on the hills, but it is the tumult of hostile invasion, not of a vintage festival. For the coming day of doom the avenging rod has blossomed, since those who once were merely violent had become defiantly corrupt. No security for life or property (Ezekiel 7:10-13). In the day of retribution they shall be stripped of all they hold most dear.^[11] All social security will be lost. None will be able to claim his rightful property nor to secure a livelihood by fair means or foul.

[10] The Hebrew consists of a play on words, not easily imitated.

[11] Very obscure.

Defence impossible (Ezekiel 7:14-18). "Preparations for defence will be wholly useless; no one will have the courage to resist Jehovah's will. Those who do not perish by sword and famine and disease will be as helpless doves, paralyzed with terror. Their wealth a spoil (Ezekiel 7:19-21). They shall fling away their treasures of gold and silver as something unclean and unserviceable. The temple profaned (Ezekiel 7:22-24). Since they have used these as an instrument of idolatry, they shall become the spoil of the cruel Babylonians, who shall profane at will the very sanctuary,[12] since it is no longer a fitting abode for God.

[12] "Make the chain" seems unintelligible.

Despair because Jehovah has ceased to reveal his will (Ezekiel 7:25-27). "Alas! it will be a time of anguish. Repeatedly will calamities overwhelm the land. Every source of revelation—prophet, priest, and sage—will be dumb. Israel's ruler will be utterly dismayed, the people will give themselves up to despair. According to their deeds will it be rendered unto them, that they may learn that Jehovah is their God."

080. II. The Vision Or The Sin Of Jerusalem And Its Consequences (8:1-12:20)

II THE VISION OR THE SIN OF JERUSALEM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (Ezekiel 8:1toEzekiel 12:20) 1. The Shameless Idolatry of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8) The prophet carried in a vision to Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8:1-4). More than a year had passed away after my summons to the prophetic work, and I was receiving in my own house certain rulers of the Jewish community who had come to inquire concerning Jehovah's word regarding Israel, when I suddenly fell into a trance and seemed to see before me a human^[13] form, radiant as fire or glistening brass. He took me in a moment's time to Jerusalem and set me down by the northern gate of the inner temple court and, lo! I was once more in the presence of Jehovah's glory.

[13] For the first word "fire" in verse 2 the Septuagint substitutes "a man," improving the sense. The image insulting to Jehovah within his temple (Ezekiel 8:5-6). My guide exhibited to me the various idolatries and abominations which were being practised in the very temple itself, the supposed abode of Jehovah. At the entrance I saw an image of Astarte, so defiling his sanctuary that Jehovah could no longer dwell therein.

Idolatrous rites practised in secret by leading citizens (Ezekiel 8:7-13). Passing through the gateway of the court, I found a secret door which opened into a chamber whose walls were covered with symbolic pictures of every kind of creature. Within the room were the principal men of the nation offering incense to these pictures, as if they thought that Jehovah, the true God of their race, had abandoned the land. Women bewailing Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14-15). At one of the outer gateways were women celebrating the rites of the Syrian god, Tammuz. Sun worshippers (Ezekiel 8:16). I even saw in the inner court, near the great altar itself, a company of men, their faces turned eastward, adoring the rising sun. The certain penalty (Ezekiel 8:17-18). "Mortal one," demanded my divine guide," can I overlook such abominations as these which flourish unrestrained throughout the land? My people are but mocking me.^[14] I must unsparingly chastise them."

[14] A possible meaning of "they put the branch to their nose." The text and interpretation of the passage are very uncertain.

2. Its Inevitable Consequences: Destruction of the People by Sword and Fire and the Departure of Jehovah (Ezekiel 9-11) (1) A Slaughter of the Idolatrous Inhabitants Decreed (Ezekiel 9:1-1)

Executioners summoned to the presence of Jehovah (Ezekiel 9:1-3). While I was listening he uttered a summons, and six heavenly beings in human form appeared, equipped for the work of slaughter. With them was an officer, who carried in his girdle materials for writing. An officer ordered to mark true worshippers on the forehead (Ezekiel 9:4). All others to be slain (Ezekiel 9:5-7). They halted by the brazen altar, and a voice from the cloud which surrounded Jehovah's glory ordered the officer to pass through the city and mark the foreheads of all who grieved over its idolatries and bade the others to follow him, and slay without mercy all who failed to receive the

mark. All appeals for pardon in vain (Ezekiel 9:8-11). They began in my very presence by slaying the idolatrous citizens whom I had seen, but soon passed out into the city, leaving the heaps of corpses to defile the sacred courts. Appalled by the terrible judgment, I cried out, "O Jehovah, surely the nation will not be completely destroyed;" but I received the answer, "The people are given over to violence and wrong-doing, because they think I cannot punish them. I will be inexorable."

(2) The City to Be Set on Fire (Ezekiel 10:1-7) The officer also ordered to burn the city (Ezekiel 10:1-7). This announcement was followed by one no less startling. The officer, who had completed his former task, was commanded to scatter throughout the city glowing coals, taken from the fire within the chariot of God. When he advanced to obey, the whole court seemed aglow with a radiance from Jehovah's presence.[15] A cherub handed him some of the coals and he departed on his mission.

[15] Verses 1 and 5 are purposely left without paraphrase because of their uncertainty.

(3) The Identification of the Cherubim with the Living Creatures (Ezekiel 10:8-22) The wheels, symbolic of activity and insight (Ezekiel 10:8-13). Meanwhile I observed more carefully the supernatural glory before me. I noted the wheels of topaz color, symbolizing the constant activity of God, covered with eyes significant of his all-seeing power. The living creatures seen to be cherubim (Ezekiel 10:14-22). While I was gazing the glory departed from the temple and hovered over the eastern gate. The living creatures, which I had formerly seen supporting Jehovah's throne, I now perceived to be the cherubim which guard the very presence of God and uphold his throne.[16] I realized with increased certainty that Jehovah himself had uttered the message of doom and was about to depart from his polluted sanctuary.

[16] Cherubim in the Old Testament seem to have these two distinct functions. Compare Ezekiel 28:14 and Psalms 18:11.

(4) The Departure of Jehovah from the Deluded City (11) The band of conspirators at the eastern gate (Ezekiel 11:1-3). At the eastern gateway of the temple I saw a throng of men, among whom were two well-known princes, busily plotting revolt against Nebuchadrezzar and discouraging peaceful occupations, urging that the city was still strong enough to protect its inhabitants against all invaders. Obeying a prophetic impulse from Jehovah, I said, "O men of Judah, your reliance upon Jehovah's protection and upon the strength of your defences is futile. The certain consequences of their folly (Ezekiel 11:4-13). Your plots only result in filling the city with corpses. But you who hope to escape the consequences of your folly will bear them to the uttermost in the camp of the great king whom you defy." While I was speaking one of the princes died. Jehovah's purposes hold good wherever his people are dwelling (Ezekiel 11:14-21). Horror-stricken by the earnest of what was to be, I humbly prayed that my nation might not be completely destroyed, and I received a message of comfort and hope. "These men of Jerusalem consider that your fellow exiles,[17] scattered far and wide among foreign peoples, are out of reach of my power and cut off from their own land and sanctuary. Great is their mistake, for the faithful exiles can still worship me in their new homes and their punishment shall not always continue. I will gather them and bring them back to Judah. They shall cleanse the land of all abominations, draw close to me and become a docile, obedient people. But those who have given themselves up to idolatry shall receive their just deserts."

[17] "The men of thy kindred" (R. V. margin "redemption") probably should be read "thy fellow exiles."

Jehovah compelled to abandon the once holy city (Ezekiel 11:22-25). With this mingled threat and promise the divine presence seemed to move away from his temple until it rested on the Mount of Olives. Jehovah had abandoned his beloved city to its doom. My vision ended, and I related what I had seen to the elders.

3. The Certain Exile of King and People (Ezekiel 12:1-20) The need of renewed symbolic preaching (Ezekiel 12:1-2). Despite these plain declarations of Jehovah's purposes, the members of the exiled community stubbornly refused to give them credence. I therefore felt impelled to impress my message regarding Jerusalem upon their minds in a more striking way. The pantomime of escaping through the wall by night (Ezekiel 12:3-7). Arousing the attention of all by publicly packing such articles as I would need in a hasty flight, I placed the bundle near the city wall. In the night I dug through the wall, and then, in the presence of the wondering bystanders, having blinded my eyes with a bandage, I groped my way through the tunnel, bearing the bundle on my back. Its explanation (Ezekiel 12:8-16). When my neighbors inquired the meaning of these strange actions I replied, "Jehovah has appointed me to represent symbolically the certain exile of prince and people. King Zedekiah will prepare for secret flight, but he shall be captured, blinded, and brought in triumph to a city which his eyes shall never behold. His supporters shall be scattered and slain. The few whom Jehovah spares will be an evidence to the world of his righteous character and of the horrible guilt of his people." The pantomime of constant fear (Ezekiel 12:17-20). Again I manifested every sign of terror as I ate my food, in token of the feelings of dread soon to be experienced by the men of Judah during the coming siege and the subsequent desolation.

081. III. The Moral Necessity Of Judah's Destruction (12:21-19:14)

III THE MORAL NECESSITY OF JUDAH'S DESTRUCTION (Ezekiel 12:21 to Ezekiel 19:14) 1. The Popular Scepticism Supported by False Prophets (Ezekiel 12:21 to Ezekiel 13:23) The sceptical attitude of Ezekiel's contemporaries (Ezekiel 12:21-28). The unwelcome truth came home to me that, in spite of my repeated warnings, the people were sceptical concerning the realization of the prophecies and careless regarding the future, saying to one another that none of the many predictions of past years were being fulfilled. Accordingly I warned them that the time appointed was at hand and that the sceptics themselves should see the execution of Jehovah's word. The baneful influence of the false prophets (Ezekiel 13:1-7; Ezekiel 13:10). "Do not wonder that the people are losing their confidence in the prophetic word, for they have been deceived by uninspired prophets, unable to comprehend or proclaim the thoughts of God. Lacking moral insight and convictions, these often predict peace instead of judgment. Like jackals, they can only undermine; they do not help the nation to be strong. While not always intentional deceivers, their words cannot be trusted. Whatever wild scheme of deliverance is proposed they approve; but their sanction is as valuable as a coat of whitewash on a tottering wall.

Jehovah's judgment against them (Ezekiel 13:8-9; Ezekiel 13:11-16). "These false religious leaders Jehovah will visit in judgment, for he cannot abide them. He will wholly cut them off from Judah; they shall never again see their native land. To make manifest to all their entire lack of wisdom and foresight, Jehovah will lay prostrate the walls which they pretend to strengthen. A judgment equally necessary against the women who practise divination (Ezekiel 13:17-23). "Jehovah's righteous indignation is also against the women who follow prophesying as a profession, freely practising divination, thereby dragging his sacred name into disrepute and creating moral confusion. Since they discourage the righteous and embolden the wicked to be defiant, he will put an end to their activity, that all may come to know him as Jehovah."

2. The People Idolatrous beyond Pardon (Ezekiel 14) (1) Jehovah cannot Answer Stubborn Idolaters (Ezekiel 14:1-11) The request of the elders refused (Ezekiel 14:1-8). One day when the elders came to consult me concerning Jehovah's purposes, I saw that they were not honoring him by their lives, but, like the rest of the people, were really idolaters at heart. I therefore told them plainly that no persistent idolater would get an answer from Jehovah except in vigorous acts of judgment. The fate of a subservient prophet (Ezekiel 14:9-11). Moreover, if a so-called prophet should respond to the request of idolaters and give them a pretended answer from Jehovah, both they and the prophet would be destroyed together in order that the survivors might thus be influenced to cease from such wickedness and to become in reality his people.

(2) The Nation Not to Be Saved by a Few Good Men (Ezekiel 14:12-23) The occasion of the utterance. A wicked land not to be delivered by the virtue of a few of its citizens (Ezekiel 14:12-20). In response to the oft-expressed opinion that Jehovah would not destroy his people despite their wickedness, because of the many good men among them, I received the declaration from Jehovah, "If a land deliberately acted so as to deserve any one of my great judgments—famine,

wild beasts, armed invasion, or pestilence—although there lived in that land such noble and perfectly righteous men as Noah or Daniel or Job, they would not even deliver their own families from my just vengeance; they would save themselves alone.

Jerusalem, least of all (Ezekiel 14:21-23). “Since Jerusalem has sinned so deeply as to deserve these four judgments at once, how impossible is it for her thus to be delivered. Those who are preserved, however, shall serve to prove the reasonableness of my action.”

3. Jehovah’s People a Worthless Vine (Ezekiel 15)

Judah is Jehovah’s vine, but unfruitful and hence worthless (Ezekiel 15:1-5). The people often urged, “Are we not Jehovah’s vine, planted and nourished by him. Will he destroy his own possession!” To which Jehovah bade me reply, “When a vine is unfruitful, has it any value in comparison with a tree? If already half consumed by fire, can it be put to any use? Judah is such a vine, so utterly useless as a nation that Jehovah can only destroy the fragment which still remains.”

4. The Moral History of the Israelitish Race (Ezekiel 16)

How Jehovah adopted Israel and brought her up in Egypt (Ezekiel 16:1-7). To bring home to the people the necessity of Israel’s destruction, I pictured the continued unfaithfulness of the nation to Jehovah from the beginning of its history in the familiar figure of a faithless and ungrateful wife. The covenant at Sinai and gift of the treasures of Canaan (Ezekiel 16:8-14). Israel was a foundling child of heathenish parentage, uncared for and exposed in a public field to perish. But Jehovah pitied her and supplied her needs and watched over her until she grew to womanhood. Then he took her to himself in lawful marriage, bestowed upon her costly attire and jewels and gave her delicate fare. All that wealth could buy was hers, and she became celebrated for her beauty.

Israel’s rapid adoption of idolatry (Ezekiel 16:15-22). But she soon became unfaithful to her husband, and made use of the gifts with which he had loaded her to attract her lovers. Her alliances with other nations and adoption of their religious rites (Ezekiel 16:23-34). She even sacrificed her children to their desires, entirely disregarding him who had redeemed her from her disgraceful fate. Finally, in her shameless and unbridled license, she allied herself with foreigners, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, enticing them with gifts to come to her. Her appropriate punishment inevitable (Ezekiel 16:35-43). What will Jehovah do to a spouse so persistently faithless? He will expose her to shame in the very presence of her lovers; he will take away her ornaments and costly garments of which she is proud, will cause her to undergo painful punishment in the sight of all the people, and thus bring her adulterous career to an end. Her sins more heinous than those of Sodom or Samaria (Ezekiel 16:44-52). “Had you, O Israel,” Jehovah declares, “merely followed the example of your Canaanitish mother and your sisters, Samaria and Sodom, you would deserve to suffer their merited fate. Sodom was made to prosper, but in her self-satisfied pride, she forgot her duties to man and God. Samaria, your older sister, deliberately neglected her obligations. Nevertheless, both nations were righteous in comparison with you, for they had less reason to be faithful to me. Hence your punishment must be the greater.

After suitable punishment Jehovah will restore her to Canaan and intrust to her instruction other nations (Ezekiel 16:53-63). “In the distant future I will restore the people of Samaria and Sodom as well as you to Palestine, but conditions will then have altered. After having paid the penalty of your

own wickedness you will no longer be able to speak of Sodom or Samaria with contempt. Stirred to sincere repentance by the proof of my faithfulness, you will make an everlasting covenant with me, and will become a guardian over these nations which I will place under your protection. Because of my goodness and grace you will then be overwhelmed by mingled regret and gratitude.”

5. The Consequences of Zedekiah’s Breach of Faith (Ezekiel 17) The parable of the great eagle which carried off the cedar twig to Babylon (Ezekiel 17:1-4). Word came to the exiled community that Judah had again broken out into open revolt against Nebuchadrezzar. The parable of the two eagles and the dissatisfied vine (Ezekiel 17:5-10). The explanation of the first parable (Ezekiel 17:11-12). Then the prophet related a parable to show Jehovah’s view of this disloyalty. A great eagle of splendid appearance flew to Lebanon, and, plucking the topmost twig of a stately cedar, carried it to Babylon. At the same time he took a cutting which he found in Canaan and planted it under favorable conditions, hoping that it would flourish and become a fruitful vine. The vine, however, instead of contentedly bearing fruit for the eagle who planted it, put forth its runners longingly toward a rival eagle, seeking nourishment from him. What does such a disloyal vine deserve except to be blasted by a wind from the east? The explanation of the second (Ezekiel 17:13-19). The meaning of the parable is plain. King Nebuchadrezzar carried off to Babylon King Jehoiakin and the princes. He placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah, taking from him a pledge to be a loyal vassal. Zedekiah has foolishly broken his oath, relying on the support of King Hoph’a of Egypt. When Nebuchadrezzar attacks him the Pharaoh will give no protection. Zedekiah’s punishment (Ezekiel 17:20-21). He will be brought a captive to Babylon and his warriors will be scattered as exiles, because he has defied, not only his political chief, but also Jehovah.

Jehovah’s purpose for the future (Ezekiel 17:22-24). “Although Nebuchadrezzar’s experiment was not a success, the time will come,” saith Jehovah, “when I will plant a twig from the cedar on Jerusalem’s mountain, where it will become a stately tree, giving shelter to all creatures, towering over all trees. Then shall I be known as the creator and governor of the world.”

6. The Principles in Accordance with which God Exercises Judgment (Ezekiel 18) The popular discouragement as proverbially expressed (Ezekiel 18:1-2). An oft-repeated proverb, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge,” pithily expressed the popular feeling of my countrymen that their calamities were an inheritance from the past and that they were powerless to avert them. The prophetic announcement of the moral freedom and responsibility of the individual (Ezekiel 18:3-4). I urged that the time had come to give up this despairing attitude, since every man stands in a direct relation to God and is responsible for himself alone. The threefold illustration (Ezekiel 18:5-20). For instance, if a man lives a pure and upright life, observing faithfully his religious and social obligations, taking no advantage of others’ weakness or need, he shall live. If such a man has a son who does the reverse, breaking every law of God, that son shall die as he deserves. If, in turn, that wicked son shall have a son who sees his father’s wickedness and determines to live a righteous life, he shall not die for the sin of his father, but shall live because of his righteousness. A man’s past will not of itself condemn or save him (Ezekiel 18:21-29). Another principle must also be kept in mind. A man’s past will not of itself condemn or save him. If a wicked man sincerely repents and lives a righteous life, his transgression will be forgiven and he shall live. If a man who has been righteous deliberately does evil, his previous goodness shall not avail. Thus men’s deeds determine their own fate. Is not this

a sound principle of life ? The reasonableness of Jehovah's ways (Ezekiel 18:30-32). Let this thought of the moral freedom and responsibility of man inspire within you, O Israelites, renewed earnestness and obedience. Jehovah takes no pleasure in judgment, but is only striving to lead you into a purer and more normal life.

7. The Sad Fate of Judah's Rulers (Ezekiel 19)

Judah, the lioness and her two unfortunate whelps, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakin (Ezekiel 19:1-9). Well may you sing, fellow captives, over the rulers of Judah this song of lamentation[18]:

How was your mother a lioness, Among the lions,—

Amid young lions she couched, She reared her whelps. And one of her whelps she brought up, He became a young lion. And he learned to catch prey, He devoured men.

Against him the nations cried out, In their pit they took him.

Away they led him with hooks, To the land of Egypt.

[18] The peculiarity of the elegiac line is that it consists of two clauses, the second the shorter of the two, and finishing the line with a mournful, falling cadence. The whole chapter is a poem of which the last few verses are in some confusion. When the mother lioness saw that her whelp was lost to her she took another young lion and sought to make him the defender of her lair. In time men heard his roaring and captured him and carried him into captivity.

Judah, the vine, consumed by fire from its own branch Zedekiah (Ezekiel 19:10-14). Judah may be also likened to a vine which has put forth many branches and spread its foliage toward the clouds. But when the hot wind from the far East withers the vine, breaks down its branches, and sets them on fire, the branch which seemed so promising will but aid in consuming the vine.

082. IV. Final Prophecies Of Judgment (Ezekiel 20 to 24)

IV FINAL PROPHECIES OF JUDGMENT (Ezekiel 20-24) 1. The Secret of Jehovah's Past Dealings with His People (Ezekiel 20:1-44) The occasion of the utterance (Ezekiel 20:1-4). About two years after my first vision of God, some of the elders came one day to inquire Jehovah's will. I was at first impelled to refuse to receive them, for I knew how superficial was their devotion; but Jehovah bade me unfold to them the lessons of their history. The idolatry of the Hebrews in Egypt forgiven (Ezekiel 20:5-9). "When I chose Israel as my own people, making myself known to them in Egypt and promising them the delightful land of Canaan, I bade them forsake their primitive idolatry. This they would not do; yet for my name's sake, I spared them. They were delivered from Egyptian thralldom, and in the wilderness I set before them laws and precepts of righteousness. Their refusal to obey the commands given in the wilderness (Ezekiel 20:10-17). These they ignored or broke, but again I could not bring myself to destroy them entirely. Their children, however, were as rebellious as their fathers. Their gross and repeated idolatries thereafter (Ezekiel 20:18-29). I threatened to scatter them among the nations and I allowed them to injure themselves with heathenish follies, but for my name's sake I still spared them. But when they came to Canaan, they forthwith adopted the Canaanitish rites.[19]

[19] Ezekiel 20:29 contains a curious play on the word for "high place," not easily paraphrased. "What (m■) is the high place (b■m■) to which you go (b■)."

Jehovah will now assert his sovereign rights (Ezekiel 20:30-44). "Now, O Israelites, do you think that I will countenance your persistence in idolatry? Must I look on passively while you worship manufactured gods? Nay! I will assert my sovereign rights and bring you again under my dominance. Idolators I will not tolerate in my land, but only those of you who serve me on Mount Zion. Thus will I be honored in the sight of the world. Then my goodness will cause you to repent of your evil ways and you will realize that I have dealt with you as befits the all-powerful and just Ruler of the universe."

2. Jehovah's Avenging Sword (Ezekiel 20:45 to Ezekiel 21:32) The fire about to devour Judah (Ezekiel 20:45-48). The news came to our community at Tel-Abib that the great king had started westward to inflict an adequate punishment upon his faithless vassals in Syria. I felt that Judah's days were numbered and predicted that Jehovah was about to kindle in Judah an unquenchable, consuming fire, which would devour green and dry trees alike, scorching all onlookers because of its fierceness. The avenging sword about to slay (Ezekiel 21:1-5). The people laughed at my parable and failed to give sober heed to my warning. So Jehovah inspired me to present another, much more distinct and plain. "Jehovah is about to draw from the scabbard his avenging sword, which will slay all in the land—righteous and wicked alike. It shall not be replaced until it has done its work." I was bidden to show signs of great emotion, as a suggestion of the paralyzing tidings soon to be heard. The prophet's expressions of grief (Ezekiel 21:6-17). My passionate grief found expression in a wild sword song[20] concerning the keen and gleaming blade ready for use by the executioner. With horror I seemed to see the slaughter of the leaders and of the people of Judah.

It flashed like the lightning, here and there, bringing universal destruction, according to Jehovah's decree.

[20]Exodus 21:9-11 is probably a poem of two stanzas of four lines each.

Nebuchadnezzar's indecision settled in favor of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21:18-27). By a symbolic action I pointed out who was to be the wielder of this sword. Marking out a road, which finally forked, I set up a sign-post, which indicated that one branch led to Jerusalem and the other to Rabbah of Ammon. At this parting of the ways stood Nebuchadnezzar, uncertain as to which city he should go. Consulting the omens, he selected Jerusalem. Alas, what sad results! a king dethroned, a city in ruins, everything in hopeless confusion! There can be no alteration for the better until the true Davidic king comes. The avenging sword of Ammon (Ezekiel 21:28-32). Another sword of vengeance—that of Ammon—seems to be unsheathed. Their diviners urge a raid against the helpless people of Jerusalem. "These visions of conquest, O Ammon, are vain. Put back the sword. In your own land Jehovah will administer the chastisement you deserve."

3. The Indictment of Jerusalem (Exodus 22)

Jerusalem's social crimes (Ezekiel 22:1-12). Realizing how false an idea of Jerusalem's value men had, I held the mirror to her face. "O, bloody and idolatrous city, you deserve the doom which is coming upon you. Injustice, irreverence, oppression of the stranger and of the weak, profanation, lewdness, bribery, extortion—all these social crimes are practised and God is forgotten. With grief and horror Jehovah witnesses these enormities. Its certain punishment (Ezekiel 22:13-16). He will deal justly and firmly with you, even though he seems to put himself to shame in the eyes of the world.

It can serve only as a melting-pot (Ezekiel 22:17-22). "Jerusalem to-day is like a melting pot and Judah is like mixed metals, fit only to be tested in the fervent heat, that the pure silver may be made manifest. So will Jehovah purify his people. Its inhabitants wholly corrupt (Ezekiel 22:23-31). "For the nation is full of wickedness. It is unfruitful like a land without rain. All classes do evil—the princes are rapacious and violent, the priests are careless in performing their duties, the nobles are cheats, the prophets apologize for them all and give them support, while the people rob, oppress, and deceive. Not a man can be found who can really protect them. Jehovah has no option but to destroy the nation.

4. The Two Unfaithful Wives of Jehovah (Exodus 23)

The two sisters (Ezekiel 23:1-4). To set forth more clearly the long continued infidelity of Samaria and Jerusalem to Jehovah, in their constant appeal to strangers for protection instead of to him, the prophet used again an allegory concerning two beautiful sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who were, in their youth, wedded to Jehovah.

Samaria's alliances with Assyria and Egypt, which ended in captivity (Ezekiel 23:5-10). Oholah, attracted after a while by the sturdy and warlike character of the Assyrians, deserted her husband and gave herself to them and to the Egyptians. At length he left her in their hands to insult and abuse according to their brutal disposition,

Judah's alliances with Assyria, Babylon and Egypt (Ezekiel 23:11-21). Oholibah, her sister, did far worse. She, too, intrigued with Assyrians; but, in addition, had dealings with Babylonians, of whom she quickly wearied. When her husband would not receive her back again she turned to Egypt.

Her severe punishment (Ezekiel 23:22-35). “Now, O Oholibah, your husband Jehovah will stir up against you those with whom you have had criminal dealings. They shall encompass and capture you, and expose your folly and shame. You have brought this calamity upon yourself. As your sister suffered, so shall you, for you have forgotten him to whom your loyal allegiance was due.

Additional details of their sin and punishment (Ezekiel 23:36-49). “Does anyone question the justice of this punishment? These sisters have been guilty of nameless abominations. They have broken every covenant. Their punishment shall be that of faithless women, for such wickedness must cease.”

5. The Tidings of the Siege of Jerusalem (Exodus 24)

Jerusalem a rusted kettle to be cleansed by fire (Ezekiel 24:1-14). For four years and a half I had been quietly conveying to my countrymen these messages of Jerusalem’s sure destruction, when, on the very day that Nebuchadrezzar began the siege of Jerusalem, Jehovah bade me announce to them the imminent catastrophe. Remembering how the conspirators within Jerusalem[21] had likened their stronghold to a kettle, which would keep its contents from the fire, I too adopted the symbol, but I indicated that the kettle, although full of choice portions of meat, was unfit for use, because it was covered, within and without, with rust.

[21] See page 44.

“What will Jehovah do,” I urged, “with a rusted kettle, whose foulness all can see? He will remove its contents, heap fuel on the fire and heat the empty kettle until it is cleansed from its impurity. Only judgment can purge the city of its blood guiltiness.”

Ezekiel’s manner of mourning for his wife a symbol of the effect of the coming news upon his fellow captives (Ezekiel 24:15-24). No sooner had I delivered this message than a more difficult burden was laid upon me. “Mortal one,” said Jehovah, “I will suddenly bereave you of your beloved wife, but show no signs of grief, and mourn not in public.” That very night she died, and, with bursting heart, I obeyed the strange command. When my friends inquired the meaning of my unwonted action, I declared that the city and temple, so endeared by many associations to their hearts, were to be profaned, and their relatives, whom they loved, were to perish. So crushing would be the news that they would be incapable of expressing their grief.

Ezekiel at last recognized as Jehovah’s prophet (Ezekiel 24:25-27). At that time Jehovah’s servant, Ezekiel, would again be permitted to preach in public, and all would be convinced that he had truly spoken the mind of Israel’s God.

083. Prophecies Of Obadiah And Ezekiel Against Foreign Nations

PROPHECIES OF OBADIAH AND EZEKIEL AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS

084. I. The Long-Expected Catastrophe

I THE LONG-EXPECTED CATASTROPHE The destruction of Jerusalem was an event of signal importance in Hebrew history. As a catastrophe it was appalling, for it marked the end, not only of a reign and a dynasty, but also of a nation. It was even more notable as a turning point in history. It closed one era and opened another. It inaugurated more than a period of exile, since it furnished convincing proof that the new national life, should that ever be renewed, must be wholly reorganized. The historical narrative preserved in 2 Kings throws but little light upon the political, social and religious conditions which hastened the disaster. It is rather concerned with the event itself. From the impassioned predictions of Jeremiah, however, and from the impressive visions and symbols of Ezekiel, may be discovered the various factors which co-operated in bringing about the downfall of the old national life. These were a well-meaning, but inefficient king (Jeremiah 37:15-21; Jeremiah 38:5), under strong obligation to maintain his political fealty (Ezekiel 17) to Nebuchadrezzar; turbulent and reactionary advisers, who had great confidence in themselves (Ezekiel 11:1-3) and were hostile to Jeremiah and his party; a number of false prophets who encouraged their schemes (Ezekiel 13:1-16; Ezekiel 22:28); and a people blindly confident that Jehovah, their God, would put forth his power, so grandly manifested in the past (Isaiah 37), to save his city and temple; a nation restless under the heavy Babylonian yoke and willing to try the experiment of revolt, if opportunity offered. Thus disposed, the Jews were easily stirred by quiet proffers of aid from Egypt. The spirit of rebellion spread like a forest fire. Even the lofty cedar, as Ezekiel, perhaps with a touch of irony, calls King Zedekiah, yielded to its fury. About 588 B. C., Judah, in coalition with one or two petty principalities of Palestine, renounced allegiance to Babylonia.

Nebuchadrezzar did not, apparently, hasten to crush this revolt, yet his policy in regard to it could have been anticipated. Upon the tranquillization of the territory bordering the Great Sea depended both the continuance, unharassed, of the overland trade, which vitally affected the prosperity of great sections of his empire, and the achievement of his future schemes of Egyptian conquest. Judah's restless and ambitious population, protected by a fortress of unusual strength, constituted a never ending source of uneasiness to the overlord. According to the standards of the day, he had acted, ten years before, with reasonableness and moderation, when he had merely deported the politically dangerous elements of the population to Babylonia and left the state intact with a member of the royal family on the throne. According to the same standards there remained no option to him except to put an end to the existence of the Hebrew people. A prompt submission on their part might possibly have been accepted, but an organized resistance could have but one termination. In due time Nebuchadrezzar assembled an army for the Palestinian campaign. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 21:18-22) vividly pictures the king as consulting the omens, on reaching the borders of Gilead, to determine whether he should first attack Rabbah of Ammon or Jerusalem. Deciding to besiege Jerusalem, he crossed the Jordan, invested the city, and ravaged the territory far and near (Jeremiah 34:7). Too late King Zedekiah and his counsellors realized the gravity of the situation. They inquired of Jeremiah what the outcome would be (Jeremiah 21:1-10;

Jeremiah 34:1-7), and attempted spasmodic reforms (Jeremiah 34:8-10). True for once to his pledge, the Pharaoh sent an army against Nebuchadrezzar, who raised the siege of Jerusalem for a while, and marched to meet his foe. Supposing they were saved, the godless nobles of Jerusalem revealed their consummate hypocrisy by promptly annulling the reforms they had just proclaimed. To their dismay the great Egyptian army was soon put to flight, and the victors encamped again around the doomed city. Its miserable inhabitants resisted with all the stoicism of despair. Soon, however, the horrors of famine and pestilence were added to the usual dangers of the siege. The condition of the populace during the six months before the capture was pitiable in the extreme (Lamentations 2:19-22). At last, in July 586 B. C., the besiegers effected a breach in the northern wall and poured into the city. Zedekiah and a handful of warriors escaped by way of an unwatched private gate and fled toward the Jordan, but were overtaken at Jericho and carried before the great king, where he was forced to witness the slaughter of his sons and of his chief men, and then condemned to blindness and captivity.

After a month's delay, during which the ill-fated city was freely plundered by the brutal soldiery, Nabuzaradan, a royal officer of high rank, was deputed to complete the work of destruction. He took away all the valuable booty that was left, set on fire the temple, the palace, and the mansions of the wealthy nobles, and broke down the city walls. Soon nothing was left of the once splendid city but uninhabitable ruins.

085. II. Obadiah's Diatribe Against Edom

II OBADIAH'S DIATRIBE AGAINST EDOM 1. Edom's Hereditary Relations with Judah From the dawn of Israel's history as a nation there was traditional enmity between the Hebrews and the Edomites. Of all the foes with whom Israel had to contend, these were the most implacable and untiring. Only a strong hand availed to keep them in retirement and subjection. The traditions of the wilderness wanderings, preserved in Numbers and Deuteronomy, convey the impression that Edom was hostile from the very beginning of their contact, desiring to hold no relations of amity with their kinsfolk. Saul fought against the Edomites, and David made a complete conquest of their land. From Jehoram, one hundred and fifty years later, they successfully revolted. Reconquered again by Amaziah and Uzziah about 760 B. C., they soon regained their freedom and thereafter maintained it.

Between the two nations there was really nothing in common, except that they were both Semitic peoples. Like Jacob and Esau, they were natural antagonists. The relative supremacy of the Israelites for many generations gave a vindictiveness to the enmity of Edom which made it sleepless and bitter. The prophet Amos denounces the sister nation because "he kept his wrath forever." This smouldering hatred, ever ready to break out into a blaze, had a unique opportunity in Judah's day of shame, of which the Edomites seem to have taken full advantage. Lining the hill-tops round about Jerusalem, they jeered at the hapless captives marching by, cut down without mercy the fugitives which they met, and had their share in the plundering of the country. Moreover, they promptly pushed their way up into southern Judah, making it a part of their own land. The Edomites were the more aggressive because they felt perfectly secure from retribution. Their stronghold and capital, Petra, in the heart of the Mount Seir range, was a remarkable retreat. An irregular, well-watered valley, a mile or two in length, shut in by lofty cliffs, and approached from the desert by a long, narrow winding gorge, afforded a site which was not only capable of easy defence, but adapted, by the soft quality of the rocky cliffs, for the excavation of dwellings in the hill-side. Protected by such a stronghold, the sturdy warriors had long levied tribute on the caravan traffic with South Arabia and with Egypt, and had made themselves rich as well as independent. How soon these conditions were broken up by the irresistible advance of the Nabathæan Arabs cannot certainly be affirmed. The retribution which the prophet looked for was probably not long delayed. The prophet Obadiah, of whom otherwise we know nothing, gives expression to the outraged feelings of the exiled Hebrews, as they thought of Edom's base and spiteful mockery of the helpless captives. Yet he uttered no mere invective, but takes the broader ground that Edom is but a type of the hostile influences now blocking Israel's progress, but destined to give way before her. The book itself, although so brief, raises some interesting problems. Its opening verses are so clearly parallel to passages in Jeremiah 49:7-22 as to force the conclusion that they had a common origin. It is quite generally held that Obadiah, and perhaps Jeremiah too, make use of an earlier prophecy against Edom. Obadiah merely introduces his theme by repeating a part of this oracle. The geographical hints of the closing verses are held by many scholars to prove the late post-exilic date of the prophecy, but the spirited references to the

scenes that followed Jerusalem's capture seem to point to a period not very remote.

2. Edom's Apparent Triumph to be Reversed (Obadiah 1:1-21)

Fellow-Israelites, let us not be disheartened and hopeless in this day of humiliation and anguish, but rather think of the coming day of recompense. Recall the prediction, so familiar to us all, regarding boastful Edom. Though still unfulfilled, Jehovah will yet make it a reality. The tribes aroused against Edom (Obadiah 1:1). A divine sanction is behind the summons, sent far and wide to the tribes of Arabia, to assemble for war against the haughty Edomites. O arrogant nation, trusting in the security of your rock-hewn city and vaunting yourself among your neighbors, your opponent is no weak commander, but Jehovah himself. Were you as strong as Babylon and as inaccessible, his power could reach you. Jehovah will humble its pride (Obadiah 1:2-4). He will not only frustrate your plans for future conquest but will make you a humble vassal of your tributaries.[22] [22] The perfects in this verse and the following may be treated as very vivid forecasts of the future.

Edom to be utterly spoiled (Obadiah 1:5-6). Sad enough would your plight be, if this were only a raid organized for plunder, for spoilers may be sated with booty. As when grape-gatherers strip a vineyard some clusters are overlooked, so your enemies might spare some treasures to you. What a spoliation, however, there will be! No part of your land will be exempt from search. And expelled by her allies (Obadiah 1:7). You shall be expelled, O Edom, by the very ones on whom you rely. Those with whom you have made a covenant shall treat you with mingled treachery and violence. They have been leading[23] you on to your own destruction. How obtuse you are not to perceive this!

[23] The phrase "they that eatthy bread" is probably to be omitted.

Edom's resources of no avail (Obadiah 1:8-9). In the day of divine retribution your sages, celebrated far and wide for their wisdom, shall be incapable of suggesting the least expedient for defence; while the hardy warriors, who have been your boast because of their courage and strength, shall become timid and irresolute, an easy prey to the sword of your enemies. Her treachery the cause (Obadiah 1:10-14). The curse of God will surely be upon you, O Edom, because of your outrageous and merciless violence and unseemly rejoicing over the misfortunes of your sister nation, Judah. You identified yourself with her enemies, seizing the opportunity for plunder and murder. Can Jehovah fail to exact in full the penalty due for such unfaithfulness ?

She shall receive a full meed of punishment (Obadiah 1:15-16). Jehovah's day of recompense draws near for all the world. On that day, O Edom, your deeds will receive the punishment which is their due. As you, my countrymen who inhabit the mountain consecrated by my presence, have not escaped the cup of my chastising wrath, so shall all nations be obliged to drink of this cup, not, indeed, with a passing draught, as you have done, but continuously, until they have drained it to the dregs. Then shall they be utterly forgotten.

Israel will return and destroy Edom (Obadiah 1:17-18). The holy land of Judah, on the contrary, shall become the abode of peace, a true sanctuary for Jehovah's people. When we return from this exile we shall repossess our ancient dominion. As a flame devours dry stubble, so speedily and completely shall we drive out of our homes and destroy the children of Edom. And obtain control of all Palestine (Obadiah 1:19-20). Then will cease the ignoble conditions which now

prevail. No longer will our foes from every quarter be in possession of the soil of Judah. Those Jews who settle down in their old homes in the extreme south will add to their territory the land of Edom; those who inhabit the low mountain ranges west of Judah will rule all Philistia; the men of the hill country of Judah[24] will control the mountains and plains of Samaria and Galilee, while to Benjamin will fall the great and fertile grazing land east of Jordan. Thus shall Palestine again revert to its lawful owners. Wherever an Israelite may have been carried he shall find a happy home within the borders of the land. From time to time great national leaders shall be raised up, as in the days of old, to fight Jehovah's battles, subdue all his enemies, and rule them in accordance with his will. At that time, when our foes have become our friends, all will be united in obedience and service to Jehovah.

[24] The Septuagint version thus interprets the indefinite word "they."

086. III. The Stand-Point Of Ezekiel's Foreign Prophecies

III THE STAND-POINT OF EZEKIEL'S FOREIGN PROPHECIES The predictions of judgments against foreign nations constitute a puzzling feature of Hebrew prophecy until the reader understands the motives which prompted them. If interpreted as expressions of national vanity or jealousy, or as outbursts of vindictiveness, they are grossly misunderstood. Nor are they mere assertions of a just retribution for injuries inflicted upon the Israelitish nation. As in the hot-blooded message of Obadiah, there is always a broader theme than that of mere revenge; it is the certain movement of events in the future under the guidance of Jehovah's sovereign will that the prophets are forthtelling.

Such prophecies as these are found among the messages of Amos, Isaiah, Nahum, and Jeremiah. They merely voice a standing theme of every prophet, the authority of Jehovah of Israel over all the nations of the world, and the uniformity of his principles of judgment. It is interesting to note that these oracles, although addressed directly to the outside world, are, for the most part, intended for the prophet's own countrymen. They are often to be described as words of consolation rather than of denunciation. They declare that the evils which Jehovah has condemned in his own people, he cannot fail to punish wherever manifested. As an assertion of the supreme sovereignty of Jehovah, Israel's God, over the universe, of his attitude to other nations than Israel, and of his one great purpose to redeem the world, they are highly significant. As affording suggestions respecting the geographical knowledge of a student of affairs in Babylonia in the sixth century B. C., these prophecies of Ezekiel are of unusual value. In characterizing the traits of contemporary peoples, they are often apt and witty.

These particular utterances assume that the fall of Jerusalem is known to the nations addressed, which are situated near the land of Judah. They are grouped in a natural arrangement and have evidently been placed, with literary propriety, between the prophecies relating to the downfall of the city and those which have to do with the upbuilding of the exiled nation.

087. IV. The Predictions Of Ezekiel Against Foreign Nations (Ezekiel 25-32)

IV THE PREDICTIONS OF EZEKIEL AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS (Ezekiel 25-32) 1. Prophecies against Judah's Immediate Neighbors (Ezekiel 25)

Fellow-Israelites, Jehovah has revealed to me his sovereign will regarding the nations on our borders, whose true attitude toward us and toward him these days of our humiliation have made known.

Ammon shall pass in to oblivion (Ezekiel 25:1-7). Against our late allies, the sons of Ammon, whose joy was undisguised when our sanctuary was profaned, our land pillaged, and our people made captives, he pronounces the judgment of national extinction. The ruins of the splendid city of Rabbah shall serve as a stable for the camels of the wandering Arabs, and the whole land shall become a pasturage for their flocks. A nation so devoid of the impulses of true friendship deserves only oblivion.

Moab shall suffer invasion (Ezekiel 25:8-11). Against Moab^[25] his sentence is less severe. Her scoffing glee over the thought that Judah has been proven by her misfortunes to be no better than other nations, deserves a stern rebuke. Her border fortresses, so long an impenetrable barrier against the Arab raiders, shall no longer serve their purpose. From Ammon's fate she shall be spared, but the plundering hordes shall execute a retribution which all will recognize as coming from Jehovah.

[25] The words "and Seir" should be omitted. Edom is mentioned later.

Edom shall be destroyed by Judah herself (Ezekiel 25:12-14). Since Edom has ungenerously seized the time of her rival's weakness as an occasion for avenging her own long-cherished wrongs. Jehovah will empower Judah in the day of her restoration to carry out an exemplary penalty. Edom shall be made a desolation from one end of the kingdom to the other. The Philistines shall be annihilated (Ezekiel 25:15-17). Since the Philistines, too, have yielded to their passion for revenge against their rulers, Jehovah declares that he will utterly annihilate them.

2. Prophecies against Phœnicia (Ezekiel 26-28) (1) The Coming Destruction of Tyre (Ezekiel 26) The sin of Tyre—selfishness (Ezekiel 26:1-2). Even Tyre, the queen of the sea, has earned Jehovah's displeasure by her exultation over the downfall of Judah. With sordid greed for gold she rejoices that in her inland traffic she will no longer have a rival or a barrier. "O selfish city," declares Jehovah, "nations will come to you in great numbers, but not for trade. Its punishment (Ezekiel 26:3-6). They shall besiege and capture you, destroy your defences, and leave an unsightly and barren rock, fitted only for drying fishermen's nets, where now are splendid palaces."

Nebuchadrezzar to be Jehovah's instrument (Ezekiel 26:7-14). The divine agent shall be Nebuchadrezzar and his mighty army. Having destroyed your dependent cities on the coast, he will persistently lay siege to you. The day will come when the hoofs of his many horses shall raise

clouds of dust in the streets of your city, while the rumbling of his chariots will cause the very walls to shake. Then shall he slaughter your citizens, throw down the famous symbols of Melkarth, and give you up to spoil. In that day you will have no heart for exultant song, for your history will be at an end. The lament of her dependencies (Ezekiel 26:15-18). With what dismay and fear will the groans of your dying citizens be heard throughout your colonies and among your allies. Their rulers, with every outward sign of grief and horror, shall bewail your untoward fate, saying:

How art thou vanished from the sea, O renowned city! Who was strong through the sea She and her inhabitants, How didst thou impose thy terror On all her inhabitants.

Now tremble the coastlands In the day of thy fall. And dismayed are the isles of the sea At thy departure. The catastrophe to be irretrievable (Ezekiel 26:19-21). Amply will their grief be justified, for when the deep waters have swallowed all the traces of your once powerful and populous city, no more shall you have a place and name in the land of the living.

(2) A Dirge over her Downfall (Ezekiel 27)

Tyre a beautiful vessel laden with the wealth of nations (Ezekiel 27:1-25). Who would not mourn, as he contemplates the ruin of the mistress of the seas, the imperial city, to which the whole world has paid tribute! Fitly may one liken you, O Tyre, to a stately trireme, riding proudly at anchor, attractive to the eye, built of the choicest woods and sumptuously furnished. Skilled mariners of every nation and mercenaries from the remotest quarters of the earth obey your captains, and enable them to bring you wealth. From distant Tarshish to Arabia and the far East traders come to load you with their merchandise. Her shipwreck (Ezekiel 27:26-27). Thus deeply laden, while on your voyage in the open sea, a wind from the east has caused you to founder. All your cargo and crew have perished in the sea. The lament of the mariners (Ezekiel 27:28-36). Alas! what a lamentation arises from the mariners of the deep. With breaking hearts they give way to frenzied exhibitions of grief, uttering a weird wail^[26] for the proud vessel, laden with attractive wares, once serving all mankind, but now a miserable wreck.

[26]Ezekiel 27:32-36are in elegiac metre.

(3) Tyre's Opportunity and Well-deserved Fate (Ezekiel 28:1-19)

Presumptuous self-exaltation deserves a humiliating punishment (Ezekiel 28:1-10). Against the prince of Tyre Jehovah announces his judgment. "Because of your wonderful success in gathering wealth and skill in producing objects of use and beauty, and cleverness in making your situation so secure, you have come to think yourself as wise and powerful and great as God. Such impious self-exaltation cannot go unpunished. These very possessions in which you glory shall effect your ruin. By brutal Babylonian soldiers you shall be humiliated and spoiled and given a dishonored grave.

Tyre's violence and wickedness the reason for her destruction (Ezekiel 28:11-19). "How appropriate, then, a lament over you! Once you were worthy in your glorious perfection to live with heavenly beings in the garden of God, adorned with costly jewels and gold; but you lost God's favor because your pride was so overweening and because you did not hesitate at violence and outrage in your dealings with mankind. He will cast you from your throne of power; as a fire unexpectedly bursting forth consumes to ashes that which feeds it, so shall your sin become your

own destruction.”

(4) The Fate of Sidon (Ezekiel 28:20-26)

Sidon shall yet revere Jehovah (Ezekiel 28:20-23). For Sidon, also, Jehovah has a message of judgment. Punished by pestilence and bloody invasion, she shall come to acknowledge that he is the great and holy Ruler of the universe. Then shall Israel at last be freed from the interference and humiliating experience which have thwarted and crippled and harassed her during the centuries past. Then Israel will attain her true development (Ezekiel 28:24-26). When her Shepherd brings back his scattered flock and pastures his people once more in the fair fields of Palestine, they shall be free to live a life of true and loyal service.

3. Prophecies against Egypt (Ezekiel 29-32) (1) Egypt to be Humbled to the Dust (Ezekiel 29:1-16; Ezekiel 30:1-19)

Egypt, the crocodile of the Nile, to meet a crocodile's fate (Ezekiel 29:1-7). Not long before Jerusalem's fall, while many were still cherishing a hope that the Pharaoh might possibly extend some aid to the beleaguered city, I received this prophetic word: "Jehovah's curse is against the arrogant dweller by the Nile who, like the huge crocodile of his river, imagines himself to be the creator of that which he enjoys. The Lord will drag him out of his beloved river and leave him on the banks to die, a prey for birds and beasts. Egypt shall be thus treated because she has ever invited the confidence of Israel only to betray it.

Because of her boastfulness and real incapacity (Ezekiel 29:8-12). "To punish Egypt's overweening pride, the Almighty will transform her boasted fertility into an uninhabited desert and scatter her people, far and wide. For a generation shall her desolation continue, and it shall be universal. Never again to be a leading nation (Ezekiel 29:13-16). Then will Jehovah restore the nation to its home, but not to its former prominence. It shall be of inferior rank, no longer able to delude Israel by empty boasts of power and wealth, and to tempt her to distrust her God. The day of Jehovah will be a day of humiliation for Egypt (Ezekiel 30:1-9). "O peoples, raise a cry of lamentation, for Jehovah's day draws near, a day of darkness and of grief to all of his foes. Unto Egypt and her allies it will be a day of death and anguish. She shall be humbled to the dust and at last will acknowledge Jehovah as the supreme power in the universe.

Nebuchadrezzar will perform Jehovah's will (Ezekiel 30:10-19). "Jehovah's agent of judgment will be the mighty Nebuchadrezzar. His ruthless and invincible warriors will spread ruin and desolation throughout the land. Egypt's ruling classes and her strong cities will offer no effective opposition to their advance, and her young men will be carried off as slaves. Then Egypt's pride will completely break down and Jehovah Will receive honor and respect."

(2) The Pharaoh to be Crippled (Ezekiel 30:20-26) The misfortune of Egypt (Ezekiel 30:20-22). When Pharaoh Hophra, having advanced to the support of the people of Judah, had been repulsed by Nebuchadrezzar and driven home, Jehovah announced through me to the wondering people: "The arm of Pharaoh I have caused to be broken; never again shall it wield the sword. Jehovah will only increase it (Ezekiel 30:23-26). His other arm, too, I will disable, rendering him utterly incapable of self-defence. Then shall his pitiless adversary, by me made strong for combat, give him his death-stroke. His people I will disperse far and wide."

(3) Egypt the Fallen Cedar (Ezekiel 31)

Egypt a stately cedar of surpassing beauty (Ezekiel 31:1-9). A fitting symbol of the majesty and influence of Egypt's king is a stately cedar^[27] of Lebanon of towering height and with spreading branches which shelter all the fowls of air, whose roots strike deep into the earth and drink freely of its waters, surpassing all other trees in the beauty of its foliage and form, and envied even by the trees of Eden.

[27] The subject in verse 3 cannot well be "the Assyrian," but was probably originally indefinite. Its sure downfall (Ezekiel 31:10-14). So overweening is your pride, O Egyptian cedar, that Jehovah will send against you a skilful wielder of the axe. Soon will your huge trunk lie prostrate across the mountain peaks while your branches fill up every valley. Those who have nestled under your protection will make haste to desert you. May your fate be a warning against impious self-exaltation! Her welcome in Sheôl (Ezekiel 31:15-18). In the day of your fall, all nature will feel the shock and be moved to grief. Those who have preceded you to the realm of departed shades will rejoice because you have joined them. Superior as you are, you must go down with them and there remain.

(4) Egypt's Coming Desolation (Ezekiel 32:1-16) The capture and death of the river-monster, Egypt (Ezekiel 32:1-6). O king of Egypt, so long regarded by many nations as a devouring masterful lion, Jehovah will prove that you are rather like the powerful crocodile of your rivers, active in display of strength, but successful only in fouling the waters in which you live. He will capture you in his net and expose your carcass to the birds and beasts of prey. Your huge bulk will fill the earth, and the rivers will run red with your blood. The effect of this calamity upon nature and mankind (Ezekiel 32:7-10). All creation will be stirred by the news of your death. The sun in mid-heaven shall be eclipsed, the moon and stars shall withhold their light. Dismay and terror shall fill every human heart, when they see a just retribution overtake you. The completeness of the ruin (Ezekiel 32:11-16). This will Jehovah accomplish by the sword of King Nebuchadrezzar and his invincible warriors. Every living creature shall they sweep away. The streams of Egypt, untroubled by the foot of man or beast, shall run smooth as oil. The once powerful and populous country shall become a desolation, bewailed by all nations.

(5) The Dirge for the Dead (Ezekiel 32:17-32)

Egypt's humiliation in the underworld (Ezekiel 32:17-20). Let this dirge be sung at the burial of Pharaoh and all his host. "Do you go down to the underworld expecting to receive that deference which you have always exacted? The heroes who are honored among the shades will meet you when you appear and direct you to take your place among the dishonored dead in the lowest portion of the pit.

She will be comforted by her company (Ezekiel 32:21-32). "There will you find your predecessors, terror-inspiring Assyria, fierce and brutal Elam, the violent and bloodthirsty nations of the north. Theirs is not the enviable lot of the heroes of old who went down to Sheôl in their panoply of war, buried with all appropriate rites. Edom also and Syria and Phœnicia, those who perish in battle, will bear their humiliation along with the rest in the lowest abode of the shades. At the sight of these companions in misery you will be reconciled to your lot."

(6) Egypt to be Nebuchadrezzar's Reward (Ezekiel 29:17-21)

Ezekiel's latest prophecy Sixteen years after the fall of Jerusalem, when the thirteen years' siege of Tyre by Nebuchadrezzar had come to a disappointing end, the prophet presented a modified explanation of Jehovah's purpose against Tyre and Egypt.

Egypt Nebuchadrezzar's reward for his long service against Tyre (Ezekiel 29:17-21). "Nebuchadrezzar, my servant, has labored earnestly in my behalf against Tyre. His warriors are worn and weary, yet they have received no pay for their toil. Lo, the land of Egypt shall be their recompense! They shall take its spoil and enslave its people. When Egypt is thus humiliated, Israel will once again become strong and my prophetic teachings will be honored by all."

088. Jeremiah's Message To The Jewish Fugitives In Egypt

JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE TO THE JEWISH FUGITIVES IN EGYPT

089. I. The Remnants Of The Jewish Nation In The Land Of Egypt

I THE REMNANTS OF THE JEWISH NATION IN THE LAND OF EGYPT The deportations of 597 and 586 B. C. carried only a fraction of the total population of Judah to Babylon. Of those who survived the horrors of the sword, of famine, and of pestilence, probably the greater number were found in the land of the Nile. Egypt had encouraged the Judeans repeatedly to revolt against Babylon, and thus had lured the southern Hebrew kingdom on to its final ruin, as it had the northern a century earlier; and yet of all the nations of the earth it alone offered a friendly asylum to the Jews in the hour of their mortal agony. It was also easily accessible from Palestine and therefore doubly attractive to exiles seeking a place of refuge where they might abide until the storm was over and they could return to their beloved land. As early as 597 B. C. a large proportion of the race had already found homes in Egypt (Jeremiah 24:8 b). When, in 586 B. C., it became evident to every enlightened citizen of Judah that the final disaster was imminent undoubtedly thousands more joined them there. A little later, when the Jewish kingdom, which had been established with its capital at Mizpah, came to an untimely end because of the treacherous murder of its governor Gedaliah, the survivors, notwithstanding the earnest exhortations of Jeremiah, turned to Egypt. The prospect of living in a land where they should "see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread" (Jeremiah 42:14) was too strong a temptation to be resisted. Jeremiah's warnings that these evils would overtake them there, and his assurances that the Babylonians would treat them justly if they remained in Judah, were of no avail. The nobles and military commanders of the little Jewish state, with the men, women, and children, with the princesses of the royal Judean house, with Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch, migrated as a body to Egypt. At Tahpanhes, the classical Daphnæ and the modern Defenneh, on its easternmost borders, the colony established itself. In many ways the location of their new place of abode must have been satisfactory to the Jews, for their former homes could be reached by a journey of a day or two, and they were right on the great highway which ran from Egypt to Palestine and the East. The population of Tahpanhes, as we learn from Herodotus and the results of the excavations which have been made in its ruins, was exceedingly cosmopolitan. While the reigning Pharaohs of Egypt had a royal residence in this eastern outpost of their empire, which they probably visited at rare intervals, Greek and Semitic influences were probably stronger in the life of the city than the native Egyptian. Thus the Jews did not come into very close contact with the religion of the new land of their adoption, and were free to worship unmolested the gods whom they pleased. The dangers which threatened their faith, as Jeremiah's sermons indicate, came not from without, but from within. They had few religious teachers, for most of the priests and prophets of their nation had been carried away by the Babylonians. The refugees in Egypt, therefore, were the rank and file of the nation. Their faith was that of the masses, which, as has been noted in the study of the earlier prophets, differed widely from that of their inspired religious guides. They had never outgrown the old heathen superstitions, and the reactionary reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah had confirmed them in the imperfect faith of their fathers. In their ignorance they also interpreted the disaster which had cast down their nation as evidence of Jehovah's weakness and neglect. Hence it was natural that in their blindness they should endeavor to win the favor of the

old Semitic gods. The Queen of Heaven, whose worship had been prevalent in Jerusalem in the days of Jehoiakim, was one of the most popular of these heathen deities. Herodotus states that this cult was common among the Assyrians and Arabs, and identifies the Queen of Heaven with the Assyrian goddess of love Ishtar, the Greek Aphrodite (i. 131). The prominence of the Jewish women in her worship (Jeremiah 44:17) tends to confirm this identification. For nearly half a century Jeremiah had preached unceasingly, in the face of apathy and bitter opposition, against the sins of his people. The sweeping misfortunes which had overtaken them were due entirely to their failure to heed his plain warnings. Contrary to his advice his associates had gone to Egypt. Their attitude toward him was one of contempt and defiance. Tradition asserts that they ultimately put him to death. Certainly from a human point of view by his life-long martyrdom he had nobly earned a quiet old age; but, while he was human, he was also a divinely commissioned prophet, so that, as long as his countrymen made mistakes and sinned, he could not keep silence. His latest sermons reflect the same supreme devotion and zeal and courage as do those of his youth.

He probably recognized that, although the mind and soul of his race were in Babylon, its physical strength, which was equally essential for the national reconstruction to which the true prophets looked forward with certainty, was to be sought in Egypt. There were found thousands of Jews able and eager to return and join the struggling few who had remained behind in Judah in reviving the body politic, whenever conditions seemed favorable. Of all the exiles in Egypt, of those located at Migdol, Memphis, and Pathros (southern Egypt), as well as at Tahpanhes, Jeremiah was the pastor, just as Ezekiel was of those in the East. The brief record of his work in Egypt introduces us to a most important, but otherwise unwritten, chapter of Jewish history. Without his faithful ministrations men might not have been found equal to the supreme sacrifice which was demanded of those unknown patriots who first came back without resources and without influence to rebuild the waste places of Judah.

090. II. Predictions And Solemn Warnings (Jeremiah 43:8-44:30)

II PREDICTIONS AND SOLEMN WARNINGS (Jeremiah 43:8toJeremiah 44:30) 1. The Coming Conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar (Jeremiah 43:8-13) The sign prophecy (Jeremiah 43:8-9). Soon after the arrival of the Jewish refugees at Tahpanhes, Jeremiah was divinely led in their presence to take great stones and imbed them in the raised platform, or mastaba, in front of the royal residence of the Pharaohs. A symbol that Nebuchadrezzar would invade Egypt (Jeremiah 43:10-13). While the people stood about in open-mouthed wonder, the prophet interpreted the significance of his strange action: "Jehovah will send to Egypt, even as he has to Judah, the agent who executes his righteous judgment, Nebuchadrezzar. On these very stones which I have placed here, at the entrance of the palace of Hophra, will the king of Babylon set up his throne. As a conqueror he will condemn some of the Egyptians to death, and others to deportation to Babylon. Their temples he will plunder and burn. With ease and completely will he become master of the entire land. The obelisks of Memphis and the many temples scattered throughout the land will suffer the fate of the Jerusalem sanctuary. Think not, disobedient Jews, that you have passed beyond the pale of Jehovah's far-reaching influence."

2. The Certain Fate of Those Unfaithful to God (Jeremiah 44:1-30) The people have failed to profit by the awful experiences of their past (Jeremiah 44:1-10). Again a divine message came to the prophet for all the Jewish exiles living in the different communities in upper and lower Egypt: "You have experienced the misfortunes, and seen with your own eyes the terrible desolation that Jehovah has sent upon your people and land. You also know the reason why: it was because you, as a nation, instead of remaining faithful to him, introduced the worship of foreign gods. In vain he warned you through his zealous, untiring prophets. You would not heed, and so the desolation of Judah and your sad lot are the direct results. Have you failed to learn the simple lesson? Is it possible that by a repetition of the same gross sins you will bring still greater evils upon yourselves and your wives and innocent children dependent upon you? I can see from your defiant attitude that you are no more repentant nor inclined to keep Jehovah's laws, which are so plainly presented in the Book of the Covenant, than were your fathers. The judgment awaiting the defiant exiles in Egypt (Jeremiah 44:11-14). Therefore, but one course of action is open, even to Jehovah himself. He must continue to execute his righteous vengeance upon you. By the sword and by famine those of you who are faithless to him will die. None shall be spared, until all the world stands aghast at the magnitude of your sin and of its punishment. Think not that you will escape his judgment here in this land of Egypt. It will go on even as in the land of Palestine. You all hope to return in time to Judah. Know that none, except a few faithful ones who escape Jehovah's just wrath, shall realize this fond expectation." The defiant reply of the people (Jeremiah 44:15-19). To the bold, earnest appeals of Jeremiah the exiles, both men and women, who at the time were gathered together from all parts of Egypt in a great assembly, replied, "We will not follow your advice. As we have in this religious convention determined, we will worship the Queen of Heaven as did our ancestors in the land of Judah during the reigns of Manasseh and Jehoiakim, when they enjoyed prosperity, and before any great calamities had overtaken our nation. It was when we, as

a people, ceased to worship this powerful celestial deity that these dire disasters came upon us. Charge not the women, O prophet, with conserving these foreign rites, for in the past, as now, the husbands were in perfect sympathy with the action of their wives.”

Jeremiah’s counter interpretation of the experiences of his nation (Jeremiah 44:20-23). In reply to the deep-seated error of the people, Jeremiah declared: “Your interpretation of the real cause of the calamities which have come to your nation is entirely wrong. They came because Jehovah could no longer tolerate your apostasy to him, your abominable heathen practices, and your contemptuous disregard of his commands. The fate in store for the guilty exiles (Jeremiah 44:24-30). “Hear Jehovah’s sentence upon you. You and your wives have deliberately avowed your determination to turn your backs upon him, and henceforth to devote yourselves to worshipping the Assyrian goddess, the Queen of Heaven. Do as you have agreed, only Jehovah commands you never again to pronounce his holy name with your polluted lips. Henceforth his care in regard to you will be to punish and destroy instead of to preserve. War and famine will complete their deadly work. Only a fraction of your number will escape and return to Judah. By bitter experience you will learn the truth of my words and the folly of your own. Let this also be a sign to you: when you behold Hophra, the reigning Pharaoh, a captive in the hands of his conqueror, as was Zedekiah in the hands of Nebuchadrezzar, know the truth of my divine message, and that Jehovah will surely execute upon you the grim sentence which I have just proclaimed.”

091. Ezekiel's Messages Of Comfort To The Exiles In Babylonia

EZEKIEL'S MESSAGES OF COMFORT TO THE EXILES IN BABYLONIA

092. I. The Supreme Need Of Prophetic Ministration

I THE SUPREME NEED OF PROPHETIC MINISTRATION

It has already been noted that the prophet Ezekiel, like a pastor of to-day, was deeply interested in the fortunes of the people amid whom he lived. A sufficient evidence of this is his declaration of the responsibility which he felt as a watchman for Israel (3), and the evident bearing of his predictions regarding Jerusalem and of his unsparing criticisms of his nation upon the action and sentiments of his immediate neighbors in Babylonia. When the downfall of their beloved city and temple became an acknowledged fact, it was natural that he should zealously devote himself to his disheartened countrymen, who had hitherto paid little heed to his words of warning. In spite of what he had repeatedly said, they were unprepared for the crushing news. Some among them attributed their misfortunes to Jehovah's neglect or weakness, and were tempted to renounce their allegiance to him and become like the heathen around them. Others, while seeing in these calamities the judgments of Jehovah for their sins, were overwhelmed by a sense of their guilt (Lamentations 1:12) and became almost hopeless respecting the future (Ezekiel 24:23). They could only realize that the city was in ruins, the royal house dishonored, the nation uprooted, the people dispersed, and the old home-land either a desolation or in possession of their hated neighbors, who were maliciously exulting over their downfall. Beyond these shocking realities they were not able to see. The prophet, however, found in this condition of affairs the opportunity for which he had been waiting. His work of sustaining, comforting, and upbuilding could now begin—the era of promises rather than threats and of the inculcation of hopefulness instead of fear. He turns the attention of his hearers to the rich possibilities for Israel in the future, at least for an Israel repentant, loyal, and earnest.

One marked result of the confirmation of all that Ezekiel had proclaimed for six long years was his re-establishment as a popular preacher (Ezekiel 33:30-32). He was always sure of an audience, and became at once an acknowledged leader in the community. He himself recognized the superficial character of his popularity, and did not expect that his teachings would effect an immediate change of heart. Chapters 33 to 39 doubtless represent the sermons of the next decade, during which the prophet was a faithful friend and helper to his people. In these chapters the true bent of Ezekiel's mind is revealed. Prominence is given the positive, constructive side of his thinking. The years between 586 and 570 B.C. must have been the happiest of his life, since it was pre-eminently the glory of a prophet to snatch a despondent people from suicidal lethargy and direct them, repentant, into a vitalized, earnest career of service.

093. II. Prophecies Of Promise And Cheer (Ezekiel 33 to 39)

II PROPHECIES OF PROMISE AND CHEER (Ezekiel 33-39) 1. The Prophet Appointed to Announce Israel's Possible Future (Ezekiel 33) The function of a watchman and his responsibility (Ezekiel 33:1-6). Fellow Israelites, Jehovah bids me make clear to you the decisive importance of your attitude toward him and his messenger in these days of reconstruction. I am like a watchman set apart in time of public peril to warn a city of the enemy's approach. If he is faithful to his trust, keeping vigilant watch and sounding the alarm when danger threatens, then those who lose their lives by failing to heed his warning are solely to blame for their death. If, however, he is neglectful, the blood of those who are slain is upon his head. The prophet a watchman (Ezekiel 33:7-9). Thus has Jehovah appointed me to proclaim in trumpet tones the doom which I see hanging over my people, if they persist in their evil ways. If I faithfully present my warning message, my responsibility is at an end, but yours, O Israel, will then begin. The future of Israel to depend upon the character of the people (Ezekiel 33:10-20). Do you despairingly conclude that a final destruction has been decreed against you because of your sins and that no effort of yours can avail! Not so, fellow Israelites; you misapprehend the divine purpose. Jehovah wishes that all should live, and ever holds forth the possibility of redemption. A man's past life does not absolutely determine his present or future state in God's sight. A once righteous man who yields to evil impulse must suffer the consequences of his wickedness; a man of evil life who truly reforms, making recompense for the wrong he has done and ordering his life by right principles, can count on divine approval and blessing. Jehovah will hold everyone responsible for his deliberate course of life. Can he do otherwise? The effect of the news of Jerusalem's fall (Ezekiel 33:21-22). Such is the message which Jehovah now bids me proclaim. There is no need for overwhelming despair because of the startling news of Jerusalem's fall. It enables me to set before you all the real character of your God and his ways of dealing with you. No longer need my lips be sealed, for you will acknowledge that a true prophet is in your midst. The remnant in Judah has no right to the land except through obedience (Ezekiel 33:23-29). Those who are even now left in the ruined land of Judah are laying claim, as sons of Abraham and heirs of the promise, to the whole territory. Jehovah will point out to them that they are ignoring the true basis of the old covenant and maintaining the very evils for which he has driven the nation from its inheritance. Hence the same judgment must be repeatedly meted out until his righteous will is obeyed. The prophet's sermons to be respected (Ezekiel 33:30-33). "As for your fellow exiles," saith Jehovah, "who now crowd to hear my message from your lips, do not set too high a value on their professions of interest. They are curious to hear some sensational preaching, but not eager to repent. They enjoy your artistic sermons as they might a beautiful song. When your words are all fulfilled, these sceptics will discover that you have indeed been a speaker of eternal truth."

2. The True Rider of Israel (Ezekiel 34)

Jehovah will set aside the negligent guardians of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1-10). "Woe," saith Jehovah, "to the rulers of my people, through whose selfish heedlessness they have become weakened and dispersed like sheep which have no watchful shepherd. On every side their enemies have

devoured them, while their slothful and self-indulgent guardians were feasting themselves. Such criminal incompetence can no longer be tolerated.

He will himself take their place (Ezekiel 34:11-16). "Therefore I will interpose and undertake the care of my people. Like a good shepherd, I will seek out those who have wandered far away. I will gently lead them homeward and give them abundant food in their accustomed haunts. There will I lavish upon them the tender care which they have never received from their appointed guardians.

Oppressions will cease (Ezekiel 34:17-22). "At that time I will make a sudden end of the oppression of the poor and the weak by those who are wealthy and powerful, who consume the best of everything, and then, in wanton spitefulness, destroy or damage what they cannot use. Such heartless ruffians will receive speedy judgment at my hands. A true Davidic ruler to be appointed (Ezekiel 34:23-31). "When I have thus restored and purged my people, I will appoint over them a faithful shepherd, a second David. Then shall the land be free from foreign foes and beasts of prey. I will give rain in its season, abundant harvests and complete security and happiness. Then at last shall God and his people be reconciled."

3. The Certain Restoration of Israel's Land (Ezekiel 35-36) (1) Edoni's Usurpation to be Severely Punished by Desolation (Ezekiel 35)

Edom to be a desolation because of her enmity, malice and arrogance (Ezekiel 35:1-15). O land of Edom, Jehovah's curse is upon you. A barren waste shall you become because in Judah's day of calamity you exhibited your ceaseless enmity toward her by exulting over her misfortunes, assisting her enemies, and especially by invading with boastful defiance the sacred soil of Israel, Jehovah's abode, as if it had been given up to such as you for spoil. Your acts and your malicious spirit Jehovah cannot pardon.

(2) Judah to be again a Fertile and Populous Land (Ezekiel 36:1-15)

Judah to be recovered from its present possessors, purified, and blessed (Ezekiel 36:1-15). And you, beloved land of hills and valleys, at once the object of our enemies' jibes and the reward of their evil enterprise, the humiliation that you suffer shall be the lot of those who now possess you. At the time, not far distant, when your own people return, you shall be luxuriantly fruitful and populous. Nevermore will there be a destructive famine, nor shall outside peoples be justified in hurling reproaches against you.

(3) Jehovah's Motive for Restoration (Ezekiel 36:16-38)

Judah's calamities well deserved (Ezekiel 36:16-19). Recall, O men of Judah, how necessary it was for Jehovah to act in judgment against you. By your persistent idolatry and acts of murder you forced him, in sheer abhorrence, to mete out the appropriate punishment of world-wide dispersion. Their significance misinterpreted (Ezekiel 36:20-21). The nations among whom you have gone, not understanding the divine method of governing the unwise, dishonor Jehovah by attributing your misfortunes to his inability to protect you. Hence, for his own sake, Jehovah will redeem the nation (Ezekiel 36:22-32). For his name's sake, therefore, he purposes to restore you again to your land, purified from every idolatrous taint, docile, reverent, and disposed to obedience. In response to the shower of blessings from his hand, you will then realize his love and your own iniquities. Both you and the nations will understand his motives and give him honor. This

redemption will cause all nations to honor Jehovah (Ezekiel 36:33-38). At that time the land will again become as beautiful as Eden and populous as of old. Once more will the people take counsel of Jehovah and ask for his blessing. Every city in the land shall be crowded with thronging multitudes, as was Jerusalem in the past on the great festal days. Looking on such a transformation as this, can the nations fail to glorify Jehovah ?

4. The Revivified and United People (Ezekiel 37) (1) The Vision of the Nation's Resurrection (Ezekiel 37:1-14) The despondent exiles (Ezekiel 37:11). The greatest obstacle to my ministry of encouragement was the despondency of the exiled people who ever kept speaking of themselves as devoid of hope. The vision of the dry bones made into living beings (Ezekiel 37:1-10). One day Jehovah granted me an answering vision. Again I appeared to be in the familiar valley, but it was covered with bleached and scattered bones, which seemed to me truly emblematic of my dispersed and blighted nation. I heard a question, "Weak mortal, can these bones be transformed into living beings ?" I dared not deny; I did not venture to affirm; I humbly asked for enlightenment. "Declare boldly," said the voice, "that Jehovah has both the power and the purpose to make a living nation from these bones." On my compliance, the bones began to assort themselves into groups and the groups to become articulated into skeletons and the skeletons to be clothed with flesh, until I saw before me a vast array of inert bodies. Again said the voice: "Call to the four winds of heaven to furnish the breath of life for this great host." I called, the winds obeyed, and there stood up a multitude of living beings. The explanation of the vision (Ezekiel 37:12-14). "Mortal one," the voice added, "these bones which you saw were the remains of the nation Israel. As Jehovah gave life to the dismembered and disintegrated bodies, so he can raise the nation from the very grave, infuse new life, and restore the people to their own land. Then will they be convinced of his power and his love."

(2) The Symbol of its Unification (Ezekiel 37:15-28) The prophetic symbol of the two sticks (Ezekiel 37:15-17). Again, under a divine impulse, I took two wooden sticks to represent royal sceptres, which I labelled with names to indicate that they denoted the southern and northern kingdoms of Israel. These I held in my hand as if they had become united into one rod. The future Israel to be a united kingdom (Ezekiel 37:18-22). When questioned about the meaning of this action, I said, "Jehovah is surely purposing to gather all the Israelites from every quarter of the world and to settle them in their own land and to make them a united nation under one king. Its glorious outlook (Ezekiel 37:23-28). Purified from idolatry and cleansed from sin,[28] they will serve him alone. Then shall a true representative of the Davidic stock ascend the throne. Like a good shepherd he will faithfully care for them, and they will be obedient and righteous. Jehovah will establish his covenant with them forever, and will dwell in their midst to the end of days."

[28] "Dwelling places" Ezekiel 37:23 should probably be read, as in the Septuagint, "backslidings."

5. Jehovah's Final Triumph (Ezekiel 38:1 to Ezekiel 39:24) The significance of the invasion of Israel by Gog's army (Ezekiel 38:1-9). After Jehovah has revealed himself to the civilized world and to Israel by restoring and blessing his own people, there will yet remain one final act in the great drama of universal, divine judgment. The unknown nations of the distant north will need one overwhelming proof of Jehovah's sovereign power, before the whole world will stand in awe of him. Then will he speak to Gog, the leader of those fierce Scythian tribes: "Prepare, O prince of nations, to assemble your forces from every quarter, well equipped and beyond number, ready at

my summons to advance, like a cloud of destructive locusts, against my people, Israel.

Gog's motive merely that of plunder (Ezekiel 38:10-16). "Your only motive, O robber of nations, will be to plunder unopposed a peaceful, prosperous, populous, but defenceless people. How the merchants of Arabia and Tarshish gloat over the prospects of a rich spoil! Yet it is not for booty that I bring you to the land of my people, but that my name may be held in reverence by all the world. His downfall the fulfilment of prophetic expectation (Ezekiel 38:17-23). "This will be the invasion to which many of my prophets have looked forward, when I and my nation would be face to face with the embodiment of the heathen world's hostility. In this supreme peril will be my long-awaited opportunity. I will pour out my wrath upon these northern barbarians. By a mighty earthquake the mountains shall be cleft and every lofty object levelled. The panic-stricken soldiers will attack each other, while I complete their destruction by pestilence and hailstorms and fire. Then will my power and the sacredness of my land be known to all.

Gog to be disarmed and destroyed by God (Ezekiel 39:1-7). "Therefore, O representative of uncivilized paganism, I will lead you to this land, but only that you may be annihilated. Making useless your weapons, I will cause you to perish. Even your own home-land shall be ravaged that my glory may be acknowledged by the whole world. The extent of the catastrophe (Ezekiel 39:8-20). "Then will the people of Israel go forth from their cities and gather up the spoil. So numerous will be the weapons that for years there will be no need of cutting firewood. In a secluded valley on the other side of the Dead Sea, outside the limits of the holy land, they will bury the corpses. Many months will it take to dispose of the slain which can be readily discovered. Then men will be appointed to search every corner of the land for unnoticed corpses, that it may be wholly freed from defilement. A splendid banquet will I spread on that day for all the birds of the air and for the beasts of prey. They shall eat flesh to the full and drink freely of the blood of princes. The effect upon Israel and the world (Ezekiel 39:21-24). "After such a manifestation of power as this, the people of Israel can never again be unfaithful to me. Moreover they and the whole world will recognize that I was obliged to punish them with exile and the sword because of their sins. Thus will my righteous rule be universally acknowledged."

6. Restored and Purified Israel (Ezekiel 39:25-29)

Jehovah's omnipotence and righteousness revealed to the world (Ezekiel 39:25-29). It will not be long, O Israel, before Jehovah will be ready to restore you to your land. Then will you put away the evil you have practised, and live in obedience and security. Then will you realize why he dealt with you severely. Never again will he need to hide his face from you. Thus will his name be honored throughout the world.

094. Ezekiel's Vision Of The Restored Hebrew State

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE RESTORED HEBREW STATE

095. I. The Character And Importance Of The Vision

I THE CHARACTER AND IMPORTANCE OF THE VISION The last nine chapters of the book of Ezekiel, far from being, as so many readers treat it, a sort of appendix which may readily be ignored, is really a crowning conclusion to all that precedes. The prophet begins with a vision of God; he concludes with a vision of God in the midst of his purified, reverent people.

There is a real unity traceable throughout the book. In the earlier chapters the prophet unsparingly denounced his unfaithful nation and asserted its destruction because it was in every way misrepresenting its God and ignoring his precepts (Ezekiel 1-24). His foreign predictions (Ezekiel 25-32) were in reality a looking forward to the time when the insolent neighboring states should be cleared away to make room for the new ideal Israel. His hopeful visions of a unified and restored people prepared the way more completely for a sketch of the ideal embodiment of the true relations between God and his people. Perhaps no one but a priest as well as prophet, who knew the old and looked forward to a new and better order, who realized vividly the most dangerous tendencies of the nation before its exile, and who planned in a definite way to counteract them, could have been the medium of so noteworthy a reconstruction.

First of all, however, these chapters are interesting because they contain a remarkably bold prophecy. At a time when the temple and city lay in ruins, when the land was devastated and in the possession of Judah's foes, the people scattered, the empire of their conqueror at the height of its power, and the exiles dispirited and helpless, the prophet draws a picture of a temple to be erected on the old site by a reunited and prosperous people who inhabit a fruitful and populous land without hint of traitor within or foe without. For sublime confidence one can only compare with it Jeremiah's purchase of the field at Anathoth (Ezekiel 32:1-15) just before Jerusalem's downfall. By such object lessons as these the prophets were wont to challenge despondency and to inculcate their own robust and unswerving faith.

Ezekiel, however, had a broader purpose than merely to awaken a spirit of hopefulness. His aim was constructive. Four ideas seem to have impressed themselves upon his mind as essential to the ideal development of his race: first, the people should make much more of the forms of religious life than ever before in order to be responsive to the demands of true holiness; again, the ritual recognized by them should be much more exact and strict than it had been in the past; in the third place, the ecclesiastical power must be independent in matters religious, not subject to royal caprice; and lastly, this power was to be centred in the family of Zadok. With consummate art Ezekiel presents such a ritualistic constitution, which provides for a temple with priests and servitors, with every appointment and necessary resource, protected and supported but not controlled by the king, its holiness guarded by the provision of an outer court, beyond which only consecrated men could pass, situated in the midst of a reservation allotted to the priests and Levites, which was in turn encircled by a territory where every true Israelite was allotted an equal share. It is a sketch, a ground plan, but its details are also carefully developed. Throughout the author recognizes that his vision has been given by God, an inspiration which is not belittled or

gainsaid by the recognition of the prophet's share in its formation.

Two details are new to Hebrew history. The old temple had only one court. Ezekiel provides another, in order to emphasize the distinction between that which is holy and ceremonially clean and, therefore, admissible to God's presence, and that which is common. Not even the king may step within the inner court, where the great altar of burnt offering stands before the temple proper. Again, before the exile, many priestly families had a claim upon the perquisites and the prerogatives of the priesthood at Jerusalem. Ezekiel declares that the Zadokites alone are worthy to serve at the altar, because they had, on the whole, been faithful to the ideals of the priesthood.

There was one element of weakness in this newly formulated policy; it reduced popular religion to a series of forms. A man's access to God was no longer to be direct in any sense; he could only stand afar off and watch, while others performed for him the symbolic rites. No doubt it was felt that the resulting systemization of religion would be a real advantage; but it can hardly be doubted that there was a loss in personal fervor.

Ezekiel's plan was never fully adopted. It was not, in fact, so adjusted to existing conditions that it could be. It is really a sort of Messianic apocalypse, an ideal picture of what ought to come to pass, intended rather to suggest broad lines of progress than to indicate exact details.

Ezekiel has been properly termed the father of Judaism, for by his keen insight into the needs of the times and by his clever formulation of his proposed policy in this striking vision, he helped materially to shape the growth of the Jewish polity which resulted in the adoption of a strict ritual. His suggestions seem to stand half-way between the free and popular ritual of Deuteronomy and the elaborate technicalities of the Levitical code. In this work he probably also represents other thoughtful minds which were intent upon the religious problems of their race, and yet among them all he was as conspicuous as one of the stately cedars of which the prophets love to think. His was the master mind through which was given the impulse toward the most important transformation that ever a nation was called upon to undergo.

096. II. The Details Of The Vision

II THE DETAILS OF THE VISION 1. The New Sanctuary on Mount Zion (Ezekiel 40-43) (1) Its Gateways and Outer Court (Ezekiel 40:1-27)

Introduction : the vision of the new temple at Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40:1-4). In the fourteenth year after the fall of Jerusalem Jehovah graciously revealed to me a vision of such an abode as he would delight to inhabit. When the prophetic ecstasy came over me, I seemed to be carried back to my native land and set down in the sacred city, Jerusalem. Upon the old temple hill, conspicuous above all other elevations, was an imposing group of buildings, like those of a city. Directly before me in the eastern gateway stood a man of glorious appearance like a heavenly messenger, holding in his hand a cord and rod for taking measurements, who said to me: "Mortal man, pay strict heed to all that I show you, that you may be able to reveal Jehovah's purpose to your nation." The surrounding wall (Ezekiel 40:5). My attention was first drawn to a wall, nine[29] feet high and broad, which encircled all the buildings.

[29] For purposes of convenience the cubit will be reckoned at eighteen inches in the following estimates. Quite probably one-sixth should be added to every such estimate. The eastern gateway of the outer wall (Ezekiel 40:6-16). Then we came to the great gateway facing the east. It was seventy-five feet long and half as wide. Ascending the outer steps, we entered, through a portal as wide as the outer wall, a passage-way fifteen feet wide and forty-two feet long. On each side of this were three guardrooms. for officers, each nine feet square and provided with windows. At the other end of the passage-way was a second portal, similar in size to the first, from which we passed into a large vestibule, and then into the courtyard. The outer court and the outer gateways (Ezekiel 40:17-27). Around the outer margin of this court were thirty chambers fronting upon a pavement which extended to the vestibule of the gateway. The court was one hundred and fifty feet wide. It had two other gateways fronting to the north and south, exactly similar in construction and size to the one through which we had passed.

(2) The Inner Court (Ezekiel 40:28-47) Its three gateways (Ezekiel 40:28-37). Crossing the outer court, we came to the gateways leading into the inner court. They were three in number, facing south, east, and north. Their dimensions and construction were exactly like those of the outer gateways, except that their vestibules faced the outer court. The level of the inner court was reached by a flight of eight steps. The sacrificial tables (Ezekiel 40:38-43). Connected with a vestibule of the inner gateway[30] by a door was a chamber in which the burnt offering was washed. In the vestibule itself stood four tables, two on either side, and outside the vestibule two other pairs of tables, all for use in the slaughter of sacrificial victims. With each pair of tables was a smaller one of hewn stone, on which the sacrificial implements were laid.

[30] The text does not indicate which gateway it was. The two apartments for priests (Ezekiel 40:44-46). In the inner court were two apartments, one by the north gate facing southward, the other by the south gate facing northward. The former was the residence of the priests who took care of the temple; the latter was for those of the family of Zadok, who ministered at the altar. The

great altar (Ezekiel 40:47). The inner court itself was one hundred and fifty feet square. In the middle, so that it could be seen through the gateways, and immediately before the temple, was the great altar of burnt offering.

(3) The Temple and its Adjuncts (Ezekiel 40:48 to Ezekiel 41:26) The porch (Ezekiel 40:48-49). On the western side of the inner court was the temple on an elevated platform approached by ten[31] steps. Ascending these, we entered a vestibule thirty feet wide and eighteen feet long by an entrance twenty-one feet wide. On either side of the entrance was a huge pillar. The main hall (Ezekiel 41:1-2). Beyond the vestibule was the main hall of the temple, sixty feet in length by thirty in breadth, entered through a doorway fifteen feet wide.

[31] So the Septuagint. The most holy place (Ezekiel 41:3-4). Beyond this hall was the innermost shrine of the temple, the holy of holies. It was exactly square, with a doorway nine feet in width. Within this hallowed spot, the abode of Jehovah's glory, I could not enter. The chambers at the side (Ezekiel 41:5-7). The wall of the temple was nine feet thick. Round about this wall on each side except the east was an outer wall seven and a half feet thick, the interval between them at the base being six feet. Between these walls were built small cells in three tiers, thirty chambers in each tier. The cells of the second and third tier were somewhat broader than those at the base, their supporting beams resting on the ledges made by the recession of the wall. The raised platform (Ezekiel 41:8-15a). The tiers were connected by winding stairways, and opened into the terrace on which the temple stood. Thirty feet west of the temple was a large building, the purpose of which I did not ask. Its area as well as that of the temple court and that of the inner court were each one hundred and fifty feet square. The interior of the temple (Ezekiel 41:15-26). The whole interior of the temple was panelled and ceiled with wood. From floor to roof this woodwork, in the holiest place and in the main hall, was ornamented with carved work representing cherubs and palms. Before the holy of holies stood an altar-like wooden table for the shewbread. Swinging doors led into the hall and into the most holy place, each door being made in two sections and elaborately carved.

(4) Other Buildings of the Inner Court (Ezekiel 42:1-14; Ezekiel 46:19-24) The chambers for the priests (Ezekiel 42:1-12). Their use (Ezekiel 42:13-14). On the northern and southern sides of the inner court were two three-story buildings, each one hundred and fifty by seventy-five feet, with a passage-way fifteen feet wide in front. The uppermost stories included a gallery. The walls which faced the outer court extended only half of the length of the walls that faced the temple. These buildings could be entered from the passage-ways and from the outer court. In these chambers the priests who minister at the altar were to store and eat their portions of the sacrificial offerings, and to lay aside their sacred garments before going into the outer court of the people. The kitchens for priests and people (Ezekiel 46:19-24). Entering these chambers from the outer court, we noted in the western corners of the inner court kitchens for the exclusive use of the priests in preparing their share of the sacrifices for food. Passing thence, we saw in each corner of the outer court four kitchens sixty by forty-five feet in size, surrounded by pillars, where the Levites boiled the sacrificial meals for the people.

(5) The Whole Temple Area (Ezekiel 42:15-20) The outside measurements of the whole enclosure (Ezekiel 42:15-20). Having completed the inspection and measurement of the interior arrangement of the temple area, we passed out of the eastern gateway and measured the exterior wall. The

whole enclosure was seven hundred and fifty feet square. A wall encircled it, shutting in the sanctuary from the outside world.

(6) The Return of Jehovah to His Abode (Ezekiel 43:1-12) The third vision of Jehovah's glory (Ezekiel 43:1-5). We then returned to the eastern gate, and there I beheld the glory of Jehovah approaching from the east with a noise that resembled the roar of a rushing stream and a radiance that illumined the earth and sky. It was like the splendid visions I had seen before on the river Chebar and at Jerusalem. I fell on my face in awe, while the glory passed through the gateway. Transported to the inner court, I saw that it filled the temple. The conditions of its permanence (Ezekiel 43:6-9). At the same time a voice announced: "Mortal man, in this truly sacred temple I will be pleased to dwell. No longer shall my abode be defiled by the immediate presence of a royal palace and a royal burial-place, and by the abominations which kings are wont to practise. It must be wholly free from contact with that which is profane. The new temple to be built according to the vision (Ezekiel 43:10-12). "Proclaim, therefore, to the men of Israel exactly how the new temple is to be erected, describing its true dimensions and noting all its ordinances and ritual, that everything may be done in perfect keeping with the divine ideal. No part of the mountain top is to be given up for a royal residence, or for any other secular use. All is to be consecrated to the worship of Jehovah."

(7) The Great Altar and its Consecration (Ezekiel 43:13-27)

Description of the altar (Ezekiel 43:13-17). In the very centre of the inner court was the great altar of burnt-offering, a huge structure of stone, rising in three regularly diminishing terraces to a height of seventeen feet from a base twenty-seven feet square and one and a half feet in height. The steps by which the priests ascended to the altar-hearth faced the east. The method of its dedication (Ezekiel 43:18-27). "Mortal one," said the voice, "in the day when the altar is completed it shall be consecrated for its sacred service in the following manner: Let the priests of the family of Zadok, whose service is acceptable to me, apply the blood of a freshly slain bullock to the prominent parts of the altar, in token of its dedication to the service of Jehovah. The bullock shall then be burned in the proper place outside the temple area. For six days thereafter the altar shall be ceremonially cleansed with the blood of a he-goat, and a burnt offering made of a bullock and a ram. When the altar has thus been set apart and sanctified, the sanctuary will be holy, and there will I accept the offerings of my people."

2. Ordinances Regarding the Temple (Ezekiel 44-46) (1) The Use of the Outer Eastern Gateway (Ezekiel 44:1-3) The prince alone to enter it (Ezekiel 44:1-3). We now returned to the great eastern gateway of the outer court but found it closed. The voice then said: "Since Jehovah has entered by this gateway, no mortal shall pass through it. Let it remain forever closed. The prince^[32] may enter the vestibule from the outer court and there partake of the sacrificial meal."

[32] For some reason Ezekiel uses this word in preference to "king."

(2) The Functions of the Levites and the Priests (Ezekiel 44:4-31) The regulations in the interests of sanctity (Ezekiel 44:4-5). Returning to the inner court, I again saw the splendor of Jehovah's glory filling the temple. The voice bade me pay good heed to the ordinances and regulations about to be promulgated for the preservation of the sanctity of the house of God.

Servants of foreign birth to be replaced by Levites (Ezekiel 44:6-14). No longer, forgetful Israel, shall you profane the sanctuary by permitting foreigners, whose service is purely mercenary, to be present while sacrifices are being offered and to have charge of the temple. Hereafter the members of the priestly families, which ministered at the high places and promoted Israel's unfaithfulness, shall be responsible for the service of the sanctuary. They shall guard the gateways, serve the priests, slay the animals for sacrifice, and wait upon the worshippers. They shall not, however, be permitted to act as priests.

Priests to be Zadokites (Ezekiel 44:15-16). The members of the priestly family of Zadok alone shall act as priests in the temple, for they have always been faithful to me. Their clothing (Ezekiel 44:17-19). In the service of the sanctuary they shall wear, for the sake of coolness and purity, only linen clothing. Before mingling with the people they shall change these garments, leaving them in the appointed chambers. Further regulations promotive of sanctity (Ezekiel 44:20-22; Ezekiel 44:25-27). They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long like the Nazirite. They shall refrain from wine while on duty. They shall marry no one but a virgin or the widow of a priest. They shall not approach a dead body except that of a blood-relative. They shall then remain unclean, not serving at the altar for seven days, and shall thereafter present a sin-offering. Their duties (Ezekiel 44:23-24). They shall instruct the people in ceremonial obligations, deciding difficult cases. They shall also arbitrate in disputes between man and man, control public worship, and enforce the due observance of sacred days and seasons. Their support (Ezekiel 44:28-31). They shall not be expected to support themselves, but shall subsist entirely upon the offerings brought to the sanctuary. It is lawful for them to eat whatever is not to be consumed by fire. Theirs also is all property consecrated to Jehovah, the best of the first fruits and the thank offerings. They must carefully avoid eating meat which has not been slaughtered.

(3) The Apportionment of their Land (Ezekiel 45:1-7) The sacred reservation (Ezekiel 45:1-7). On the return from exile, when the land is reapportioned, you shall mark out a tract about seven miles square. Of this land, set apart two-fifths for the Levites and their cities.[33] Another two-fifths allot to the priesthood, the domain required for the temple and an open space of seventy-five feet on all sides of it being taken from its centre. The remaining strip, about seven miles by one and one-half, shall belong to the people who live in Jerusalem. All the territory east and west of the reservation shall belong to the prince.

[33] So the Septuagint in place of "chambers."

(4) The Rights and Duties of the Prince (Ezekiel 45:8-17; Ezekiel 46:16-18) The prince subject to property laws (Ezekiel 45:8; Ezekiel 46:16-18). Having received a portion of his own, the prince must not take or give away the property of a subject. He may only allot the land to the tribes in accordance with Jehovah's will. His own property he may give to one of his sons in perpetuity. If granted to a subject, the land reverts to the prince in the jubilee year. To regulate weights and measures (Ezekiel 45:9-12). He shall establish a correct scale of weights and measures, so that all robbery of the people in his name shall cease. The support of the ritual (Ezekiel 45:13-17). They shall pay over to him for the support of the ritual one-sixtieth of their produce of wheat or barley, one-one-hundredth of their oil, and one out of every two hundred lambs. The prince shall in turn provide that which is needful for all the stated public sacrifices.

(5) The Stated Offerings (Ezekiel 45:18 to Ezekiel 46:15) The atonement for the sanctuary (Ezekiel 45:18-20). On the first day of the new year^[34] and on the first day of the seventh month the priests shall formally cleanse the temple by applying the blood of an unblemished bullock to the doorposts of the sanctuary, to the corners of the altar and to the posts of the gateway of the inner court. Thus shall it be kept absolutely sacred.

[34] According to our calendar about the fifteenth of March. The offerings at Passover and Tabernacles (Ezekiel 45:21-25). In the middle of the first month^[35] shall be held the feast of the Passover. On the first day the prince shall offer in atonement for himself and the people a bullock, and in addition, daily burnt offerings for a week, with the appropriate cereal offerings and oil, and a sin-offering for each day.

[35] About the first of April.

Similarly, at the feast of Tabernacles, six months later, shall be provided all that is needed for the public offerings throughout the sacred week.

Regulations for Sabbaths and new-moons (Ezekiel 46:1-7). In ordinary weeks the eastern gate of the inner court shall be open only on Sabbath days and the days of the new moon. At such times the people shall assemble for worship in front of the gate, while the prince may ascend the steps, pass through the gateway, and stand at the threshold which opens upon the inner court. Every Sabbath the prince shall offer a burnt offering of six rams and one lamb, with the suitable proportion of cereal offerings and of oil. On the day of the new moon he shall make the same offering with the addition of a bullock

Various regulations (Ezekiel 46:8-12). After performing his duties in the temple, the prince shall return as he entered. The multitude, however, to prevent confusion on a festal day, shall enter the outer court by one gate and depart by the opposite one. Both prince and people shall worship at the same time. If the prince desires to make a special offering, the eastern gate of the main court may be opened for the purpose. The daily burnt offering (Ezekiel 46:13-15). For every day in the year the prince shall provide a yearling lamb as a morning burnt offering with the suitable offerings of flour and oil.

3. The Renewing and Allotment of the Land (Ezekiel 47, 48) (1) The Fertilizing Stream from the Temple (Ezekiel 47:1-12) Its source (Ezekiel 47:1-2). Again my celestial guide brought me to the inner court and showed me a stream of pure water issuing from beneath the porch of the temple, passing the altar on the south side and emerging from the temple near the outer eastern gate. Its size (Ezekiel 47:3-7). Fifteen hundred feet away from the gate the water was ankle-deep; farther on it covered the knee; soon the stream became an unfordable river that could be crossed only by swimming. Along its banks grew an abundance of trees. Its effect (Ezekiel 47:8-12). "Mortal one," said my companion, "behold this river of life-giving water springing from the very presence of God. Down the barren slopes of the Judean wilderness it will pour, restoring them to productiveness. It shall freshen even the Dead Sea, so that fishermen shall ply their trade there as on the Great Sea. Its desolation shall disappear. Only so much shall remain unchanged as will supply the salt which human life demands. All along the banks of the river shall grow every kind of useful tree, perennially fruitful. Thus shall the land be made a paradise."

(2) The Boundaries of the Land (Ezekiel 47:13-20)

Only territory west of Jordan to be included in the new land of Israel (Ezekiel 47:13-20). This is the will of Jehovah, O Israel, respecting the extent of the fertilized land, which you shall equally share among the twelve tribes. Its northern boundary shall extend from the sea, not far from Tyre, and run eastward to the vicinity of Dan. Its eastern boundary shall be the river Jordan and its connected seas. The southern boundary shall extend from Tamar below the Dead Sea, through Kadesh, along the Brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea, which shall constitute its western boundary.

(3) The Allotment of the Land (Ezekiel 47:21 to Ezekiel 48:29) The rights of proselytes (Ezekiel 47:21-23). Although this land shall be divided among the tribes, strangers not of Israelitish blood, who have adopted the worship of Jehovah and abide by all the ordinances, shall have equal rights with those who are of Israel. They shall have an inheritance among the members of the tribe in which they sojourn. The tribes north of the reservation (Ezekiel 48:1-7). Seven tribes shall be given allotments north of the portion set apart for sacred purposes: Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah. Each tribe shall occupy a zone extending from the Jordan to the sea. The reservation itself (Ezekiel 48:8-22). South of Judah's allotment shall be the sacred reservation, inhabited by the Levites and by the priests. None of it shall ever be sold or exchanged or alienated by them, for it is Jehovah's land.

South of the portion allotted to the priests shall be a zone, one-half as large, in which the city Jerusalem shall be built. It shall be about a mile and a quarter square. Its public lands shall extend three hundred and seventy-five feet on every side. The rest of the territory, about nine square miles, shall be devoted to agricultural purposes. The inhabitants shall come from all Israel. On both sides of the sacred reservation, that he may protect it, shall be the domain of the prince. The tribes south of the reservation (Ezekiel 48:23-29). South of the reservation five tribes shall be given allotments: Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulon, and Gad. This territory, two hundred miles by an average of fifty, shall be the possession of the tribes of Israel forever.

(4) The Holy City (Ezekiel 48:30-35) The circuit, gates, and name of the new city (Ezekiel 48:30-35). The city shall have three gates on each side named after the ancient tribes. Its whole circuit shall be about five miles.[36] The city shall no longer be designated by its old familiar name, but shall be worthy of a new one, indicating that God dwells with his people. All shall call it, "Jehovah is there."

[36] The present city, excluding the suburbs, has a circuit of 2½ miles.

097. Songs Of Exultation Over Babylon's Approaching Fall.

SONGS OF EXULTATION OVER BABYLON'S APPROACHING FALL

098. I. The Rise Of Cyrus

I THE RISE OF CYRUS

Ezekiel's latest prophecy is dated 570 B. C. Probably before that time Jeremiah's long life-work came to an end. From the middle of the period of the Babylonian exile no prophecies which can be dated with certainty have been preserved. While the strong hand of Nebuchadrezzar ruled the Babylonian empire the Jews were apparently subjected to no serious persecutions, nor was there anything in the political outlook to arouse hopes of deliverance; the prophets therefore were silent.

Although under the immediate successors of Nebuchadrezzar there was no radical change of policy to the close observer, the internal weakness of the empire began to be apparent. The accession of the usurper Nabonidus in 555 B. C. marked the beginning of the end. He had none of the prestige nor executive ability of the conqueror of Jerusalem. His interests were with the gods and traditions of the past rather than with his subjects and the problems which pressed upon them. While dangers threatened, he devoted himself to excavating the sites of ancient temples, neglecting his duties as king. The inevitable result was that the civil and military organization of the state fell into decay, while the confidence and loyalty of the people toward their antiquarian king waned, so that when the crisis came the empire collapsed suddenly and completely. Its strength and vast resources might have preserved it intact had not a powerful and energetic foe arisen in the north. The rise of Cyrus from comparative obscurity to the rule over all of southwestern Asia was so sudden and unexpected that it took the ancient world completely by surprise. In 549 B. C. this king of the little kingdom of Anzan, located among the mountains to the northeast of Babylonia, espousing the cause of the older Aryan population, defeated his overlord, the Scythian king Astyages, and by this act became master of the large but loosely organized empire which the northern invaders had built upon the ruins of Assyria. The new conqueror was quickly able to amalgamate the varied elements under him and by his personal ability and energy to develop an efficient army. Fortunately for him the strongest rivals, the Babylonians under Nabonidus, were inactive. He was, therefore, able to meet his foes in succession and to strengthen his position on every side before attacking the proud mistress of the lower Euphrates. He appears also to have instituted intrigues in Babylon calculated still further to alienate the subjects of Nabonidus and to prepare the way for their ready submission when the attack came.

After having conquered in 547 B. C. the territory of Mesopotamia lying to the north of Babylonia, he turned westward in the following year to meet the attack of the rich, powerful Lydian king Cræsus. After fighting an indecisive battle, he followed up his rival, defeated him, and within an incredibly short time was in possession of his wealthy capital and kingdom.

He next attacked the opulent Greek colonies on the coast of the Ægean Sea. Many of these were not lacking in courage, and so offered a desperate resistance, but the rapid advance of Cyrus gave them no opportunity to effect a general organization against their dread foe. The result was that most of them quickly submitted, while those who refused were not able to hold out long against such overwhelming numbers as the Persian king was able to launch against them. In the

end, after a series of signal victories, Cyrus returned to his capital, supreme lord of all of the states of Asia Minor. The restless, half-civilized peoples to the east of his empire next commanded his attention. Here again he and his army secured not only vast territory and spoil, but also great prestige, so that by the autumn of 538 B. C., when he turned his armies against Babylon, victory was practically assured.

099. II. The Date And Authorship Of Isaiah 13:2-14:23; 21:1b-10; Jeremiah 10:1-51:58

II THE DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF Isaiah 13:2 to Isaiah 14:23; Isaiah 21:1-10; Jeremiah 50:1 to Jeremiah 51:58 The period following the overthrow of the rule of Astyages by Cyrus in 549 B. C. furnishes the most probable background of a series of brief prophecies, appended to the original writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah, which treat of the approaching downfall of Babylon. In Jeremiah 50:1 to Jeremiah 51:58 the prophet and his readers behold in the north the people who are to deliver them. They are clearly the Medo-Persians under Cyrus, although in accordance with the terminology which continued in use even after the death of the great conqueror, they are styled simply the Medes. Babylon's destruction is looked for in the future, so that the prophecy must have been written before 539 B. C. In the middle or earlier part of the decade is found the most probable date of the original sections. The prophecy was, without much doubt, in time attributed to the great Jeremiah, or at least joined to the collection of his sermons, because of the tradition preserved in the closing verses of chapter 51, to the effect that "he wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon"; that he made a prediction concerning that great world-power is undoubtedly historical. Several of his prophecies respecting the Babylonians have been preserved, but a study of them makes it probable that Jeremiah was not the author of the present one. Not only is the style different, but the point of view also is quite other than that of Jeremiah. A familiarity with Babylon and with the politics of the East, which would be impossible to a Jew who had never crossed the Euphrates, is also apparent. The prophet who wrote these chapters had obviously not, like Jeremiah, received special favors from the Babylonians, but instead recalled only wrongs and insults received from their hands. He was also familiar with certain of Ezekiel's prophecies, written probably after the death of Jeremiah. He was, perhaps, a disciple of one of the great prophets. Although his prophecy lacks the originality, literary finish, and permanent value of his master's, it affords a glimpse into the hearts of the faithful exiles and records the triumph of inspired faith at a critical moment in the history of the Jewish race. The same date, although probably not the same author, has given us the prophecy found in Isaiah 13:2 to Isaiah 14:23. The political problems which were insistent in the days of Isaiah the son of Amoz have long been forgotten. The Babylonians instead of being fellow-rebels with the Hebrews, as they were in the time of Hezekiah, are the masters and hated oppressors of the Jews. The exile, which Isaiah at the most only hinted at as a distant danger, has long been a reality; and the promise of restoration to Judah is presented by the prophet. The Medes are already crossing the northern frontier of Babylon. Many ideas peculiar to the exilic and post-exilic writers also find expression in this section. The style likewise is not that of Isaiah but of the later prophets.

Striking points of contrast between Jeremiah 50:1 to Jeremiah 51:58 and this prophecy suggest that the author of the one influenced the other. If so, the passage in Isaiah is the more original and, therefore, probably slightly earlier. To the same group belongs the short section, Isaiah 21:1-10. Its theme is the fall of Babylon. Media and Elam (from whence Cyrus came) are urged to advance against the oppressor. The end, however, is seen only by aid of the prophetic vision. The language

of the passage has many points of affinity with that of Isaiah, but the extreme obscurity of its thought is in striking contrast with the clear, direct messages of the pre-exilic prophet. While the exile and the years immediately following the appearance of Cyrus furnish the only satisfactory historical setting, its indefiniteness suggests that it is the earliest of the three prophecies.

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