

THE BOOKS  
OF THE  
PROPHETS

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*G.G. FINDLAY*  
*B.A.*

*VOL. I.*  
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*OF*  
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# BOOKS FOR BIBLE STUDENTS

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REV. ARTHUR E. GREGORY

## *THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS*

BY

G. G. FINDLAY, B.A.

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THE BOOKS  
OF  
THE PROPHETS

*IN THEIR HISTORICAL SUCCESSION*

BY

GEORGE G. FINDLAY, B.A.

TUTOR IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE, HEADINGLEY COLLEGE

VOL. I.

*TO THE FALL OF SAMARIA*

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To

William Fiddian Moulton, D.D.,

My Honoured Teacher

and

Most Kind and Constant Friend.



## P R E F A C E



THIS volume is the first of three, in which it is intended to furnish to English readers a continuous historical Introduction to the Books of the Prophets. Volume II will cover the period extending from the Fall of Samaria to the Chaldean Exile, and will include Isaiah 1–39 and Jeremiah; and Volume III will carry the story on from the beginning of the Exile to the cessation of Prophecy, embracing Ezekiel, Isaiah 40–66, and the post-exilic authors. Volume I contains several chapters of a general introductory nature, and is then mainly occupied with the first six of the Twelve Minor Prophets, —Jonah being, however, postponed to the third volume and Zechariah 9–11 included in the first, since this section of the Book of Zechariah proceeds, in the writer's view, from a contemporary of Hosea and Micah, who preached in the Northern Kingdom of Israel shortly before

its overthrow.<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that the separate volumes will be of service to those engaged in the study of special periods and sections of prophecy, while the work when completed will give a survey of the entire field, as comprehensive as the limits of the series will allow. Full indices will be furnished at the end of the third volume.

The method of the book is the same that was followed in the writer's *Sketch of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul*, viz. that of comparative and historical enquiry. We shall ask of each prophet, who and what he was, and what he meant to say to the men of his time; and we shall further ask, how he stood related to his fellow-prophets, and what part he took in the common cause and the collective work of the prophetic order. While seeking to appreciate the several prophetic scriptures for their own sakes, we must equally realise their oneness of

<sup>1</sup> See the scheme drawn up on p. 75. The scriptures just mentioned belong to the periods there defined as the *Pre-Assyrian* and *Assyrian-Israelite Ages*; only Micah falls under the *Assyrian-Judæan Age*. But although Micah was a Southern prophet associated with Isaiah, and chapters 6, 7 of his Book are even later than anything certainly from Isaiah's pen, the Fall of Samaria is the first matter of his prophesying; and he is connected in so many ways with the prophets of Northern Israel, that it seems best to group him with them, and to see in Micah the conclusion of the prophetic movement that commenced with Amos.

character and aim. That unity lies in the fact that they are sons of Israel, the heirs and vindicators and interpreters of its unique faith and hope,—in the fact that the calling of the chosen people and its mission to the world centred in the testimony of its holy prophets. These Books are not the casually gathered products of the inspiration of so many separate authors, put forward in the name and on the authority of the particular men who wrote them ; they are the utterance of the Spirit and the Church of God in Israel. They form an organic and progressive whole, a *body* of spiritual truth and teaching to whose larger existence each member is subservient,—a body knit together and ministered to by “that which every joint supplieth,” while it is animated in all its parts with a supernatural life and “increases with the increase of God.” To the organism of Old Testament prophecy we may yet further apply St Paul’s words concerning the Church : growing, as it did, out of the soil and nourished by the sap and substance of national Israel, the life of the Spirit in the prophets was shaped little by little toward an unseen and grander purpose,—it grew up into Christ, the living Head, in all things. The instinct of Israel’s historic teachers was continually feeling after and gravitating towards *Him*,—the end of law and prophets.

In their basis and in their issue, their starting-point and goal alike, in their spirit and the hope of their calling, the prophets of the Old Covenant are one. To read them according to this unity, and under the light of the convictions which they shared in common as the messengers of God to their people at the several stages of that people's history,—this seems to us the only sound and fruitful method of prophetic study; and it is the method plainly dictated by the present condition of Biblical knowledge and research. More than this, it is the line of exposition which the structure of the Old Testament itself suggests. A collective and historical character was, in fact, impressed on the Books of the Prophets from the beginning, by their position and arrangement in the Canon of Scripture; this character is recognised in the words of our Lord, and in the usage and manner of citation prevalent in the New Testament. Much has been lost by our habit of reading the Bible piecemeal in isolated Books, and by our dwelling upon favourite chapters and passages of more obvious meaning, at the expense of their context and living connexion.

When taken upon the broad historical ground we have assumed, the unsettled questions respecting the authorship and precise date of certain parts of prophecy become less disquieting, while

they are still more interesting to us. If differences are pointed out, for example, between the last two chapters of Micah and the rest of the Book,—differences of language, of thought, of situation,—and it is asked how one and the same man could have written the two groups of oracles assigned by the Jewish editors to Micah, we are ready to consider the matter without prejudice. The question with us is simply, whether Micah of Moresheth or some other man of God was the spokesman of the message which chapters 6 and 7 convey to the Church. To be ignorant of an author's *name* is a trifling loss, if his *mind* is better understood, if his place and his function in the body of Divine revelation are more truly apprehended.

It is one thing, however, to conceive an ideal, to form a plan: to carry it into execution is quite another. The mode of historical construction we have indicated is far more difficult and doubtful of application in the field now lying before us than in the case of the Pauline Epistles. The Books of the Prophets cover a region vastly larger and more obscure,—widely removed from us in point of time, and still more remote in its mental conditions and surroundings. To sit down by the side of Hosea and Isaiah in turn, of Habakkuk and Ezekiel and Zechariah, and read oneself into their very thoughts, is a

task that appears the less easy the more nearly one approaches it. The interpreter requires historical and linguistic skill of many kinds; he requires a breadth of mind and imagination, a fine candour and balanced judgement, a moral affinity to his subject and a feeling for spiritual truth under its most varied forms, which are rare in themselves, and rarer still in their combination with the needful scholarship. For an elementary work of this nature, we must hope that more ordinary qualifications will suffice. We are not concerned here with the multifarious details, the subtleties and niceties of interpretation, but with the salient features and general bearing of the work of the Prophets, and shall endeavour to keep to the main track and highway of prophetic testimony.

This historical highway affords us, for great part of the route, a sure and well-beaten path. It has been neglected for other roads; it has been in many places overlaid and overgrown. For some time to come it will be the work of Criticism,—the Higher (literary) and the Lower (textual) Criticism,—by the aid of the fresh tools that God has put into the Church's hand, and under the impulse and guidance of the wonderful light that His providence is now shedding upon the ancient world, to remove the obstacles which a faulty tradition has set in that



way, to illuminate its dark places and recover the lost thread of its broken and disjointed passages.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional setting of the Old Testament, received by the Church from the Synagogue, is undergoing a revision—a recasting, indeed—which to observant minds has long seemed inevitable. The nature and conditions of ancient Eastern literature have been in former times too little understood and taken account of. Tradition is inseparable from the existence of a written “Word of God.” That Word has been transmitted to us through a long succession of editors, copyists, translators, interpreters. Faithful and exact men in the main they have proved themselves to be; but for which of them can we claim immunity from error? It is the Church’s right, and her duty when occasion arises, to examine and rectify her Biblical traditions. This she has

<sup>1</sup> I am glad to refer to Professor Kirkpatrick’s *Doctrine of the Prophets* (Macmillans), and to Mr Buchanan Blake’s *How to read the Prophets* (T. & T. Clark), as works of orthodox and able scholars which present the results of critical study in a thoroughly intelligible and serviceable form. Mr Blake has retranslated and digested, in five small parts, the entire text of the Prophets, arranging them in chronological succession. The order adopted in this work is nearly the same as his. Dr A. Duff’s *Theology of the Prophets* (A. & C. Black) contains many just and fine observations, and is written in a graphic style; it covers, however, only a part of the field, and is somewhat too discursive for a text-book.

been compelled to do by the Spirit of truth again and again.

Very serious issues depend upon the temper in which the pending revision, and the debates that it involves, are carried on. If rashness and pride of knowledge prevail upon the one side, to be met by anger and panic and blind denunciation upon the other, if historical science and Christian faith should come to be arrayed in opposite camps, as physical science and faith have so largely been, disastrous loss and damage must ensue. In the charity and patience of her saints, in the diligence and integrity of her scholars, and more than all, in the guidance of the Holy Spirit of truth promised to our prayers, the Church's safety lies in such days of trial. From the present scrutiny we need not doubt that the faith of Christ's people in His Scriptures will come forth not less confident than before, but, it may be, more intelligent, more vivid and sympathetic, more wisely discriminating and more richly practical.

GEORGE G. FINDLAY.

HEADINGLEY, *December 10th*, 1895.

*N.B.*—The mode of distinguishing chapter and verse in scriptural references by large and small Arabic numerals, which has been adopted for this work, will be perfectly clear to the reader, and will, it is hoped, commend itself.

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ΤΑΥΤΑ ΤΥΠΙΚΩΣ ΣΥΝΕΒΑΙΝΕΝ ἘΚΕΙΝΟΙΣ,  
ἘΓΡΑΨΗ ΔΕ ΠΡΟΣ ΝΟΥΘΕΣΙΑΝ ἩΜΩΝ,  
Εἰς ὅτ' ἡ Τέλη τῶν αἰῶνων καθήνηκεν.

# THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS



## INTRODUCTION

### CHAPTER I

#### THE PROPHETS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Their position in the Canon—Principles of Arrangement—Histories and Prophecies in the *Nebi'im*—Lamentations and Daniel added to the *Nebi'im*—Compilation of the *Nebi'im*—Titles and Headings of the several Prophecies—Authorship, simple or composite—Incorporation of Notes and Glosses—Effect of Modern Criticism.

PROPHETS (*Nebi'im*)<sup>1</sup> is the title given in the Hebrew Bible to the second of its three divisions—LAW, PROPHETS, AND WRITINGS (*Torah Nebi'im u-Kethubim*). These divisions are of extreme antiquity, constituting the title which the

<sup>1</sup> We use the sign ' , with many Hebraists, for the letter Aleph, and ' for Ayin.

volume of the Old Testament has borne in the original language apparently from the time of its completion, and which it received from the original editors. This title marks, as it is now generally acknowledged,<sup>1</sup> the three stages in the formation of the Jewish Canon, the successive strata in which the Scriptures of Israel were gathered up and deposited. This threefold order is indicated by our Lord in the New Testament (Luke 24<sup>44</sup>), and earlier still in the prologue to the Book of Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) in the Apocrypha, which carries us back to the beginning of the second century before Christ. All exact study of the Old Testament is based on this primitive order and connexion of its constituent parts.

The *Nebi'im* in the Hebrew Canon consist of eight Books: four "Former Prophets," including Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings (the two latter subdivided by the Greeks, and entitled Kings 1-4,<sup>2</sup> as subsequently in the Latin and German Bibles); and four "Latter Prophets," viz. Isaiah, Jeremiah,

<sup>1</sup> See Buhl's *Canon and Text of the O.T.*, or Ryle's *Canon of the O.T.*; also the article on the *Canon of Scripture* by Westcott and Ryle in Smith's *Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed.), and Ryle on "The Structure of the Bible" in the *Cambridge Companion to the Bible*.

<sup>2</sup> The title in the Greek version is strictly *Of Kingdoms*, not *Of Kings*.

Ezekiel (distinguished as the "Great Prophets"), with the Twelve,—Hosea to Malachi (the "Little Prophets"),—which were lumped together in a single volume. This is the arrangement of the Massoretic, or traditional text, as it was finally determined by the Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages. The Talmud (fourth century after Christ) ranges the major Prophets in the order *Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah*,—which is also traditional in the MSS. of the French and German Jews. On the other hand, the Greek and Syriac translations, with the Christian Fathers (Melito, Origen, Jerome), support the Massorettes in putting Isaiah first. Which of the two arrangements is the older, it is impossible to say. Some critics see in the Talmudic order evidence of the late compilation of Isaiah; but the relative size of the four volumes supplies a plausible explanation. Jeremiah fills 80 pages in Theile's standard edition of the Hebrew; Ezekiel, 70; Isaiah, 64; and the Twelve, 56 pages. The priority of Jeremiah may have been favoured by the close connexion of his prophecies with the concluding part of the Book of Kings; indeed, tradition assigned the authorship of Kings to this prophet.

The succession of the Prophets in the Hebrew Canon is therefore determined partly by the rule of *magnitude*, and partly by that of *time*; and

the second of these considerations is subordinate to the first. The "Latter Prophets" are so styled as being posterior to the "Former" in place and not in time, though indeed the earliest of them appeared soon after the age of Elijah and Elisha and in the period covered by our Second Book of Kings. Amongst the Twelve, some are earlier, some later in date than the major Three, and others contemporary with them. Within this minor group the arrangement is roughly chronological; but Hosea heads the list in virtue of the size of his Book, although Joel and Amos were regarded as his predecessors. The primitive Greek version (the Septuagint, about B.C. 250) sets the minor Prophets before the major, presumably because of the earlier date of the foremost amongst them; and it ranges the the first six of the Twelve in another order than that of the Hebrew Canon,—viz. Hosea, Amos, Micah (the three dated, and more substantial of the earlier writers); then Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, etc. Whether this arrangement is due to the Greek editors, or existed in the Hebrew MSS. they used, is not known. The Latin Vulgate reverted to the Hebrew order of the Prophets, and is followed by modern versions.

The Books of the Prophets reviewed in the following pages are identical with the "Latter



Prophets" of the canonical *Nebi'im*. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings belong to the histories of the Old Testament, and will be discussed along with the other narrative Books.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, we should recognise the close connexion of these histories with the prophetic writings that follow them, and the fitness with which they were classed at first amongst the *Nebi'im* and used to supply their foundation. Joshua and Judges are the link between the ages of Moses and Samuel; they furnish the introduction and prelude to the prophetic age, holding to the Prophets much the same relation that Genesis does to the Law. Judges exhibits the moral and political chaos out of which arose the new creation of Samuel and David. Samuel and Kings—one continuous work, drawn from various sources—depict from the prophetic standpoint this new order and course of things throughout the vigorous middle period of the national life, extending from the birth of Samuel to the release of the exiled king Jehoiachin in Babylon. The prophets,—Samuel, Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah,—not the kings, are the heroes of the tale; they move the springs of history; the monarchy is their creation, and is denounced and

<sup>1</sup> In a forthcoming work in this series by the Rev. J. T. L. Maggs B.A.

finally destroyed by the word of Jehovah on their lips (Hos. 6 5 13 11, Zech. 11 8, etc.).

The story related in Samuel-Kings is, in effect, concrete prophecy,—prophecy realised and dramatised on the stage of history; Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah are, as it has been said, *prophets of action* rather than of speech. Indeed, it was only when the inspired teachers of Israel ceased to control national movements, and a breach set in between religion and politics, when in fact the theocracy began to break up and the day of judgement upon the visible kingdom of God was dawning, that prophecy assumed its written form. Thus it sought to preserve itself for the future out of the wreck which it saw impending over the existing state and people (Isa. 8 16 30 8). The history of Samuel-Kings (a work as prophetic in temper and aim as the later Chronicles is priestly) supplies the necessary background and framework to the teaching of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Twelve, which without this would be suspended in the air. Judged from the literary or the historico-critical standpoint, and as mere *history*, this work is defective enough; as a religious view of history, a representation of the Divine lessons and enduring results for the kingdom of God of Israel's experience in the age of the monarchy, it serves

its purpose well. It is under this character that these narrative Books are designated as *Nebi'im*, and stand in line with Amos and Hosea, with Micah and Jeremiah.

While we distinguish history and prophecy, therefore, we must observe that no strict distinction is drawn between them in the Old Testament itself. Rather, they melt into each other. As there are in the histories purely prophetic passages, like Nathan's oracle in 2 Sam. 7<sup>4-17</sup> addressed to David, which laid the foundation of the Messianic throne, or the Carmel and Horeb scenes from the life of Elijah in 1 Kings 18 and 19, so in the Books of the Prophets we find narrative pieces, such as Isa. 36-39 (identical with 2 Kings 18<sup>13-20</sup>); and the prophet Haggai gives us the most definite information we have about the building of the second temple. In both parts of the *Nebi'im*, as in the *Torah*, there is religious poetry,—hymns and songs kindred to the Psalter, and which might fitly have been gathered into it. These poems are Psalms found, so to speak, *in situ*; they show how naturally in the experience of the Hebrew Church the moving incidents of national or personal life would touch the springs of poetic feeling, and have recorded themselves in memorable strains of confession or thanksgiving.

See 2 Sam. 1<sup>19-27</sup> 23<sup>1-7</sup>, Isa. 12, 38<sup>10-20</sup>, Mic. 7<sup>7-20</sup>, Hab. 3.

While we separate, then, from our Books of the Prophets the four first of the *Nebi'im*, it will be convenient and almost necessary to add to the list, on the other hand, Lamentations and Daniel from the *Kethubim* (Greek, *Hagiographa*). The Book of Lamentations occupies the sixth place in the *Hagiographa*, being third in order in its middle division, which consists of the five so-called *Megilloth* (or Rolls),—the small separate volumes which the Jews read in the synagogue on their five chief anniversaries. Lamentations is annually recited on the fast of the Destruction of the Temple, held on the 9th of the month Ab (July or August). Its position in the Hebrew Canon is due to this usage. In the Talmud it stands last of the poetical Books, after Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Solomon's Song. The Septuagint and the Vulgate, followed by modern usage, attach it to the prophet Jeremiah; and this is its natural place. Whether from Jeremiah's pen or not (the English title to this effect comes from the Greek, not the Hebrew Bible), this fine elegiac poem is quite in Jeremiah's spirit, and was composed early in the Babylonian captivity. Like the song of Habakkuk, the elegy on fallen Jerusalem must be claimed for the

prophets. It is no despairing lament over the past. There shines through its distress and agony the light of Israel's sure destiny; the prophet of Zion cannot sorrow as those without hope, his funeral dirge promises a better resurrection (3<sup>22-36</sup> 4<sup>22</sup> 5<sup>19-21</sup>). We shall treat Lamentations as a sequel to Jeremiah.

The Book of Daniel belongs to the last division of the *Kethubim*, consisting of the three narrative works, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, together called the "Latter Writings." Daniel has reached its present position between Ezekiel and the Twelve somewhat singularly, through the Greek and Latin Bibles. When the editors of the Septuagint, the Hellenistic Jews of Egypt, distributed the poetical and historical parts of the newly-added Hagiographa amongst the Books of the second Canon, they left Daniel undisturbed; at the same time, it will be remembered, they reversed the order of the major and minor Prophets. In this way Daniel came to follow Ezekiel, and stood last of all the canonical Scriptures in the Greek order. The Latin (Christian) translators restored the major Prophets to their precedence, and in doing so they promoted Daniel along with these, since it ranked in the early Church as a prophetic work of first importance; and so Daniel for the future counted

as a fourth with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in the goodly fellowship of the prophets, although in the first instance he stood altogether outside their ranks. The unique history and character of this enigmatic Book demand for it a separate treatment; it marks the point where Israelitish prophecy steps off from the ground of history and merges into apocalypse, dissolving itself (as one may say) into the vision of the last things and the coming of the Son of Man.

The Books of the Prophets, therefore, of which we propose to give an account in these pages, are Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Ezekiel, the Twelve (Hosea to Malachi), and Daniel. The order and method pursued in this work will be explained as we proceed.

The composition of the prophetic writings extended over five hundred years; the latest of them was separated from the earliest by a distance probably greater than that which lies between Chaucer and Tennyson. A further interval of several generations must be allowed for the work of sifting and compiling, before the collection of the *Nebi'im* took its permanent shape and gained canonical recognition as a distinct and complete body of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Ryle's *Canon of the O.T.*, pp. 94-119 (The Second Canon). Dr Ryle concludes that the collection of the *Nebi'im*

We know nothing of the editors and their modes of procedure apart from the evidence of the Books themselves, and beyond what may be precariously gathered from the general practice of ancient scribes and compilers and of the Jewish scholars of later times. The process of compilation was, in all probability, a gradual one: later prophets manifestly knew and used the writings of some of their predecessors; and one may infer from Zech. 1 4-6 that some recognised collection of the kind already existed in the year 520. The arrangement and distribution of the matter are manifestly due to practical convenience more than to any strict regard for chronological sequence or connexion of thought and subject.

The MSS. at the disposal of the compilers must have come into their hands in very various conditions. Sometimes the author had attached his name to what he wrote, and clearly indicated his personality; other important prophecies were anonymous, and their origin was known by tradition, or possibly only guessed at. Some ancient pieces, like the sermons of Haggai and like Isa. 6 and 20, were precisely dated; others, such as the Books of Joel and Obadiah, bore no

was not formally canonised till about 300 B.C., that is a century and a half after Malachi. The Book of Daniel, outside the *Nebi'im*, he dates much later than this.

specific marks of time; in other instances the date might easily be surmised from the contents, as with Habakkuk. Later prophets had occasionally reissued, perhaps with additions or modifications of their own, oracles of their predecessors; see Isa. 2<sup>2-4</sup> and Mic. 4<sup>1-5</sup>, also Isa. 16<sup>13</sup> compared with 15<sup>1-16</sup><sup>12</sup>. We must distinguish between dates and headings which form an integral part of the original prophecy, as in Ezek. 11, 81, and others, such as those of Isa. 13<sup>1</sup>, Hos. 11, which are seemingly prefixed by a later hand, and, like the headings of the Psalms and the titles and subscriptions of the New Testament Epistles in the received text, are due to editorial judgement and tradition, which may be more or less correct.

Where titles and descriptive headings are given us, we must be careful not to stretch them beyond their proper scope. The heading of Zech. 1<sup>1</sup> does not look further than the first six verses of the book; in the seventh verse the prophet has passed already three months onward. Similar or much greater changes of situation may have occurred in the course of a prophet's ministry, where we are not thus distinctly informed of the fact; at other times a considerable period of history is reviewed in one discourse, and events of different epochs are combined to-



gether, as in Amos 1, 2. The heading of Isa. 11 ("the vision . . . concerning Judah and Jerusalem") can scarcely be applied with certainty in its primary intention beyond the first twelve chapters; the oracles against the foreign nations occupying chapters 13 to 23 are not included in the above description, to say nothing of the very different bearing of chapters 40 to 66. Some prophetic Books, like those of Amos and Ezekiel, bear evidence in their orderly and consistent structure of being drawn up as they stand by the author himself; in Isaiah the prophet's arranging hand shows itself in the earlier part of his Book, and is missed as we proceed; Jeremiah was fortunate in having a secretary, and perhaps literary editor and executor, in Baruch (36 4. 17-19. 32 45) his devoted friend; here prophet and scribe were in direct partnership.

It is only a presumption, which internal evidence may confirm or contradict, that the name prefixed to a Hebrew Book was intended to apply in the sense of personal literary authorship to everything that appears in it. The Book of Jonah is written *about* Jonah; no one would gather from reading it that it came from Jonah's own hand. Isaiah can hardly have written chaps. 36-39, which speak of him in the third person; and the title "Isaiah" may fairly cover

*Isaianic* prophecies coming from others than the original Isaiah, as "Wesley's Hymns" include *Wesleyan* Hymns not composed by the brothers Wesley. Anonymous, fragmentary pieces and detached prophetic memoirs, which it was important to preserve, would in all likelihood be inserted by the editors where the nature of their contents or convenience of handling suggested. Individual authorship and literary copyright were not matters of great moment or scrupulous research in primitive times, and an unnamed work would naturally be fathered on the writer whose spirit is breathed and whose tradition it carried forward. The governing question was, What hath God said? not, By whose mouth, or pen, was it said? From the time of Samuel downwards the prophets had formed a kind of corporation or school; nameless "men of God" or "sons of the prophets" again and again play important parts in the sacred history; and this fact has apparently its literary counterpart in the prophetic Books. Surely in the centuries extending from Joel to Malachi there were holy men of God besides the fifteen known to us by name, who were touched by His Spirit and wrote things that deserved to live. Criticism has made it probable that the message of other forgotten masters of Israel has been preserved

along with those of Isaiah and of Zechariah, and that the extant books of the *Nebi'im* embody the teaching of the Spirit of God in His prophets in a form more continuous and complete than we were wont to suppose.

Considering also the long period during which the written prophecies were accumulating, and the obscure conditions under which they were transcribed in the first instance, it is likely enough that their text suffered damage here and there. There may well have accrued to such books occasional glosses, explanations, or editorial observations,—such things as a sympathetic reader might jot down in the margin, or a modern editor would insert in a footnote. When in Jeremiah 25<sup>13</sup> we find the words, “Even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations,” or in v.<sup>18</sup> the comment, “as it is this day,” in such instances the interpolation is patent; we are reading not Jeremiah’s words, but the ejaculation of some pious reader living in the times of fulfilment. In other cases the existence of additions and enrichments to the primary text may be fairly suspected, but not so easily proved. The chapter-divisions and the chronological headings of the English Bible are quite modern, the latter dating from the

seventeenth century and the former from the twelfth.

Some lovers of the Bible may feel that the observations made in the last paragraphs throw an air of uncertainty over the Old Testament, and disturb the confidence with which we are accustomed to quote the prophets. But this disquiet is a trial of faith which cannot be avoided. The providence of God concerning His written revelation is wiser than our fears and prejudices. We must take facts as they are, and cannot dictate to Him as to how His word should have been preserved. It is to the form and letter, not to the spiritual contents of Scripture, that such questionings attach, to names and traditions of men, not to the thoughts and purpose of God. The New Testament sits loose to the matters of individual authorship, about which so many Christian minds are disturbed. The Epistle to the Hebrews prefaces its quotations with such words as "The Holy Ghost saith," or "One in a certain place testified;" St Mark refers (1 2. 3 R.V.) to "Isaiah the prophet" a citation the first half of which comes from Malachi, and St Matthew (27 9. 10) even gives as Jeremiah's a saying that we find in the Book of Zechariah, — facts which show that the writers were too much occupied with

the sense of Scripture to be anxiously careful about the headings of its books and the *meum* and *tuum* of literary property in them. Moreover, the scarcity of books and the difficulty of handling them made such details matter of memory rather than exact reference in ancient times. The Apostles and Evangelists employed the current Greek translation of the Old Testament, which teems with verbal errors and differs in many points of editorship from the Hebrew text. These are "the mint and anise" of tradition, not the "weightier matters" of faith. Whether prophet A or B uttered the saying, "Behold, I send My messenger before thy face," it suits St Mark's purpose equally well and applies with equal fitness to the mission of the Baptist. The substance and Christian value of the Old Testament are untouched by most of the questions (we do not say *all* the questions) raised in literary criticism.

On the other hand, a wise criticism animated by reverence and faith—and without reverence and faith there can be no real insight and sound critical sense for the history of Israel—has a great service to do for the Church in regard to the interpretation and handling of Scripture. Light is being thrown by modern investigation on tracts of the Bible that, like the minor

Prophets, have hitherto been largely barren for Christian use, or have been the field of lawless allegory and superstition. The connexion of part with part in the Old Testament becomes clearer; the conflicts of faith and the gradual progress of spiritual truth in the Church of Israel disclose themselves; the organic unity and development of revelation, amidst its rich variety of sundry times and divers manners, are more and more apparent. By all this we shall learn better to understand the education of the Church in its childhood, and the world's preparation for Christ; we may come to see more of the nature and working of God's plan of the ages for the redemption of mankind. If we must rely less than we used to do on particular texts and definite verbal predictions of Hebrew Scripture, we are compensated by a larger grasp of its central and saving truths, and a distincter apprehension of the witness and spiritual experience of the Old Testament people in their characteristic features, their main tenor and bearing. The ancient Scriptures are made more human to us,—human even in the defects and limitations of the earthen vessels which convey their treasures: for that very reason they become the more Divine. So much the more conspicuously is the excellency of their power seen to be of God.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CALLING OF THE PROPHET

The National Calling—The Basis of the Prophetic Religion—Messengers from Jehovah to His People—Pastoral Office of the Prophets—Corporate Prophetism—Pre-existent Creed of Israel—Doctrine of Jehovah—Practical antecedent to Theoretical Monotheism—Present Duty of the Prophets—The Future foreseen in the Present—The Messianic Hope.

THE calling of the prophets of Israel can only be understood in view of the character and destiny of the nation to which they ministered. They entered as religious teachers into a position created for them beforehand; they built on the foundation laid for their work in the knowledge of God possessed by the fathers of their race. Their unique mission arises from the unique relationship established between Jehovah and His people Israel. This relationship is fundamental to the entire world of ideas in which the prophets move. Just as the preaching of Paul

and the apostles could have had no existence—no contents or meaning or aim—without the history of Jesus, so Israelitish prophecy could never have come into being, and is indeed inconceivable, apart from the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. That this is the ground on which the prophets of the Old Testament stand, is a certainty evident to every one who reads them with attention and requires no detailed proof; as Riehm has well said, the idea of the covenant was “the root-idea of the O.T. religion,” and became the “living germ and motive power of Messianic prophecy.” In saying this, we do not presume anything as to the authorship or date of the canonical Pentateuch,—that is a question with which we are not concerned here; but we do assert that the prophets presuppose for their people the origin that we find described in the Mosaic books, that the story of the patriarchs and of the bondage in Egypt and the exodus and the leadership of Moses, which is there related, was in its essential facts present to the mind of the prophets and their hearers, and formed the substratum and starting-point of their doctrine.

The prophets present themselves as *witnesses of Jehovah to Israel*—witnesses of such a God, to such a people, as we have learnt to know from earlier Israelitish history. They step forward as



reformers of an old religion, not creators of a new one<sup>1</sup>; they do not reveal an unknown God, they recall their people to a God known and confessed but dishonoured. And while their reform was a reconstitution and development as must be the case with all effective reformations,—the unfolding of truths that lay hidden in the ancient faith and not a mere formal reassertion of that faith,—the inspired men of the eighth and following centuries before Christ were, for all that, true conservatives; they understood the history and genius of their people; they claimed to be, and they were, the legitimate heirs of the older time, the authorised exponents of the divine vocation of the sons of Abraham. Springing from that primæval root, the flower and essence of Israel's life discloses itself in them. The Old Testament blossoms and *sets* for its fruit in these middle books of the Canon; and hence it is to the prophets rather than the law that Christ and the New Testament attach themselves. Every one

<sup>1</sup> See Robertson's *Early Religion of Israel*, ch. v. The whole of this very able and candid work goes to establish the above position and to develop its consequences. Robertson Smith, too, in his brilliant lectures on *The Prophets and their Place in History* (1882), says that "the basis of the prophetic religion is the conception of a unique relation between Jehovah and Israel" (p. 20); but the basis, as he describes it in that book, is scarcely adequate to the superstructure.

of the prophets of Israel virtually made to his people the declaration of Moses (Ex. 3): "The LORD God (*i.e.* Jehovah the God) of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, hath sent me unto you."

Most significant to this effect are the terms in which Amos, the earliest writing prophet of certain date, delivers God's message: "It was I that brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel, saith Jehovah?" (2<sup>10.11</sup>). Amos traces the religion of his people back to the exodus from Egypt; he regards the institutions of prophetism and Nazirism (the one proclaiming, the other illustrating, the nation's holy calling) as an outcome of this vocation; and he challenges the national traditions and conscience upon these fundamental points. The Mosaic election of Israel supplies the nerve of Amos' appeals and threatenings from first to last: "Hear the word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you

all your iniquities!" (3 1. 2). And when Amos observes shortly afterwards, in view of the situation caused by Israel's apostasy, "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (3 7; comp. chs. 7 7-9 8 1-3 9 1, Hos. 6 5, Mic. 3 8, Jer. 44 4, etc.), he evidently views the order to which he belongs as an indispensable intermediary between God and His people, the channel through which He declares His mind to them whether in favour or censure. While the priests, through ritual and sacrifice and intercession, represent the people before Jehovah (see Lev. 16, Num. 25 10-13, Joel 2 17, Zech. 3, etc.; comp. Heb. 5 1-3), the prophets through their inspired word represent Jehovah to the people.<sup>1</sup> Hence the nation is addressed by God in His prophets as "My people," and Hosea finds in the words *Ammi* or *Lo-ammi* (*My-people* or *Not-my-people*, chs. 1 9. 10

<sup>1</sup> The oracle of the Urim and Thummim, which is put in charge of the high priest in Ex. 28<sup>30</sup> and of the tribe of Levi in Deut. 33<sup>8</sup>, was in post-Mosaic times a means of obtaining divine responses. But it could only *reply* when consulted on definite points, and apparently was limited to the answer Yes or No. Probably its method was some form of the casting of lots. In any case, its operation was limited and mechanical and had nothing of the spontaneity and freedom of spiritual prophecy, being more akin to divination. Hence, when prophecy became a regular institution, the Urim-Thummim fell into disuse, and in the time of Ezra (2<sup>63</sup>, Neh. 7<sup>65</sup>) it is

21; comp. Isa. 43<sup>1-7</sup>) the problem of his sorrowful ministry. Correspondingly, the prophet is to God "My servant" (2 Kings 9<sup>7</sup>, Isa. 20<sup>3</sup>, Jer. 7<sup>25</sup>, Zech. 1<sup>6</sup>, etc.), "My messenger" (Isa. 44<sup>26</sup>, Hag. 1<sup>13</sup>, Mal. 1<sup>1 3 1</sup>), and "as My mouth" (Jer. 15<sup>19</sup>; comp. Ex. 4<sup>12</sup>). So close is the union between Jehovah and His prophet, that the messenger not unfrequently loses himself in his message, and utters God's words in the first person singular, and this quite naïvely and naturally, as though the personal ego were for the time absorbed in a higher consciousness; his soul becomes the meeting-place where God speaks to Israel.

Isaiah is called to his life's work by a voice of Jehovah saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" and he is despatched with the order, "Go, and tell this people," and so forth (6 s. 9); just as Amos relates, "Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel" (7<sup>15</sup>);

spoken of as a lost treasure of antiquity. David is the last person referred to as using this priestly oracle; for it is to this, no doubt, that allusion is made in 1 Sam. 30<sup>7,8</sup>, 2 Sam. 5<sup>19</sup>, etc. In one place the two modes of communication are set side by side, where it is said that "Saul inquired of Jehovah," and "Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. 28<sup>6</sup>). Saul, in his despair, being refused all legitimate supernatural guidance, resorted to the witch of Endor and her "familiar spirit," although it had been a special part of his policy to "put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land."

and Ezekiel is bidden, "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel" (2<sub>3</sub>, etc.). To Jeremiah, shrinking from his task like a timid "boy," the charge is given in grander terms: "I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. . . . I have set thee this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and break down . . . to build and to plant" (1<sub>5.10</sub>); but like the rest he is commissioned primarily to Judah and Jerusalem; and, more than any prophet before him, Jeremiah suffers the distress of being "pastor" to a rebellious people ripening for judgement (1<sub>17-19</sub> 1<sub>7.16</sub>, etc.; comp. Zech. 11<sub>4-14</sub> 13<sub>7-9</sub>).

This pastoral duty of the prophets to the Israelitish church and people constituted their immediate business; all other elements of their work and issues of their teaching are subordinate to this, and may be deduced from it. Deut. 18<sub>9-22</sub> expresses the conception of their office which the prophets maintained all along, from Samuel down to Malachi. Prophecy, we there learn, was given to Israel as the substitute for the illicit arts of divination and witchcraft and necromancy practised in heathendom; it supplies the true vehicle of communication between God and men, between the worlds unseen and seen. It is precisely because Israel has Jehovah for its God and dwells in a land given by Him to His

people, that it "shall not learn to do after the abominations" of the Gentiles. "Jehovah thy God," it is declared, "hath not suffered thee to do so": instead of this, "A prophet from the midst of thee, one of thy brethren like unto me (Moses), Jehovah thy God will raise up for thee; to him thou shalt hearken." St Peter rightly points to the Supreme Prophet of God as the supreme fulfilment of the promise of Deuteronomy; but the entire order answered to this purpose, and each succeeding prophet in his turn occupied the place thus described. Israel's knowledge of the living and true God implied Israel's possession of "the oracles of God"; and this nation found, accordingly, raised up within its ranks, as occasion required, spokesmen of God to declare those oracles,—men distinguished from all pretenders to the supernatural by their repudiation of magical arts and incantations, by their moral and spiritual insight and their utterance in clear, rational, and commanding words of the counsels of Jehovah. Thus Isaiah, in ch. 8<sup>16-20</sup>, stands forth as the appointed and authoritative witness of "Jehovah of hosts who dwelleth in Mount Zion"; and his "teaching<sup>1</sup> and testi-

<sup>1</sup> *Torah* here, as elsewhere in the prophets, denotes not "the law" of Moses, but divine "instruction" given by the prophet himself or by another. See *margin* of R. V. on Isa. 23 524309. 10.

mony" supply the standard of truth and are the touchstone of the people's fate, compared with which the devices of those that have familiar spirits and of "wizards that squeak and gibber," are mere fatuity. Compare with this passage Isa. 26 44<sup>24-28</sup>, Mic. 3<sup>5-7</sup>, Jer. 27<sup>9-11</sup> 29<sup>s. 9</sup>, for the rivalry between prophets and diviners and the identification of false prophets with the latter; also the conflicts of Moses in Egypt and of Daniel in Babylon with the heathen magicians.

From this standpoint we are able to realise the *corporate* character of Israelitish prophetism. We do not view the prophets as detached and separate persons, standing each on his own footing and speaking only from his individual knowledge and acquaintance with God; they range themselves in a divine order, a "goodly fellowship of the prophets." They exercised a common ministry; they exchanged thoughts with each other, and handed down a permanent, growing deposit of revealed truth and promise. As "watchmen" they "lift up their voice together,"—one voice with many personal notes blended in its music, some louder and more distinct, others merged in the general harmony. In reading the Nebi'im we are listening to the continuous testimony of the pre-Christian Church,

to the witness of the spirit of prophecy animating its living organism from age to age and giving unity and direction to the entire history of Israel. By the side of this commanding fact, personal distinctions and claims of authorship are of secondary moment and almost inconsiderable. The prophets never were authors in the modern sense, addressing the public in their own name and putting forth their personal views; they are mouths through which God speaks for the time, voices that cry, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight the path for our God. However interesting and edifying it may be to distinguish the individuality and study the character of the known writers of the Old Testament books, this line of inquiry is, after all, subordinate and serves a higher purpose. When words come to us with the stamp which the prophetic literature bears, *what is said?* is the main question, not *who said it?* Our chief concern is to track the living course of prophecy itself (which would be possible even if all the oracles of the Nebi'im were anonymous), to follow out the organic development of Old Testament faith and hope. We desire to hear, in its true order of discourse, the converse of the Spirit and the Bride of Christ before His coming, and to watch the unfolding of those grand conceptions and purposes through



which the older revelation moved on to its accomplishment in the last days.

That the prophets spoke and wrote as interpreters of the God of their fathers to His people, that they addressed their ministry to the church of the old covenant as it then existed, are facts so patent that to insist upon them as we have done may appear superfluous. This is one of those commonplaces so familiar that we seldom take the trouble to weigh their import. But the position in which the prophets stood to their people involves relations on their part toward the *past*, toward the *present* of their own times, and the *future* beyond them, which require our careful and distinct attention.

Our prophetic writers did not descend upon their age heaven-born, and dispensing a strange and unprepared revelation of the divine mind. They were reared on the soil of Israel, raised up "out of the midst of their brethren" and nourished in the traditions of ancestral piety. They appeal to their fellow-countrymen, as we have shown (pp. 20-24), on the ground of a well-known history, and a *creed* which had its witness in the breast of every Israelite. What was this creed? What were the ideas about God and duty, about character and worship, about the soul and the world, about Israel and humanity, in which such

prophets as Amos and Hosea had been brought up? For these ideas must have formed the staple of Israel's religious life in their time and in the days before them. As Dr A. B. Davidson aptly says in writing upon Amos,<sup>1</sup> "We cannot account for the appearance of a succession of such men otherwise than on the supposition that they arose out of a society in the main identified with themselves, and fitted to give them birth, —that they were the efflorescence, season after season, of a tree whose roots always stood in the soil." To the same effect Dr Driver:<sup>2</sup> "Amos' book implies the existence of a recognised phraseology, and of familiar ideas to which he could appeal. The prophetic style in his hands appears already fully matured. . . . He was familiar with events and usages, related or codified, in the Pentateuch. . . . The whole prophecy implies the existence of a body of established ideas and institutions, to the true meaning and import of which he recalls his people. Amos both recognises an authoritative Divine teaching and appeals to a tradition reaching back to a remote past."

The great prophets of the eighth century, Amos and Hosea, Micah and Isaiah, furnish us

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v, pp. 164, 165.

<sup>2</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, 2nd ed., article "Amos."

with a decided and, on all vital points, a sufficient answer to the questions we have just asked. These four writers represent both the northern and southern kingdoms, which had been separated in their time for two hundred years; they represent city and country, the higher and lower classes; they exhibit the greatest contrasts of personal temperament,—choleric and melancholy, phlegmatic and sanguine. There are notable differences, as we shall afterwards see, in the methods of these great preachers of righteousness, and in the aspects and applications of truth which they severally enforce. But they hold one and the same unique creed; they pursue the same mission; and they stand upon the same solid and unassailable ground of the covenant relation between God and His ancient Israel. The hereditary faith on which they rest is nowhere formulated and drawn up in dogmatic articles: such a proceeding was foreign to their age; and besides, their creed was too much a part of themselves and the substance of their own souls, to be formally objectified in that way. Nor did the people whom they reproved oppose the principles of the prophetic creed; they assented to them in words only too easily, and were always ready to cry, “My God, we Israel know Thee,” to “lean upon Jehovah and say,

Is not Jehovah in the midst of us?" (Hos. 8 2, Mic. 3 11; comp. Isa. 1 11-15 29 13, etc.). Not formal confession, but heart-faith was wanting in them; and they falsified the religion they professed in common with the prophets, by mixtures of idolatry and by gross moral corruption and disobedience to acknowledged law. We may infer the character of the national religion from what is implied in the addresses of the prophets, as confidently as from the best modern Christian preaching we might gather the contents of the faith held in the churches of our own day.

On the testimony, then, of these four prophets, all Israel believed in One God, known specifically as the God of their people under the name of *Jehovah*. They knew Him as a spiritual Being, represented by no visible image,<sup>1</sup>—the almighty Creator and Lord of nature (Amos 4 13 5 8 9 5. 6, Mic. 1 3. 4, Isa. 6 3, etc.), the founder and disposer of nations,—of Philistines and Syrians as well as

<sup>1</sup> Though it were admitted, and this we question, that Amos did not condemn the calf-worship of Jehovah in North Israel, the entire absence of any allusion to images of God, considering especially the poetical and plastic style of these writings, is a silent proof, as strong as could well be desired, of the immateriality of the conception of God held by orthodox Israelites in the eighth century. We do not build upon the recognition at this time of the decalogue (with its second commandment), though quite persuaded of the fact ourselves.

Israelites (Amos 97),—to whom the mighty Assyria is but as an axe in the woodman's hand (Isa. 105. 6. 15). While He holds unshared dominion and uncontrolled authority through the universe, the God of the prophets is a Being absolutely wise and good. It is only the revelation of Christ Himself that enables us to conceive anything that is either intellectually or ethically more sublime than the image of God, "the Holy One of Israel," possessed by the minds of Hosea and Isaiah. And there is a glowing intensity, a passionate energy of realisation in the apprehension formed by these men of the moral character of God, which has never been surpassed and rarely equalled since.

To Amos the Divine character is revealed on its judicial side, in the splendour and awfulness of God's justice exercised upon guilty nations; to Hosea it appears in its infinite affection and tenderness, outraged and yet pitiful, reproaching and relenting. In Isaiah's theology the thought of God's holiness preponderates; he sees God in His burning purity, in His absolute transcendence above the creaturely and His close immanence in human affairs, as the infinitely Great and Holy, and infinitely Near. Those searching "eyes of Jehovah's glory," that swift, inevitable "hand," find out all His-enemies and can

smite down the proudest in a moment. Micah is distinguished by his sober, humane, and practical apprehension of the character of God, as appears by his statement of the wrongs endured by Jehovah from His people and the virtues He requires from men, and in the terms of His promise of ultimate forgiveness (chs. 2 7, and 3, 6 s 7<sup>14-20</sup>). The identity of religion and morals in the creed of these early prophets is strikingly indicated by the opening words of Hosea's indictment (41): "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." Together with the absolute sovereignty, they maintain the ethical purity of Israel's God and Israel's faith against the ritual formality of a nominal Jehovism on the one hand, and against the licentious idolatry of Baalism on the other. *Ethical monotheism* is not, as Kuenen argues,<sup>1</sup> "the creation of the Israelitish prophets"; it is their heritage from the past, and they are its vindicators and expounders.

Such a God as this Lord Jehovah of the oldest writing prophets must needs be the *sole* God in their world of thought. This principle, we grant, was not in early prophetic times

<sup>1</sup> *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, p. 585. We willingly add our tribute to the masterly ability, the luminous research, and the religious spirit of this renowned Dutch scholar.

pushed to its logical consequences nor recognised in its universal bearing, as by the Isaiah of the Exile and the post-exilic Psalmists. There was, as Dr H. Schultz puts it, a "practical religious monotheism" antecedent to the developed "theoretical monotheism" which appears from the age of Jeremiah onwards. A sort of relative, hypothetical existence is allowed to other gods in such passages as Judg. 11<sup>24</sup>, 1 Sam. 26<sup>18, 19</sup>; and the temples built by Solomon to foreign divinities, which long stood in Jerusalem, imply a large admixture of polytheistic ideas remaining in the popular religion during the most flourishing times\* of Israel. These manifestations existed side by side with a true faith in the absolute Godhead of Jehovah. Nothing is commoner in a people than religious inconsistency; nothing rarer and more difficult than for men to carry out their spiritual convictions on all sides to their full practical and intellectual issues. And the surroundings and associations of Israel in the times of the monarchy were adverse in a high degree to the monotheistic creed. Yet in spite of these contradictory symptoms, "a people that reverences only one God and views Him as creator of the world and director of its history, is by this very fact monotheistic. For gods who have no power

over nature and history and are denied the worship of the people, cannot be called gods any longer. And a God whose power is not confined to His own land and the people that worship Him, is something other than a mere national God" (Schultz).<sup>1</sup>

The creed which the prophets had received in trust from the past determined their relation toward the *present* and their testimony in regard to the existing Israel and its national institutions. "The conversion of the people" was, as Kuenen rightly says, their absorbing aim; and their predictions of the future were, so far as their own purpose and conception went, incidental to this object and subservient to it. "Their business is not to communicate what *shall* happen, but to insist upon that which *ought* to happen:"<sup>2</sup> we should prefer to say, "not so much to communicate what shall happen, as to insist upon that which ought to happen." Micah speaks for all when he says, contrasting himself with the popular seers and diviners: "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of Jehovah, and of the sense of right and of courage, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (3 5-12). The denunciatory tone of the pre-exilic prophets was

<sup>1</sup> *O. T. Theology* (Eng. trans.), vol. i, pp. 175-85.

<sup>2</sup> *Prophets and Prophecy*, p. 344.



due to the nation's declension. The rise of written prophecy marks the precise epoch, following on the failure of Elijah's reformation, when the decay of the Israelitish state and polity was declared and their dissolution became necessary (Isa. 8<sup>16</sup>. 17 30<sup>8-11</sup>, Amos 4<sup>12</sup>, etc.). If we may trust in any degree what the prophets say of their own work, it is not a new creed of their own, a higher and more spiritual Jehovism, that they are forcing upon an undeveloped people, but the old and pure Jehovism that they are maintaining in the face of a backsliding people. This maintenance, we have already said, implied development, but it was maintenance notwithstanding; and the first duty of the prophets lay in the preservation of Israel's traditional piety.

It is of the utmost importance for us to realise that the prophets were primarily, and, as they themselves understood their calling, *pastors and preachers* to their contemporaries. They bent their whole strength to warn and to save the actual nation around them, the living people to whom they preached. Through neglect of this elementary fact and by our selfish way of reading the Old Testament solely in its bearing on the New, and treating prophecy as synonymous with prediction, great part of the prophetic Books have become useless to the Church; and their

predictive passages, isolated from their context and historical conditions, have been construed in unnatural and distorted modes. We must restore to Israel her right in her own God-given teachers; the acknowledgement of her rights in them enriches and secures our own.

The predictive function of the Old Testament prophets grew out of their pastoral office. Many of their forecasts related to the immediate future, and were fulfilled for their contemporaries; others had a grander, even a universal scope, but these arose no less out of existing conditions. The prophets *saw the future in the present*. Their visions of the last things and of the coming of God's kingdom are everywhere coloured by their living experience, and are constructed after the forms and with the material supplied by God to the age in which they taught. In detaching the predictions of Isaiah or Ezekiel from the period and circumstances of their utterance, we break the vital threads that bind them together; we tear them from their native soil, and find in our hands in the prophecies thus collected a bundle of rootless and disconnected plants. We must insist alike on the prospective and on the retrospective character of Hebrew prophecy. It was able to take a large and vigorous grasp of the present, and to apply itself—in the preaching of

Amos, *e.g.*, or Isaiah—with powerful effect to the moral and political situation, just because it had struck its roots firmly into the past of Israel's origin. This keen religious interest in the present and devotion to the present, in its turn, impelled the prophets to their eager and exalted conceptions of the future of God's kingdom. That they looked beyond and forward from out of their time, while they looked so profoundly into it, that they were *fore-tellers* as well as *forth-tellers*, arose from the nature of their faith and from the position in which they stood. If their Jehovah was such a God as they declared, the Lord of the whole earth, the All-wise and mighty, the loving and faithful covenant God of Israel, and the nation of Israel was doomed to fall under heathen conquerors,—if, in short, such a “day of Jehovah” was impending as our four prophets of the eighth century unitedly declare,—this could not be the end of Jehovah's plans. The future must and will redeem the present. Thus the prophets were compelled, if only by the contrast between the ideal and the actual, to become predictors. That kingdom of Jehovah from which the existing Israel revolted and whose establishment for the present its rebellion made impossible, must assert and display itself in the ensuing times, and that the more gloriously because of its previous eclipse.

In the mind of Isaiah this line of thought is unfolded with the utmost clearness and vigour. In him prophecy fully confronts the appalling future and masters its problem. It thus becomes "prophecy" in the largest sense, giving birth through its travail to the messianic promise, which now took on its more definite and developed form. At this epoch the hope is conceived, never henceforth to be surrendered, of the founding, through and after Israel's chastisement, of a universal reign of peace and justice beneath the rule of the Son of David, who will gather all nations around Israel and Zion and form them into one glorious and happy kingdom of Jehovah (2 2-4 9 3-7 11, 19 23-25 30 19-26 32 1-8). Isaiah's compeers share, more or less distinctly, in his great expectation; see Amos 9 11-15, Hos. 3 5, Mic. 4, 5, Zech. 9 9. 10. The Davidic, along with the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants, thus supplied a fruitful element in the heritage which devolved on these prophets from the past.<sup>1</sup> This "hope of Israel" concerning the Messiah absorbed in itself new material and took on new forms—in Jeremiah, in the

<sup>1</sup> The marvellous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, following upon the devastations which Israel, both north and south, had suffered for thirty years from the Assyrians, was the proximate goal of Isaiah's predictions, and formed an earnest and pledge of his larger hopes.

exilic Isaiah, in Zechariah—as time went on and taught its great lessons; but it must be recognised, from the eighth century onwards, as the heirloom of prophecy, that to which, in one shape or other, all the prophets give their witness.

Israel was the people of the future. “In thee,” it was believed, God had said to the father of its tribes, “shall all the families of the earth bless themselves” (Gen. 12 s, etc.). To its Anointed, as the people’s poets had sung, God had “given the nations for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.” These “Messianic hopes and prophecies proceed from the inmost heart of the ancient covenant people. . . . We discover in the essence of this religion the ground of that expectant *look* and *effort* forward toward a glorious consummation which are so characteristic of it, and have made it, alone amongst the religions of antiquity, the religion of hope” (Riehm).<sup>1</sup> The religious leaders of Israel were early possessed with this idea. Its deep-rooted persistence accounts for the nation’s surviving the exile and the long

<sup>1</sup> *Messianic Prophecy* (2nd ed., 1891), p. 63. Dr A. B. Davidson says of this book: “No work of the same compass could be named that contains so much that is instructive on the nature of prophecy in general, and particularly on the branch of it specially treated.”

centuries of weakness and ignominy that have followed. The humiliating present was always relieved by the light of the ideal calling of the people. The more dismal the immediate outlook and the more completely the existing people and State denied their vocation and belied God's high purposes for them, so much the more were the prophets driven to take refuge in the future and to build there, "in the last days," the new and better Zion for which the visible foundation was wanting. They must renounce their faith in the God of Israel and in Israel's destiny, or else construct, in order to support it, a new and nobler covenant in place of the old, which had so miserably failed. Where statesmanship and patriotism despaired, the prophets "abound in hope through the Holy Ghost."

The heirs of Israel's past, these men of God were thus the creators of Israel's future. Messengers of judgement to a sinful and stubborn people, they proclaimed good tidings to them and to all people; they were the heralds of a magnificent hope for mankind. In their sayings they foretold, and in their character and experience they foreshowed, the kingdom of Christ and the nature of His redemption. This was the end and crown of the calling of Israel's holy prophets.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NAMES AND TITLES OF THE PROPHETS AND PROPHECY

Etymology of *Nābī'*—The "Mouth" of God—The Greek *Prophetés*—Rational Character of Prophecy—Hebrew Verbs for "Prophecy"—The Canaanite *Nābī'*—Spiritual Progress in Prophetism—The Seer and Prophet—Vision Theory of Prophecy—Synonyms for Prophecy : the Burden, the Oracle.

THE Hebrew word *Nābī'* is of somewhat doubtful derivation. Like the great name of God, Jehovah (strictly pronounced, *Yahvéh*), and like *kohen* (priest), the sacred title of the prophet carries us back toward the origin of the Israelitish faith. Its obscurity of meaning witnesses to its antiquity, and to the primitive and deeply rooted character of the institution that it serves to designate.

The verb-stem from which *nābī'* grew is not extant in Hebrew, but survived in the cognate

Assyrian and Arabic tongues. In the former it signifies *to speak, proclaim, designate*; and from it is derived the name of *Nebo* (or *Nabu*), mentioned in Isa. 46<sup>1</sup>, the Mesopotamian god of intelligence and wise speech, the interpreter of the great gods, whom the Greeks and Romans identified with their *Hermes* or *Mercury* (the planet *Mercury* was *Nebo* in Chaldean astronomy). This word enters into many Assyrian and Babylonian personal names, such as *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Nebu-zaradan*. In Arabic the verb is said to have the more specific meaning *to announce, speak out, bear a message*; and with this signification the Hebrew noun *nābî'* appears to be connected.<sup>1</sup> The above Arabic usage is traced to an earlier root-meaning, viz. *to bubble up*,—a notion expressed by a collateral verb of similar sound in Hebrew; and some Hebraists accordingly trace *nābî'* to this source, as though it meant primarily, in a passive sense, *one made to bubble over, a possessed or inspired person compelled to utterance*. On either theory (and the former

<sup>1</sup> So Ewald, *Prophets of the O. T.*, vol. i, p. 8 (Eng. Tr.), and Cornill in his brilliant Lectures entitled *Der israelitische Prophetismus* (Strassburg, 1894); similarly Orelli, *O. T. Prophecy*, pp. 11, 12; and Schultz, *O. T. Theology*, i, 264, 265. See also, beside the standard Dictionaries, Robertson Smith's note in *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 389, 390. Hupfeld, Kuenen, and Riehm prefer the passive interpretation.



of the two seems to us the better grounded), the *Nābi'* is the utterer of a Divine message,—one who conveys to his fellows truth otherwise hidden, and imparted to himself by God for them. He is, in short, the *mouth* of God's mind toward men. This essential function of the *Nābi'* is strikingly exhibited in the parallel narratives of Ex. 4<sup>16</sup> and 7<sup>1</sup>, where Moses, on complaining to Jehovah of his want of eloquence, is told that he shall have Aaron for his “mouth” or “prophet,” while he is to be to Aaron “instead of God” and “a god unto Pharaoh.”

In virtue of this consciousness that they are the organs of utterance for the God of Israel, the prophets, from Moses downwards, habitually give their message as “the word of Jehovah,” and enforce it with the solemn “Thus saith Jehovah,”—occasionally (in Isaiah and Micah), “For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it”; and they are quoted by others in the like terms. This style of reference characterises the Books of the *Nebi'im* throughout, and other Books of the Old Testament only in a less degree; in the mouth of degenerate or false prophets this mode of speech became a professional formula. The assumption above defined underlies the phrase “prophets of Jehovah” or “prophets of Israel,” and all such designations; it is very apparent

when the prophets are called, as in Isa. 43 27, "interpreters" (or "ambassadors," R.V. : Cheyne, "mediators"), or "messengers" (identical in Hebrew with "angels") as in Hag. 1 13; or when it is said in Num. 23 5. 12. 16 that "Jehovah *put a word* in Balaam's mouth." Accordingly, Jeremiah denounced the popular false prophets of his day (23 9-40) as men who "utter the vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of Jehovah," for they have never "stood in the council of Jehovah" to "hear His words,"—"prophets that steal My words," says Jehovah, "each from his comrade" (plagiarising from the true prophets); "they take their own tongue, and pretend to utter oracles." The genuine prophet has heard Jehovah's dread voice as one hears a lion's roar (Amos 3 7. 8); he is seized by God's strong "hand" and pressed into service (Isa. 8 11, Ezek. 3 14, etc.), though it were against his will, as with Balaam and Jonah and Jeremiah (20 7-18); he is the mouthpiece through which the all-commanding Voice chooses to speak (Isa. 6, Jer. 1 9, Ex. 4 11. 12), and he "cannot but prophesy." By this appropriation on Jehovah's part the prophet has become, as he is especially called in early times, a "man of God" or "God's man"; he is a "man of the Spirit" (Hos. 9 7, Ezek. 2 2, etc.); and above all, his *lips* are cleansed by the fire from God's

altar, since these are the specific instruments of his ministry for God (Isa. 6).

The Greek translators rendered *nābī'* by *prophētēs*, which, through the Bible, has passed into our own tongue as *prophet*. But, as it often happens with imported words, this term has been narrowed and twisted in current use, until "prophet" rarely signifies to us anything but "foreteller" of the future. Now this is just what *prophetes* did not mean, or only came to mean accidentally, in its native language. The *pro* of the Greek compound is not temporal but local, and denotes *forth-* rather than *fore-*.<sup>1</sup> The *prophetes* tells forth in clear, intelligible words the Divine oracles (comp. the contrast between "prophesying" and "speaking with tongues" in 1 Cor. 14); he is the interpreter of the mind of the gods, whether that mind is directly imparted to himself or gathered from the mutterings of soothsayers or the cries of the possessed and frenzied.

Hence amongst the Greeks the *prophetes* was distinguished from the *mantis*, the soothsayer or diviner, who was regarded as the primary re-

<sup>1</sup> What is said here of *nābī'* and *prophetes* in the Old Testament applies equally to the prophets of the New Testament. Matt. 26<sup>68</sup>, to take one example out of many, suffices to show how much more the word "prophesy" meant than simply to predict,

ipient of supernatural visions. So the famous Pindar says to his muse, "Be thou my soothsayer (*mantis*), and I will be thy interpreter (*prophetes*)." The Israelitish *nābi'* occupies the ground covered both by the Greek *mantis* and *prophetes*,—an enlargement of meaning due to the simplicity of Hebrew religion, and that indicates the peculiar nearness in which Israel felt itself to be to its God,<sup>1</sup> and the more rational and moral apprehension that it possessed of the Divine nature and activity. While heathen divinities were imaged in vague and changeful shapes and confused with the manifold of nature, the Holy One of Israel stood forth in sublime consistency under the form of pure Spirit and ethical Personality. The God of the prophets was a perfect Intelligence and Will, ceaselessly active and everywhere present, a Spirit touching the human spirit, whose thought could express itself clearly and surely to the mind of His servants and could be conveyed by them to others in like fashion, so that it was the same "word of Jehovah" that they heard and that they uttered.

<sup>1</sup> "For what nation is there so great, which hath God so nigh unto them?" (Deut. 47, Ps. 14814). Thus in Num. 126-8, Moses, the ideal prophet (Deut. 1815), is represented as one with whom Jehovah "speaks face to face, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches." No riddling soothsayer is needed; no *mantis* interposed between such a God and His *prophetes*.

Notwithstanding their sense of the awful, unapproachable holiness of God, yet His word so appealed to and called forth their understanding that the prophets received it with intelligence and self-possession. Thus Ezekiel, who was apparently inclined to ecstasy, when he "fell on his face" before the glory of Jehovah, "heard a voice of one that spake," a voice that said, "Son of man, *stand upon thy feet*, and I will speak unto thee" (chs. 12<sub>s</sub>-22: comp. Num. 12<sub>s</sub>). And it is the perfect "servant of Jehovah," one who realises in himself all that Israel should be, who is depicted in Isa. 50<sub>4-9</sub> in features which, idealised as they may be, are drawn from a veritable experience: the ideal prophet has an "ear wakened morning by morning" to the converse of Jehovah, and a "tongue schooled" to expound His will; and to these spiritual faculties are added the moral qualities of patience, courage, and self-abnegation, of unswerving faith and hope in Jehovah, befitting the exponent of such a God.

On the basis of the noun *nābî'* there rest the two derivative verb-forms<sup>1</sup> (*Niphal* and *Hithpacl*) signifying *to prophesy*, which draw their meaning entirely from it. The first and more usual of

<sup>1</sup> The rare Hebrew verbs so formed are called *denominative* by grammarians.

these is a *passive* formation, and sets the prophet in the position of one acted upon rather than acting of himself; he is "filled with strength, even with the spirit of Jehovah, and with (the sense of) right, and with manliness" (Mic. 3 s); for he "prophesies by (impelled by) the name of Jehovah," while his antagonist, and caricature, "prophesies by Baal" (Jer. 2 s, etc.). The rarer *Hithpael* verb signifies *to play the prophet, to exercise the prophetic office*, and is used by preference where an external seizure by divine, or quasi-divine, influence is implied, rather than a proper inspiration, as in the instances of Saul and his messengers (1 Sam. 10 5-10 19 20-24), or the Baal-prophets on Carmel; or where an affected, unreal prophesying is in question (Jer. 23 13, Ezek. 13 17).

We are reminded by the case of the "prophets of Baal" and "of the Ashera" (1 Kings 18) who confronted Elijah, and by Jeremiah's allusions to Israelite prophets who had "prophesied by Baal" (2 s 23 13), that the Canaanite religion had also its *nebi'im*. Recent critics have made a good deal of this approximation. "The name and idea of the prophet," it is said by Robertson Smith,<sup>1</sup> "are common to Israel with its heathen neighbours." Kuenen even ventures to speak of

<sup>1</sup> *Prophets of Israel*, p. 86.

“the Canaanitish origin of prophecy.”<sup>1</sup> He points to the use of stimulating music and processional movement by Samuel, the founder of the prophetic discipline, to the frenzied “prophesying” of Saul under this influence, to the ecstasies of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 18<sup>46</sup> 19<sup>8</sup>, 2 Kings 3<sup>15</sup>), and to the association of prophecy in other places with madness (1 Sam. 18<sup>10</sup>, 2 Kings 9<sup>11</sup>, Jer. 29<sup>26</sup>, Hos. 9<sup>7</sup>), in proof of his contention that the prophetism of Samuel and his successors was derived, as to its form and methods of cultivation, from the orgiastic practices native to the religions of Palestine. He views, therefore, the “development of prophecy in Israel” as a “spiritualising” of the forms of nature-worship, a “gradual diminution of the sensuous” through “the increasing mastery acquired by the spirit.” Prophecy, he says, in course of time “became calmer and more sober; its higher enthusiasm, its *élan*, almost disappears, and gives place to consideration and calculation. The spirit of the prophets is made subject to the prophets. . . . For this happy combination of reflexion and impetus they had to thank the might and the purity of the religious ideas to the pro-

<sup>1</sup> See his *Religion of Israel*, vol. i, pp. 190ff., 216, 217. Cornill expresses the same view in Lecture I of the brief work already referred to.

climation of which they had wholly dedicated themselves."

This is an interesting and characteristic passage of Kuenen's, but it is open to manifest and very decided objections. The "happy combination" of which he speaks originated much farther back in the history of Israel than he will admit, and those "strong and pure religious ideas" to whose proclamation the prophets of the eighth century were devoted had descended to them from the enthusiastic *nebi'im* of the older time. Robertson Smith accounts sufficiently for the physical manifestations attending the ministry of Samuel and Elijah, when he speaks of them as "closely parallel with what is still seen among the dervishes of the East, and occasionally among ourselves in times of strong religious feeling." That scoffing contemporaries called the prophets fools and "mad fellows," is nothing more than the compliment which worldliness at all times is ready to pay to religious zeal.

Very probably the Hebrews acquired musical instruments from the civilised Canaanites. But the periods of religious revival in Israel were just those of the greatest repugnance and hostility to Baalism; and whatever truth lies in the maxim, *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*, it is inapplicable here; to suppose that Samuel adopted the



religious methods of the Canaanite heathen is an outrageous paradox. The difference between the physical excitement of the priests of Baal and that of Elijah is just the difference between the fanaticism of a coarse and cruel idolatry and the enthusiasm of spiritual faith acting on a high-strung, athletic temperament. The word *nābi'* was common to the two peoples, with their whole language; but the ideas and practices associated with it were as different as the genius of the two religions. The confusion between them which Hosea and Jeremiah describe was, to these prophets, a mournful index of the corruption of the ancient faith and of the degradation into which the sons of the prophets had fallen. Instead of Jehovism borrowing from Baalism, it is more likely that Jezebel's *nebi'im* were organised in rivalry to those of the true religion, and included apostates from the latter order.

At the same time, there is an element of historical truth in Kuenen's representation. While the difference in modes of prophetic expression is largely matter of temperament and circumstances, we observe also, in passing from the earlier to the later prophets, a real advance from the outward to the inward, from the more sensuous to the more intellectual forms of ministry, from vehement political activity and pas-

sionate outbursts of feeling to the calm, sustained, and luminous unfolding of spiritual truth and principle that distinguished the greatest of our writing prophets. We cannot well imagine Isaiah running before the king's chariot like Elijah, nor Jeremiah "hewing Agag in pieces before Jehovah" as Samuel did. The prophets of action (as the earlier *nebi'im* have been called) gave place to those of word and doctrine, whose teaching was put into enduring written form for the whole world, as the work of their predecessors took shape in the history of the nation. Dr Cheyne puts this distinction sharply when he speaks of Isaiah as "standing between two schools of prophecy,"—the one with an inspiration "external and intermittent," depending on "ecstatic states," the other drawing from an "internal and perennial source." <sup>1</sup>

1 Sam. 9<sup>9</sup> supplies a note on the history of prophecy, whose importance is recognised on all hands. On the occasion of Saul's seeking Samuel to enquire for his father's lost asses, the narrator observes: "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the Seer (*Ro'eh*); for he that is now called a Prophet (*Nabi'*) was beforetime called a Seer." The change from Seer to Prophet

<sup>1</sup> *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, vol. i, p. 37 (3rd ed.).

coincides with the transformation which prophecy underwent through the agency of Samuel, and the commanding influence which it now assumed in Israel. We do not suppose that the word *nābī'* originated at this epoch, much less that it was borrowed from Baalite usage; but the popular name for men credited with supernatural wisdom had been previously *roëh*, and subsequently became *nābī'*. The term Seer indicates a lower idea of revelation, not far removed from that of "second sight" or "clairvoyance." The *roëh* "sees" what is dark to ordinary minds,—things distant in space or time, or enigmatic in their nature. His faculty, though a supernatural endowment, is not specifically religious, nor occupied with the higher things of life; and Saul goes to consult "the man of God" about his strayed asses, as he might have consulted a wizard or soothsayer. Out of this inferior condition and the disrespect into which the Mosaic institutions had lapsed during the period of the Judges (comp. 1 Sam. 3 i. 20), prophecy was raised by Samuel; it was put upon a regular and authoritative footing, and acquired accordingly a new and worthier title. The designation Seer, however, with its synonym Gazer (*Chozth*), continued in use side by side with Prophet. These terms are rare in the Books of the *Nebi'im*, after

1 Sam. 9; and when employed, it is often with a tinge of disparagement, as in Isa. 30<sup>10</sup>,<sup>1</sup> Amos 7<sup>12</sup>, Mic. 3<sup>7</sup>, Ezek. 12<sup>27</sup> 13<sup>8-16</sup>. Only in the Book of Chronicles "Seer" comes again into vogue. "Prophecy," however, is throughout the Hebrew Bible designated "vision" (most frequently *chazon* or *chizzayon*, cognate with *chozélh*), although *nābī'* had displaced *roēh* and *chozélh* in common speech: see Isa. 1<sup>1</sup> 22<sup>1</sup>, Nah. 1<sup>1</sup>, Hab. 2<sup>2</sup>, Hos. 12<sup>10</sup>, etc. *Nebuah*, the abstract noun derived from *nābī'* (like *prophecy* from *prophet*), is only found thrice, and that in the very late Books of Nehemiah and Chronicles.

On the prevalence of *vision* and kindred expressions a psychological theory<sup>2</sup> of prophecy is based, which supposes that revelations were ordinarily made to the prophet in a trance or dreamlike, ecstatic state, and in the shape of pictures impressed on the imagination, which he afterwards described or interpreted in speech and writing. Now there are revelations, belonging to all periods of prophecy, that take this

<sup>1</sup> Here "prophets" and "seers" are literally "seers" and "gazers." *Nābī'* is not used at all.

<sup>2</sup> This theory of Hengstenberg, held in a modified form by König, is fully and very ably discussed in Riehm's *Messianic Prophecy*, pp. 19-59 (2nd ed.). It is curious to see how extremes meet in the emphasis laid both by Hengstenberg and Kuenen on the ecstatic features of Hebrew prophecy.

scenic form; though sometimes, as in Zech. 1-8, one may suspect that the "vision" is the product of studied representation rather than of real ecstasy. But the adoption of this form by a late writer like Zechariah shows that the ecstatic vision was a well-known and favourite mode of prophetic teaching. In Num. 24<sup>2-4</sup>, and again in Job 4<sup>12-16</sup>, and in Acts 10<sup>9-16</sup>, we have impressive examples of this mode of Divine revelation. There is a general instinct which holds the dream, the trance, and reverie to be states in which the spirit is specially open to communications from another world,—when, "laid asleep in body" and free from the distractions of sense and appetite, the man "becomes a living soul," and receives unwonted "visitations from high heaven."

But this explanation covers only a part, and that not the most important and distinctive part, of Old Testament prophetism. The dream and trance predominate in the earlier and the latest types of prophecy (1 Sam. 3, 2 Sam. 7<sup>4</sup>, 1 Kings 22<sup>19-22</sup>, Amos 7-9, Ezekiel, Zech. 1-8, Daniel). Isaiah records but one vision, strictly so called, which inaugurated his ministry; in the chief middle prophets of the Canon these phenomena almost disappear. We must therefore suppose that the word "vision"—a correlative of *Seer* or *Gazer*—

held its place as the designation of prophecy when its etymological sense had ceased to be appropriate. The Book of Micah is entitled "The word of Jehovah that came to Micah the Morashtite . . . which he saw (*chazah*) concerning Samaria and Jerusalem" (comp. Amos 1<sub>1</sub>, Hab. 1<sub>1</sub>); but there is little or nothing in Micah's sermons which appeals to the eye, or that indicates a rapt, abnormal condition of mind in this prophet. The saying of Isa. 50<sub>4</sub>, already discussed in this chapter, indicates more truly the psychological condition in which the prophets of Israel lived and worked: "The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of those that are schooled. . . . He wakeneth mine ear morning by morning; He wakeneth mine ear to hear as those that are schooled." It was in no dim night-vision, in no wondering reverie or inanimate trance, under the pressure of an overpowering mystery and terror, but in "sober certainty of waking sense," with clear consciousness and in the full and manly exercise of their rational powers, that such messengers of God received the "word" which they have spoken in His name.

Other designations of prophecy had a more specific meaning; or were current at particular periods, or adopted by individual authors. *Massa*

probably denoted at first a *high-raised utterance*, reflecting the manner of prophetic address,—the elevated voice and style of the inspired orator (comp. Isa. 24<sup>14</sup> 42<sup>2. 11</sup>); but later—possibly by a play on the double sense of the noun—it was taken to mean a *burden* laid on the prophet, or laid on the people by him. *Massa*<sup>1</sup> is always rendered in the second of these senses by the English Version (*oracle* in the R.V. margin). The Septuagint translates it sometimes as “saying,” sometimes as “vision.” It is chiefly used in Isaiah’s discourses of judgement against the foreign nations (chs. 13–23); but “the burden of Jehovah” came to be denounced by Jeremiah as a cant phrase, affected in his time by the false prophets (23<sup>33-40</sup>).

*Ne’ûm* (*oracle*) is applied to any specially solemn or pregnant declaration of the mind of God, and is a favourite expression of Amos and Ezekiel; in Jeremiah this word is excessively frequent. It is not distinguishable in the English rendering, but may be recognised, as in Jer. 1s, where “saith the Lord” (*ne’ûm Yahveh*) follows a prophetic deliverance. This term denotes by etymology, in a sense contrasted with *massa*, a low, “murmured” sound, coming as if from

<sup>1</sup> *Massa* in Prov. 31<sup>1</sup> is most likely a place-name: see R.V. margin.

oracular depths; it is a word of "very ancient origin," says Ewald,<sup>1</sup> "employed by the earliest writing prophets, always in close conjunction with the name of the God of Israel, *Yahveh*, and then almost always at the end of a sentence, —Zech. 12<sub>1</sub>, Num. 24<sub>3</sub>, and Prov. 30<sub>1</sub> are exceptions,—most frequently at the end of a paragraph, in order to designate with solemn emphasis what has just been said as *Jehovah's* word."

<sup>1</sup> *Prophets of the O. T.*, vol. i, p. 9.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FORM AND CONTENTS OF THE PROPHETICAL WRITINGS

The Prophets first Speakers then Writers—Prophetical Scriptures but a part of Prophecy—Gradual Displacement of the Oral by the Written Style—Mixed Character of the Book of Isaiah—Sacred Oratory in Israel—Prophecy and Poetry—Analysis of *Nebi'im* in regard to Contents and Topics—Chronological Outline.

THE largest part of the prophetical Books is made up of reports or notes of the public addresses of the prophets, digested by the preacher himself or arranged for him by others. In some instances, as with the Book of Joel and of Haggai, the work before us is so uniform and of a piece, that there can be little doubt that it retains the original shape given to it by the prophet-author. In other instances, as it is expressly related in the case of Jeremiah (36<sup>32</sup>), the first draft of the writing was recast and enlarged; and this may very well

have taken place more than once. Moreover, since prophecy was a continuous exposition of the mind of Jehovah to Israel, and its oracles were not the property of the individual man who uttered them, it was the part of later inspired men to carry on and develop the programme handed down to them from an earlier generation; and in fulfilment of this duty they may sometimes have enlarged and commented upon, while they re-issued, sayings of their predecessors. Critical analysis tends to make out a composite origin of this kind and a manifold authorship for some of the Books of the Prophets (see also pp. 12-15).

It must always be remembered that the prophets were *speakers* in the first instance,—orators and preachers, not literary authors. They became writers only in the second instance, and by way of putting on permanent record so much of their sayings as seemed to be needful or useful for a wider circle than that of their first hearers and for later times. The canonical prophecies are the enduring monument, the sifted, written deposit of a powerful and fruitful spoken ministry, which commenced centuries before the earliest writing *Nebi'im* appeared, and was carried on by a numerous order of men, of whose names only a few are preserved to us. The prophetic Scriptures are an ultimate

product, a kind of crystallised precipitate of oral prophecy. The former represent the latter (to vary the figure) very much as the parts of an iceberg above the water-line indicate the entire floating bulk, or as the peaks of a mountain-chain represent the broad lower slopes covered by the mist and the solid underlying strata, of which these are but the visible eminences. Without the work of Samuel and Nathan, Ahijah and Elijah, and a host of forgotten men of God, such Books as those of Amos and Isaiah could never have existed. Whether the fifteen Books of the "Latter Prophets" are single or manifold in their several authorship, each of them gathers up and embodies a long course of inspired teaching; and we can say to their writers, what they would have been the first to admit,—what is true, indeed, of all who stand in the succession of God's husbandmen,—“Others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours.” And just as the distant mountains open out when you approach them, and what appeared at first to be solitary peaks, when beheld more nearly or from a different angle, part into several clustered summits, neighbouring to each other or seen previously along the same line of view, so it is apt to be in the study of an ancient literature such as that of Israelitish prophecy.

The earlier written prophecies, like the earlier Gospels, reflect distinctly the style of oral utterance; "the prophet (Amos) writes as he spoke, preserving all the effects of pointed and dramatic delivery, with that breath of lyrical fervour which lends a special charm to the highest Hebrew oratory" (Robertson Smith). In Isaiah 40-66 and Ezekiel, amongst the later Books, the features of literary conception and construction are very manifest. The conditions of the Babylonian exile, which must have limited the exercise of all public ministry and made large popular assemblies infrequent, if not impossible, amongst the Israelites, account in part for this change of manner. But in general the pen of the writer played an increasing part, and the tongue of the orator a less commanding and powerful part in Israelitish prophecy from the eighth century onwards. In Isaiah—whose work, in point of human genius, is the consummate flower of prophecy—the pulpit orator and the literary artist are nobly combined. In the case of Jeremiah the tongue and pen directly co-operated,<sup>1</sup> and the written sermon served as the protest of the rejected and silenced preacher.

<sup>1</sup> See especially the remarkable incident of ch. 36<sup>1-8</sup>, where the imprisoned prophet sends his secretary to *read* to the people in the temple what he has written.

The Books of the earlier Joel and Amos bear the stamp of the finest popular religious oratory; their homilies were doubtless addressed to large congregations of Israelites, very much in the form in which we find them written. The work of Hosea is more varied in its form: its first three chapters are a prophetic memoir rather than a sermon; the bulk of the work consists of reminiscences of addresses delivered during a considerable period of years, which are wrought, apparently, into one long and very discursive discourse on the coming judgement, closed in ch. 14 by a brief and exquisite penitential hymn. Micah's work resembles that both of Amos and Hosea; the concluding chapters (6 and 7) bear a more finished literary stamp than the previous five, and suggest that the prophet in publishing the memoir of his ministry at an advanced period of life has completed it by a careful written discourse. Nahum's three chapters of judgement upon Nineveh form a splendid and highly artistic lyrical poem, written probably for public recitation, but certainly not the product of free popular discourse. Similarly, "the oracle which Habakkuk the prophet did see" is the production of a poet rather than a preacher; it wears the air of meditation and soliloquy; his "prayer" in the third chapter is a song, resembling those of

Miriam and Deborah in Ex. 15 and Judg. 5, and has been arranged for the temple music.

The Book of Isaiah is the most irregular in form, as well as the richest in contents, of the latter *Nebi'im*. Setting aside the last twenty-seven chapters, on any hypothesis constituting a separate work, there remains in Isa. 1–39 a miscellaneous book which it is almost impossible to classify or describe as a whole. It contains history, biography, oratory, vision, apologue, and poetry—lyrical, elegiac, and didactic. Its homilies are of the most varied strain, and sound every note both of warning and encouragement. It has passages of crushing denunciation and piercing irony, and again of tender entreaty and glowing promise. Sometimes, as in chs. 1–6 and again in chs. 10–12, we have finished and polished discourses of this prophet; but others of Isaiah's addresses, as in chs. 7 and 8, are marked by unevenness and obscurity, as though they were drawn up from short, detached notes, or had suffered in transcription. The "burdens" of chs. 13–23 differ considerably from each other in standpoint, as well as in language and style, while chs. 24–27, and again chs. 34, 35, are apocalyptic compositions, unlike anything else that appears in Isaiah or in other pre-exilic *Nebi'im*. The historical appendix, chs. 36–39,

is surely by another pen than Isaiah's. It is certain that the Book, as it stands, has been revised and arranged in post-exilic times; and it is not surprising that, with matter of such various date and character, most recent critics suppose that even 1 Isaiah (chs. 1-39) is a composite structure, and that later as well as earlier<sup>1</sup> prophecies have been absorbed in the work of Isaiah the son of Amoz.

Amongst the post-exilic Books, the two chapters of Haggai are a precise report of this prophet's addresses on the rebuilding of the temple; Malachi has written out the substance of his sermons; Zechariah has added to the account of his visions (chs. 1-6) certain episodes from his subsequent public ministry amongst the restored exiles, in chs. 7 and 8. By this time preaching was on its decline in Israel; the great days of inspiration were over; the priest with his temple-ordinances and the scribe with his written law assumed the direction of the religious life of the people, and began to fill the place so long occupied by the bold and fervid oratory of the prophets.

The discourses preserved in the prophetic Books indicate a high development and long culti-

<sup>1</sup> See Isa. 22-4 and 151-1612, with the notes in Delitzsch's or Orelli's *Commentary*.

vation in ancient Israel of the art of public speech. The rules of sacred oratory and the figures and devices of rhetoric could be amply illustrated from the remains of the great prophet-preachers of the pre-exilic age. The speeches of Isaiah, in particular, would well repay study in this respect; and the criterion of manner and style has not yet been applied in the discrimination of his writings with the exactness that is possible. Generally considered, Israelitish eloquence, like that of most Eastern peoples, excels in the imaginative and pictorial rather than the logical method of persuasion. It is lavish in metaphor and simile, full of colour and of music, and rises habitually into a kind of rhythmical prose,—“vibrating,” says Ewald, “between poetry and prose,”—with a parallelism in the clauses, and sometimes a refrain at the end of the periods, that approach the movement of Hebrew verse. See, *e.g.*, Amos 1 3–2 8 and 4 6–11, Isa. 5 1–25 and 9 8–10 4, Ezek. 7 2–27. In Nahum and Habakkuk, as we have seen, the oratorical is merged in the poetical, descriptive or lyrical, style.

From Jeremiah onwards there is a manifest diminution in the literary power of the writing prophets. The contrast, which is so marked both in power of conception and of utterance, between the *Nebi'im* of the Restoration and their



predecessors cannot be explained by inferiority of talent; it belongs to a time of impoverished culture, when the life of Israel was confined to a narrow channel and overshadowed by an alien power, and when the heroic age of prophecy and its great conflicts had gone by. It is remarkable that the epoch which witnessed the decay of prophetic oratory excelled in religious poetry,<sup>1</sup> and that we owe to it many of the most exquisite pieces in the Psalter. The characteristic Psalms of the Restoration have, however, a subdued, plaintive note in keeping with the times.

We have already classified the contents of the *Nebi'im* in discussing their literary forms. We distinguish (1) the *reported oral discourses*, which form the principal and more essential part of the prophetic Books; (2) the *written homilies* of a later period, composed for the reader rather than the hearer, as, *e.g.*, Isa. 40 and following chapters; (3) *prophetic memoirs*, as in Hos. 1–3 or Ezek. 1–3, where prophecy is blended with autobiography; (4) *stories of the prophets*—see the Book of Jonah, Isa. 36–39 (and large parts of the Books of Samuel and Kings); (5) *descriptive prophecies of the future* (vision, apocalypse, etc.)—Am. 7–9,

<sup>1</sup> See Davison's *Praises of Israel*, pp. 61–63: "A period which, so far as extant Psalms are concerned, is the most prolific of all."

Ezek. 40-48; (6) *prophetical poems*, as those of Nahum, Hab. 3, Isa. 24-27 (Pss. 2, 45, etc.). These divisions are not exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive; but they may serve the purpose of keeping before our mind the manifold dress in which the spirit of prophecy has clothed itself, and the vast variety of matter that is compacted under the general title of the *Nebi'im*.

We may classify the prophetical Books, again, by their *subject-matter*, or the topics of which they treat, as distinguished from their literary form. Some prophets, like Amos, Hosea, and Malachi, deal largely with the social and national questions of the day; others, like Joel, Zephaniah, and Haggai, dwell on the vital religious questions, of Israel's conduct toward Jehovah, or (in Ezekiel) the relations of the individual Israelite to God; others, again, such as Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, busy themselves with foreign lands and the wrongs done by surrounding nations to Israel and to Jehovah. Large sections of prophecy, relating both to home and foreign affairs, are occupied with the coming of the day of Jehovah, either in its judicial or redemptional aspects: see Joel 3, Amos 5<sup>18-20</sup>, Isa. 2<sup>2-4</sup> and 12-22, Mic. 4, 5, Zeph. 1<sup>14-213</sup>, and again, 3<sup>9-20</sup>, Mal. 4. In the Assyrian crisis there rises to the prophetical vision of the future, on the foreground of "the day

of the Lord," the great figure of the ideal Son of David (Isa. 9-11, Mic. 5, Zech. 9), who is replaced in Isa. 40-66 by that atoning Servant of Jehovah, whom Jewish interpretation failed to identify at the right moment with the conquering Messiah. In this later Book, and in close connexion with the doctrine of the suffering Servant, the prophecies of the conversion of the Gentiles appear, already adumbrated in 1 Isaiah, which give a new and bright import to the promised "day of Jehovah."

From the above definite forecasts of judgement and salvation, which have their occasion and suggestion in the current history of Israel, we must distinguish the so-called apocalyptic prophecies found in Joel 3 9-17, Isa. 24-27, 34 and 35, Ezek. 38, 39,—and above all, in Daniel. Here the final conflict of the kingdoms of God and Satan, the manifestation of Jehovah and the universal transformation of the world, are depicted under symbols which from the nature of the subject are mysterious and uncertain of interpretation; for such revelations concern the new heavens and earth, and the order of things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard." Yet it will be found that these dim disclosures of the last things have reference to the environment of the prophet through whom they are made; the apocalyptic painter dips

his brush in the colours furnished to him by contemporary history.

To sum up: we distinguish the contents of prophecy topically, as it relates (1) mainly to the present, and is predominantly *ethical* or *religious*, and *national* or *extra-national*, in its interest; and (2) as it bears on the future, and is *judicial*, *messianic* (understanding this word in a wide sense, as comprising the promises about the Son of David and about the suffering Servant, and concerned whether with the salvation of Israel or the Gentiles), or *apocalyptic*. Here, again, our classification is theoretically faulty, but it is such as the complications of the subject will admit of.

The strands which we have thus disentangled are woven together in different modes and proportions at different points in the chain of prophecy; but they run, more or less distinctly, through its entire course. And it will be one of our principal objects to discriminate these various interests in the Books of the Prophets, and to point out, so far as may be possible, the growth and development of each main topic and the manner and effect of their combination.

But our governing principle of division in this work is neither that of literary form nor of

topical content, but of *historical order*. Reading these inspired writings as a progressive and living whole, in the light of the events and movements of the age that gave them birth, we may hope to see more distinctly into their meaning, and to understand the place which they severally hold in the body of the Old Testament teaching and in the course of God's dealings with Israel. The constitution of the great Book of the *Nebi'im* has taught us that history and prophecy are inseparable. (See Chapter I.) They are alternate commentaries upon each other. The personages of Hebrew story were typical, and its institutions and events symbolical of that which belongs to God's final kingdom upon earth. Prophecy is history idealised; history is prophecy dramatised.

The prophecies are inspired studies of current history; and the history is a continuous providential illustration of prophecy, and is full of germinant and tentative fulfilments. The religion of the Bible is the historical religion,—a revelation which, like Christ its Lord, has served that it might rule, has waited upon that it might dominate the course of human progress. The subject itself, therefore, dictates to us the historical method in its treatment. In this way we shall best approach the difficulties and obscurities lying in our path, and view them in

something of their right proportion; and we shall best avail ourselves of the abundant, though often conflicting, light which modern enquiry throws upon the field.

The chief line of division that history marks in the succession of the prophets of Israel is drawn by the Babylonian Exile. That calamitous event was the end of much, and the beginning of much, in the life of the Jewish people. It was the goal of a large part of antecedent prediction, and supplied to prophecy a new starting-point and new conditions of development. We distinguish, then, in the first place, between *pre-exilic*, *exilic*, and *post-exilic prophecy*. In the two centuries and a half over which written prophecy extended in the times before the Exile, great national and religious movements took place, which centred in or were determined by the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests of Palestine. Accordingly, we divide the pre-exilic age into pre-Assyrian, Assyrian, and Babylonian periods. Of these three, the Assyrian period is the longest and the richest in material, and may be divided into two sections, distinguished by the interest of the prophets in the Northern or Southern kingdoms of Israel respectively.

We thus arrive at the following chronological

arrangement, which furnishes the plan of our exposition in this work:—

Dates.	Periods.	Prophets.
B. C. Circa 850-790	PRE-ASSYRIAN AGE.	Obadiah (?), Joel.
„ 790-722	ASSYRIAN-ISRAELITE AGE, terminating with <i>the fall of Samaria.</i>	[Jonah], Amos, <sup>1</sup> Hosea, Zechariah 9-11.
„ 740-630	ASSYRIAN - JUDÆAN AGE. <i>The deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib (701) is the culminating point of this epoch; at the accession of Josiah (640) the Assyrian empire had begun to wane.</i>	Micah, <sup>2</sup> 1 Isaiah, Nahum. <sup>1</sup>
„ 630-587	CHALDEAN AGE, terminating (so far as it was pre-exilic) with <i>the fall of Jerusalem.</i> Only in the last twenty years of this period was the preponderance of Babylon assured in S.-W. Asia.	Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Zechariah 12-14 (?), Jeremiah.
„ 587-536	EXILIC AGE.	Lamentations, Ezekiel, 2 Isaiah, [Daniel].
„ 536-400	POST-EXILIC AGE.	Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, Malachi.

<sup>1</sup> Although Amos preached before the Assyrian invaders appeared in Palestine, and never mentions them by name, Assyria has cast its shadow over him and he writes possessed by the presentiment of national ruin. Nahum, on the other hand, looks back with bitterest anger on Nineveh's triumph, and exults in her approaching overthrow.

<sup>2</sup> Micah stands at the point of transition.

The above must be taken as a preliminary outline. A number of unsettled points are involved in it, some whose solution will always remain doubtful. Several important matters we hold at present in suspense; and certain qualifications and reservations will have to be made as we proceed. But this scheme supplies a working basis sufficiently sure and complete in its main positions for the building upon it of our historical construction of prophecy.



## THE PRE-ASSYRIAN AGE

B. C.	Kings of Judah.	Of Israel.	Leading Events.
About 850	JEHOSHAPHAT (873).	JORAM (851), son of Ahab. Death of ELIJAH.	ASSHURNAZIRPAL of Assyria (884). MESHA, king of Moab ( <i>Moabite Stone</i> ). Siege of Kir-hareseth.
848	Accession of JEHORAM, son of Jehosha- phat, son-in- law of Ahab.		Revolt of Edom from Judah; inva- sion by Philistines, etc. (2 Kings 8 <sup>20-22</sup> , 2 Chron. 21). HAZAEI, king of Syria.
844	A H A Z I A H, killed by Jehu.		Second battle of Ramoath Gilead (2 Kings 8 <sup>28</sup> ).
843	Usurpation of ATHALIAH.	JEHU: destroys dynasty of Omri; pays tribute to Assyria.	Ascendancy of ELISHA; over- throw of Baalism.
842			SHALMANESER II of Assyria (860-824).
837	Athaliah over- thrown for JOASH.		Jehoiada, the high priest, regent for the infant Joash.
815	Murder of Zechariah (2 Chr. 24 <sup>20-22</sup> ).	JEHOAHAZ.	Israel oppressed by the Syrians (2 Kings 10 <sup>32</sup> ).
798		JEHOASH.	Invasion of Judah by Hazael (12 17. 18).
797	AMAZIAH, de- feated by Jehoash of Israel (2 Kings 14).		Death of Elisha. Wane of Syrian power — defeated by Israel (2 Kings 13 25), after severe Assyrian attacks.
792	AZARIAH.		
790		JEROBOAM II.	

The figures above given, provisionally, are those adopted by Dr Lumby in the *Cambridge Companion to the Bible* (Art. VI,

*Chronology*). The years assigned in the Bible to the Judæan kings, from Rehoboam to the fall of Samaria, amount to a sum exceeding by twenty that allowed to the kings of Israel in the same period. Archbishop Ussher, in his generally accepted scheme of chronology, reconciled this discrepancy by inserting in the Israelite succession two *interregna*, of which the sacred text gives no intimation whatever. The date of the Assyrian monuments go to verify the shorter, Israelite reckoning. Probably even this is too extended; and the received dates in the period above tabulated are about forty years too early. It is a subject on which only approximate certainty is attainable.

## CHAPTER V

### BEGINNINGS OF WRITTEN PROPHECY: OBADIAH

Israel at the middle of the Ninth Century—Why did the Prophets take to Writing?—Lack of Historical Data in Obadiah and Joel—Obadiah against Edom—Analysis of his Vision—Discussion of its Epoch—Obadiah and other Prophets—Israel and Edom.

OUR earliest writing prophets appeared in Judæa in the latter half of the ninth century B.C., and belonged to the age immediately following the great reformation of Elijah. Religion and prophecy had received a powerful stimulus; but while they had gathered new internal vigour, the spiritual forces of the nation's life found themselves for that reason in growing

disharmony with its political conditions. Elisha was, probably, still living and exercising his gracious and venerated ministry in the Northern kingdom, when Joel began to prophesy in the South; and the schools over which Elijah and Elisha had presided furnished the country with numerous champions of the national faith in the "sons of the prophets,"—an order which appears, however, to have rapidly degenerated after Elisha's death, so that by the time of Amos it was in low repute (7<sup>12-15</sup>: comp. the case of Gehazi). The image-worship of Jehovah continued under the Jehuite dynasty in Israel, and along with it there remained many active roots of the heathenism against which Elijah had struck his giant blows.

The Southern kingdom was at this time in a condition decidedly better than the Northern. Since Rehoboam's time, Asa and Jehoshaphat, both able and religious kings, had ruled in succession for nearly eighty years (929–848); and the subsequent usurpation of Athaliah—a counter-stroke to Jehu's revolution in the North—was the *coup d'état* of a daring and revengeful woman, which had no lasting effect. The priesthood organised, at the temple, the revolt against Athaliah; and both priests and temple gained new prestige by its success. The crimes of Athaliah, like those of her mother Jezebel,

strengthened the reaction against Baalism; and during at least the earlier part of Joash's long reign, while Jehoiada the high priest was at the helm of affairs, Jerusalem was the scene of great religious zeal and activity (2 Kings 11<sup>17</sup>–12<sup>16</sup>, 2 Chron. 23, 24).

The political outlook was, however, far from favourable. The schism between North and South was now more than a century old; and Jehoshaphat's ill-advised attempt to heal it by a family alliance with Ahab had ended in disaster. The internal struggles which marked the middle of the ninth century in both kingdoms had greatly weakened their external power, and laid them open to the hostility of neighbours who had long-standing grudges to repay (Joel 3<sup>4</sup>). The heathen States formerly incorporated in the empire of David and Solomon, had one by one broken away from the divided rule of their successors. Moab rebelled against the Israelite Ahaziah (2 Kings 3), Edom against the Judæan Joram (2 Kings 8<sup>20-22</sup>); the Philistines followed their example, and raided upon defenceless Judah (2 Chron. 21<sup>16,17</sup>). The Aramæan kingdom of Damascus had become the dominant military power in Palestine; Judah as well as Israel suffered from its encroachments (2 Kings 10<sup>32, 33</sup> 12<sup>17, 18</sup> 13<sup>3</sup>). The old proud supremacy of

Israel (see Pss. 18<sup>39-50</sup> 60) in the land of Canaan seemed hopelessly lost, nor could it be restored without some signal intervention on Jehovah's part and a complete reversal of existing conditions. The faith of Israel has now to meet the shock given to it by the loss of the Davidic Empire, by a renewed and humiliating experience of suffering from the malice of its heathen neighbours. Such is the situation under which Obadiah and Joel spoke and wrote.

These are our oldest extant writing prophets. If we ask why just at this time the prophets began to *write*, this is to beg the question. We do not know that they now *began* to write: only, Books of this period are the earliest of their writings preserved and known to us. As Dr James Robertson well observes, "The products before us give no sign of being earliest efforts. . . . From all that appears, we might most naturally infer that literary composition in every variety of form had been long prevalent among the Hebrews by the time these books came to be written."<sup>1</sup> When Wellhausen, therefore, concludes that "the question why Elijah and Elisha committed nothing to writing, while Amos a hundred years later is an author, admits of hardly any other answer than that in the interval

<sup>1</sup> *Early Religion of Israel*, pp. 62, 63, and ch. iii. *passim*.

a non-literary had developed into a literary age,"<sup>1</sup> his explanation is both inadequate and incorrect. Kuenen says: "A double reason impelled the prophets to write their oracles. In the first place, prophetism underwent a transformation at this epoch, which made the prophets feel that they must try to exercise a more extended ministry than in the past. Further, a literary movement had just commenced," etc.<sup>2</sup> Robertson Smith describes this "transformation" in a striking passage :<sup>3</sup>

The prophets write the words which their contemporaries refuse to hear. . . . Jehovah's Word has a scope that reaches beyond the immediate occasion, and a living force which prevents it returning to Him without effect ; and if it is not at once taken up into the hearts of the people, it must be set in writing for future use and for a testimony in time to come. *Thus the prophets become authors, and they and their disciples are students of written revelation.*

This putting of the matter brings out the essential point ; it applies in its full force, however, to the prophets of the Assyrian period. Ewald grasps the situation still more completely,

<sup>1</sup> *History of Israel* (1st Eng. ed.), p. 465. Instead of "a hundred years," there was less than an interval of fifty years between Elisha and Amos !

<sup>2</sup> *Historisch-kritisch Onderzoek* : French translation, ii. 32, 33.

<sup>3</sup> *The O. T. in the Jewish Church*, 2nd ed., pp. 300, 301.

in his large and masculine if somewhat awkward fashion :<sup>1</sup>

The recording of purely prophetic utterances, ideas, and hopes is a very remote branch of composition, and is not rendered possible until general literature has attained a considerable facility of expression ; and again, it is only produced under the pressure of exceptional circumstances. These causes were now at hand. In the great prophets of these centuries was concentrated not only the most spiritual but actually the strongest of the powers which directed the course of events ; and when . . . its sway over the present gradually declined, prophetism, in so many respects rejuvenated, turned with the greatest ardour to the future, from which it hoped to receive the confirmation of those of its truths which were not recognised in the present. It was, on the one hand, the grand public activity of the prophets in the kingdom of their day, and, on the other, the appeal which was rendered necessary to a more extended publicity and to the decision of the future, which became the most powerful lever of pure prophetic composition ; nor could the state-life of the Greeks and Romans stimulate their popular orators to a more rich and stirring composition than was poured forth by the prophets with heavenly clearness, *under the impulse of the afflictions to which the Spirit of Jahveh was subjected by the world.* . . . When the prophet had sufficiently proved his character by word of mouth, and was impelled by some need of his age to put forth his influence in writing over a larger

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<sup>1</sup> *History of Israel*, vol. iv, pp. 195-197.

area and a longer period, he collected in an orderly form the most lasting truths of his fugitive addresses, adding perhaps much new matter which there had been little opportunity for treating orally with so much definiteness and detail, yet which ought not to be omitted in any composition claiming the attention of a wider circle and a more permanent existence.

It was not, therefore, that the prophets were now learning, in the ninth century, "to manage the pen" (Kuenen); an inward impulse, an intrinsic necessity, compelled them to write,—the need of providing for a better future amid the calamities of the present, the vision of a brighter "day of the Lord" dawning beyond the shadows that were gathering over the nation. If we are right in this view, then the apocalyptic element in Joel, which, to many critics, is a decisive reason for putting him late amongst the prophets, is on the contrary, in the form it assumes in him, a mark of the crisis out of which written prophecy itself was born. While Israelite prophets had used the pen before the generation of Obadiah and Joel, it was only then that written prophecy became a necessary and established thing; and its documents came to be copied and preserved in virtue of their significance for the future, since they contained the title-deeds of Israel's forfeited heritage.

It is unfortunate that we have to begin with



authors whose age is contested, and who furnish us with no indisputable historical data. The occasions that gave rise to the prophecies of *Obadiah* and *Joel* were of a recurring and almost chronic nature. The antipathy between Esau and Jacob, which is the subject of *Obadiah's* vision, runs throughout Old Testament history; and the plague of locusts, on which *Joel* preached, is a scourge that may fall on Palestine any summer. At the same time, this generality of theme, together with their simplicity of treatment, makes these short Books very suitable to introduce the rest. They strike notes that resound through the whole of Israelitish prophecy; indeed, "there is hardly a prophet, from *Amos* onwards, in whom one does not hear reminiscences of *Joel*" (*Delitzsch*). Uncertainty of date is of less moment in these instances than in some others.

#### THE VISION OF OBADIAH.

The *Vision of Obadiah* has a brief title, and it is the smallest Book in the Old Testament. The author's name (*Obad-yah* = servant of Jehovah) is a common one in Hebrew, and there is no reason to identify this *Obadiah* with any of the eleven mentioned in the histories. The prophecy is simple and brief. Its one subject is *the injury*

done by Edom to Judah during some recent calamity that has fallen on Jerusalem,—a wrong which will be heavily repaid to its inflictors in the approaching Day of Jehovah (vv. 4-9. 15. 18): Jacob, on the other hand, will survive its disaster, and spread its restored people over all the bordering lands (vv. 17-20);—in fine,

There shall ascend Deliverers on mount Zion,  
To judge the mountain of Esau ;<sup>1</sup>  
And the kingdom shall belong to Jehovah.

The Vision falls into three successive parts. The prophet sees—

I. The doom of the Edomites : vv. 1-9.

(1) The nations summoned against this feeble power, vv. 1. 2 ; (2) its pride described and threatened, vv. 3. 4 ; (3) the completeness of its destruction, vv. 5. 6 ; (4) the uselessness of its alliances, wisdom, and warlike courage, vv. 7-9.

II. The cause of Edom's ruin : vv. 10-16.

(1) Its unbrotherly part in the calamity of Jerusalem, vv. 10. 11 ; (2) its conduct reproachfully described,<sup>2</sup> vv. 12-14 ; (3) its part in the vengeance impending over the heathen, vv. 15. 16.

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<sup>1</sup> Obadiah looks back to the *Judges* for the example of Israel's redemption ; comp. Ps. 83, Isa. 9 & 10<sup>26</sup>. The doctrine of the Messianic King was developed in the subsequent Assyrian age.

<sup>2</sup> Read in these verses, "Thou shouldest not have looked—entered—stood—delivered up" (as with the A.V., Orelli, W. A. Wright), rather than "Look not thou," etc., as in R.V.; for, according to ver. 11, Obadiah is relating crimes already committed.

### III. The future glory of Zion : vv. 17-21.

(1) Jacob will recover from its distress, ver. 17 ; (2) to consume Esau like stubble, ver. 18 ; (3) and to spread itself over the whole promised land, vv. 19, 20 ; (4) so that Jehovah's kingdom will be established in Zion, ver. 21.

The above analysis shows this little work to be a well-constructed unity, clear and direct in aim, terse in expression. It is characterised by sound moral feeling and firm religious faith. The style is blunt and soldier-like,—not rich or graceful in any way, but full of rugged dramatic force. “The speech of Obadiah,” says Umbreit, “comes as if freshly quarried from the rocks. He has no flowery expressions, no picturesque descriptions ; it is as though he had hewn out his prophecy from the cliffs of Petra.”

Obadiah's vision is contracted in its range. He is the most purely nationalistic—the most *tribal*, one might say—of the prophets. His horizon is occupied by “the mount of Esau” (vv. 8, 9, 21 : an expression found only here) standing opposite to “mount Zion.” Vv. 18, 19 seem to imply a reunion of the Israelites against Edom : comp. Isa. 11<sup>13</sup>, 14, Zech. 9<sup>13</sup>, and the war of Joram and Jehoshaphat (in Obadiah's time) against Moab (2 Kings 3). Obadiah identifies “the house of Jacob” (vv. 10, 17, 18 : so named in

contrast with "the house of Esau") with the legitimate kingdom of Judah, to which Edom owed subjection. This kingdom, including Benjamin, he sees expanding in all directions, even occupying the lands of Ephraim and Samaria, while the recovered Israelite captives are located farther north, "unto Zarephath (Sarepta)," vv. 19. 20. This last trait of the picture presupposes the dispossession of the Ten Tribes,—unless it be implied (Orelli) that they are to suffer by the spreading of Judah and Benjamin at their expense.

Verse 20, speaking of the "captivity of . . . Israel" and "of Jerusalem," certainly points *primâ facie* to an exilic date for the prophecy; although, as we shall see from Joel and Amos, there were many lesser captivities before the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations; an active slave-trade was pursued on the borders of Palestine, and slavery was the ordinary fate of prisoners of war (see, *e.g.*, 2 Chron. 28 s-11.17). We admit also that the Judæan calamity is depicted (vv. 11. 12) in language that seems exaggerated if applied to anything short of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in which the Edomites took a keen and much-resented delight (Ps. 137, Lam. 4 21, Ezek. 25, 35). This explanation is adopted by a number of the leading critics,

—Ewald, Kuenen, Riehm, Driver, Cornill.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Obadiah says nothing of the Chaldeans; nor do the terms of these verses necessarily signify more than such an invasion and pillage of Jerusalem as took place, according to 2 Chron. 21 16, 17, in the reign of Jehoram. At this very time the Edomites were in successful revolt against Judah (vv. 8-10); nothing is more likely than that they seized the opportunity of the Philistine raid in the way Obadiah describes: so Delitzsch, Hofmann, Nägelsbach, Orelli, and others. “On the whole, the arguments in favour of the early date of Obadiah seem to be the stronger” (C. H. H. Wright). Upon this interpretation, Obadiah prophesied about 845 B.C., and is the first of the extant writing prophets. His short, emphatic oracle became the model and starting-point for later denunciations of Edom; and Edom, Israel’s hereditary rival (Gen. 25, 27), came to represent the spirit of enmity and rancour against the people of God in its intensest form (see Isa. 34 and 63 1-5). Chiefly for this reason, we may suppose, has the vision of Obadiah been preserved.

The tone in which Edom is addressed testifies for the earlier date of the Book. The prophet

<sup>1</sup> In his newly published and excellently brief and clear *Einleitung in das alte Testament* (Mohr, Freiburg i. B.).

speaks as one surprised and grieved by Esau's cruelty; compared with the fierce anathemas of Isaiah and Ezekiel, "his *Thou shouldst not* appears rather as the sad remonstrance of disappointment." It belongs to the time when the rupture between Judah and Edom was still fresh (2 Kings 8<sup>20</sup>), and better conduct might have been expected. Compare the language of Amos, referring to the same and subsequent events (1 11. 12).

Amongst other prophets, Obadiah stands in closest connexion with Joel. Two sayings are common to them both: "The day of Jehovah is near," and "In mount Zion there shall be deliverance" (vv. 15. 17, Joel 2<sup>32</sup> 3<sup>14</sup>). In the eyes of both, Jerusalem is a "sanctuary" (ver. 17, Joel 3<sup>17</sup>) not to be defiled by the heathen. They supply already the watchword for Isaiah's grand doctrine of the inviolability of Zion. Alike they see the heathen "judged" from mount Zion (ver. 21, Joel 3<sup>12-21</sup>), and dwell on their punishment as a "re-compense" in kind (vv. 15. 16, Joel 3<sup>4-8</sup>). When Obadiah concludes, "The kingdom shall be Jehovah's," and Joel, "Jehovah dwelleth in Zion," these sayings are complementary and sum up the messianic doctrine at this stage, where it anticipates the reconstruction in a more glorious and perfect form of Jehovah's dominion, at present destroyed by the revolt of the subject

heathen in Palestine. There are echoes of Obadiah in Amos 9 2, 3, and especially in 9 12.

Jeremiah, who often employs the language of older prophets, bases his denunciation of Edom (ch. 49 7-22) upon this Book: in vv. 7, 9, 15, 16 the resemblance amounts almost to repetition. Admittedly, Obadiah has the precedence; but it is observed that this correspondence *stops at ver. 9* of our prophet; and Ewald, Cornill, and (seemingly) Driver accordingly distinguish between an older Obadiah, the author of vv. 1-9 (Ewald adds 10, 15, 17, 18), whom Jeremiah has copied, and a younger Obadiah writing after 587 B.C., who has republished, with additions suitable to his time, the ancient oracle against Edom. This conjecture is plausible, as it reconciles the seemingly opposite indications of the Book, but on the whole improbable, for reasons already given. Only one is tempted to think that vv. 19, 20 show the touch of a later hand. If a second author has recast the original, he has done it with skill, and the little work preserves its unity, being throughout the prophecy of *Jehovah's controversy with Edom*.

The Book of Obadiah is never quoted in the New Testament, and has been little used in the Christian Church, in consequence of its limited, Judaic bearing. But it has lain near to the

heart of the Jewish people, giving, as it does, a strong and clear expression to the hope of "recompense for the controversies of Zion." The Rabbis have several curious legends and fancies about the author; and they have translated his Edom into *Rome* (comp. the symbolic use of *Babylon* in the Apocalypse), and subsequently Edomites into *Christians*! They solaced themselves with the words of Obadiah under the *Judenhetze* of the Middle Ages. Sepharad (ver. 20: a word that is hopelessly obscure) they identified with Spain; so that the Spanish Jews, and those who follow their usage, are called the *Sephardim*, while the German and kindred Jews are the *Ashkenazim* (after Jer. 51 27).

Obadiah's closing sentence, however, lifts him quite above Jewish nationalism; it is as universal in its ultimate scope as the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." The Edom he denounced represents, in principle, the perpetual war of proud, cold-hearted worldly wisdom against the kingdom of God,—most of all when that enmity to the Church is shown, as it is sometimes shown in extreme and bitter forms, by those born of her own household. Obadiah's sadly remonstrant "Thou shouldest not" is still to be heard; and his sentence, "For violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee," is the constant



warning of the spirit of prophecy to taunting and arrogant unbelief.

The relations of Edom to Israel were so close and so deeply affected the latter people, that it is no wonder they are made conspicuous at the beginnings of written prophecy. Those relations continued until the reign of the Herods over Israel; and when the Edomite Herod the Great, as king of the Jews, sought to kill the infant Christ, the envy and rancour of Edom culminated in that deadly blow aimed at the Lord's Messiah. From the Christian era the Edomites have lost their distinct nationality and become merged in the Arabian people. Obadiah's prediction of disaster to Edom received a speedy fulfilment, partially at least, in the defeats inflicted on them by the Judæan king Amaziah and their renewed subjection by Uzziah (2 Kings 14 7. 22, 2 Chron. 25 11-16).

## CHAPTER VI

JOEL THE SON OF PETHUEL; ISAIAH XV, XVI.

Divergence of Opinion about Joel—Perfection of his Style—Reasons for post-exilic Date—Ascribed to the Tenth Century—Analysis of the Book—Two leading Themes—The Day of Jehovah—Outpouring of the Spirit—Joel and other Prophets—Isaiah 15, 16—Date of the Elegy upon Moab—Republished by Isaiah.

**T**HE Book of Joel (*Yo'el* = Jehovah-is-God) is entitled "The word of Jehovah that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." As to the question *where*, or *when*, that word came, there is nothing but internal evidence to show. The position of the Book in the order of the *Nebi'im*, where, notwithstanding its shortness, it ranks second of the Twelve, is a presumption in favour of its early origin. The question of the date of Joel has occasioned amongst Hebrew scholars differences of opinion so extreme that they are a reproach to criticism. "It is as if men doubted, from internal evidence, whether a work were

written in the time of William the Conqueror or in that of Cromwell, or whether the author of the *Nibelungenlied* lived with Schiller" (Pusey). But in fairness to the critics we must remember, when discussing such matters, the stationary character of Oriental speech and usage; and we must allow for the possibility that ancient pieces of literature have been rewritten and retouched by later hands, so blending the characteristics of different eras. Some critics place Joel in the tenth century before Christ (Bunsen, Pearson),<sup>1</sup> while others with equal confidence refer him to the age of Nehemiah and Malachi in the fifth or fourth century (Duhm, Merx,<sup>2</sup> W. R. Smith, Cornill); a few writers make this Book as late as the reign of Artaxerxes III (350 B.C.), or even as the Maccabees. And almost every period between these extremes has been pitched upon by one historical critic or another for the date of this remarkable Book.

It is generally admitted that Joel appeared either very early or very late amongst the

<sup>1</sup> Dr W. L. Pearson, an American scholar, has written an able and careful monograph (Leipzig, 1885), in which he argues that Joel prophesied soon after the invasion of Judah by the Egyptian king Shishak.

<sup>2</sup> A. Merx is the author of the most complete critical work on Joel, *Die Prophetie des Joel und ihre Ausleger* (1879). Most of the recent discussions are greatly influenced by Merx's work.

*Nebi'im*. Bitter as the author is against the enemies of Zion, he knows nothing of the Syrians, Assyrians, or Chaldeans; Tyre and Sidon, the Philistines, Edom and Egypt are the objects of his wrath, while the Grecians and Sabeans appear on his horizon as distant purchasers of Palestinian slaves (chap. 3).<sup>1</sup> Joel is therefore either pre-Assyrian, or post-Chaldean. He must be earlier than Hosea and Amos, or later than Jeremiah and the Exile. And if post-exilic, it is argued that he is posterior to 445 B.C., at which time "the wall of the city" (*scil.* Jerusalem), to which he refers in 2<sup>o</sup>, was rebuilt. The relations which exist between Joel and other prophets—Amos, Zephaniah, Isaiah, Nahum, and especially Ezekiel—force the same alternative upon us. In none else of the *Nebi'im* are there found within the same space so many ideas and phrases parallel to those of other prophets. Either Joel was the forerunner of these writers, who knew and used his Book and regarded him as an "old classic"; or else we must put him down as an imitator

<sup>1</sup> The English Bible, along with the Septuagint and Vulgate, divides Joel into three chapters, instead of four as in the Hebrew. Joel 3 in the Hebrew consists of the last 5 verses (28-32) of our Joel 2; and Joel 4 in Hebrew = Joel 3 in Greek, Latin, and English.

of the antique style, the composer of a Midrash (Merx), of a "study" or exercise upon his prophetic forerunners,—an author who, as Duhm maintains,<sup>1</sup> "has scarcely a single original thought of his own, but drags down the ideas and conceptions he has borrowed from the past to the lower level of the post-exilic age," and who "has learnt by careful imitation of the best models to write a good style."

Now Duhm's and Merx's alternative is paradoxical; it is impossible to read Joel in this way. If there is any writing in the Old Testament which, more than another, has the air of freshness and spontaneity, of "antique vigour and imperativeness" (Ewald), it is just this little Book of Joel. This is one of the choicest productions of Israelite literature; it exhibits, as Driver says of the Elijah-Elisha narratives in the Books of Kings current in the ninth and eighth centuries, "the ease and grace and vividness which belong to the best style" of Old Testament composition. Riehm declares—and there was no better judge of Hebrew style—that "the Book of Joel is amongst the most perfect pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Die Theologie der Propheten* (1875), pp. 276, 323, 324. Duhm's work is of great originality and value, though somewhat viewy and arbitrary. It was the first attempt to give a constructive account of the Prophets upon a critical basis.

phetical writings. Its language is copious, rhetorical, and full of poetical fire, pure and classical throughout. Its movement of thought is orderly, its descriptions vivid and pictorial, its rhythm and parallelism regular.”<sup>1</sup> Now these are not the signs of a second-hand, second-rate composer, an artificial Midrash scribe. Joel is, as much as Amos, the prophet-preacher; his periods move with the swing and glow of the popular orator, and his pen has learnt its style from a practised tongue. Certainly Joel’s Hebrew was not the common Jewish speech of the fifth or fourth century. One hesitates on such a point in face of the adverse judgement of scholars like Drs A. B. Davidson<sup>2</sup> and Driver; but to make Joel a contemporary of Malachi and Nehemiah seems to us a literary anachronism. Hitzig was a revolutionary biblical critic, but his “fine linguistic sense” compelled him to agree with Ewald and Delitzsch as to the early origin of Joel. Pearson well says, touching the relation of Joel to his fellow-prophets, that “it is due to this old classic style and old classic thought,

<sup>1</sup> *Einleitung in das alte Testament* (Halle, 1890), ii. 38. Riehm represents the moderate and more spiritual school of Old Testament criticism. This posthumous work of his we have found highly informing and luminous.

<sup>2</sup> *Expositor*, 3rd series, vii. 198.

with a genuine prophetic tone, that nearly every other prophet freely draws upon him.”<sup>1</sup> Instead of being a mosaic formed of fragments from other *Nebi'im*, Joel has served as a model for the rest.

The words of ch. 3 2 do seem, on the face of them, to demand a post-exilic date :

I will gather all the nations,  
 And will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat ;  
 And I will there contend with them at law,  
 For My people and for My heritage, Israel ;  
     Whom they have scattered amongst the nations,  
 —And My land they have divided.

Driver says : “ The strong expressions here used respecting the dispersion of Israel among the nations, and the allotment of the Holy Land to new occupants, cannot fairly be referred to any calamity less than that of the Babylonian captivity.”<sup>2</sup> But the calamities suffered by the

<sup>1</sup> P. 109, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to the Literature of the O.T.* (4th ed.), p. 290. The case for the later date of Joel is also ably stated by W. R. Smith in the Article *Joel* in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th ed.) ; and by Dean Farrar in his *Minor Prophets* (Men of the Bible Series). The view here adopted is maintained, with great effect, in Lecture III of Kirkpatrick's *Doctrine of the Prophets*.

Israelites in the ninth century are often underrated. The Kingdom of the Ten Tribes then lost the entire trans-Jordanic region, and Samaria itself was all but captured by the Syrians (2 Kings 6, 10<sup>32, 33</sup> 13<sup>3-7</sup>). Edom in the south and the Philistines in the west rose against Judah; its territory was reduced; Jerusalem itself on one occasion suffered pillage; the Southern kingdom, as well as the Northern, was brought into the direst straits (2 Kings 8<sup>18-22</sup> 12<sup>17, 18</sup>). Through these disastrous wars a great number of Israelites must have gone into captivity, and the neighbouring markets had again and again been glutted with Jewish slaves: what else can Amos mean when he denounces in turn the Philistines and the Phœnicians for “delivering up *a full captivity* to Edom”? (1<sup>6, 9</sup>; comp. Joel 3<sup>1-8</sup>). Besides, the phrase rendered “bring again the captivity” (ver. 1) has a wider meaning, and signifies rather to “give a new turn,” to “restore prosperity” (comp. 2<sup>14</sup>).<sup>1</sup> The promise Joel gives is suitable to a time of peril and distress, such as that of the middle of the ninth century, when the surrounding heathen

<sup>1</sup> See Pearson's *Prophecy of Joel*, pp. 58-60, and Gesenius' *Handwörterbuch* (12th ed., by Buhl), s. v. שְׁבוּת—derived from שׁוּב, not שִׁבָּה.



powers appeared to be closing in upon the Israelites on all sides and their national existence was at stake. To such a crisis of imminent danger, rather than to a period of long continued exile or subjection, the prayer of ch. 2<sup>17</sup> belongs:

O spare, Jehovah, Thy people,  
And do not give Thy heritage to reproach,  
That the heathen should rule over them:  
Wherefore should they say amongst the peoples, Where  
is their God?

The people are now experiencing, with keen humiliation, a foretaste of the miseries of foreign dominion and banishment.

Another objection, of much less force, to the early date of the Book, lies in the absence of detailed reference to national sins. "Joel, unlike the early prophets, is entirely silent—except in the way of distant allusion—as to the *wickedness* of either Judah or Israel. No prophet dwells so little on moral considerations."<sup>1</sup> Why, then, is "the day of Jehovah" so "terrible"? why the universal call to repentance (2 11-14)? And what do the prophet's warm assurances of Jehovah's mercy mean, except that the Israelites have deeply sinned and are con-

<sup>1</sup> Farrar's *Minor Prophets*, pp. 106, 107.

scious of their sin? <sup>1</sup> When God says to the people,

Return unto Me <sup>2</sup> with all your heart,  
 Even with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.  
 And rend your heart, and not your garments,  
 And return unto Jehovah your God,—

He charges them with *departing from Him*, just as much as if it were added, as in Hos. 14 1, "For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Though Joel does not in this single prophecy define the sins of his people, words could hardly express a livelier sense of sin than those he addresses to them. It is surprising, too, that the division between Judah and Israel should be unnoticed by a prophet of the ninth century; but one can hardly say where, in Joel's extant chapters, one would expect to find this mentioned. There is no argument more often fallacious than the *argumentum ex silentio*. Joel's purview, like that of Obadiah, is very limited; he belongs to Judah and Jerusalem, where "Jehovah dwells in the midst of Israel" (2<sup>27</sup> 3<sup>21</sup>); and his heart is full of the distress from

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 13 is strikingly parallel to Ex. 34 6, which belongs (on the critical analysis) to the older narrators,—a declaration of Jehovah's merciful character, following on the apostasy in the matter of the golden calf.

<sup>2</sup> עָרַב יָבוֹא, a rare and emphatic idiom, found in the like connexion in Hos. 14 2, Isa. 19 22, Amos 4 6 ff.: "Return right back to Me."

which his own people are suffering, and of the glorious certainty that salvation will come to Zion.

The absence, moreover, of any reference to the *king and nobles* is a feature of the Book of Joel in which it differs markedly from the prophetic Books of the eighth century. On the contrary, the *priests* are here much in evidence, and the author dreads the cessation through famine of the daily offering in the temple: see 1 9. 13 2 14. 17. It was these peculiarities which led Credner<sup>1</sup> first to propose for the epoch of Joel the early part of the reign of Joash in Judah (B.C. 837–820), before the death of the high priest Jehoiada (see the chronological table given on p. 77), and before the conquests of Hazael in South Palestine (2 Kings 12 17. 18), for Syria is not enumerated amongst the enemies of Judah by Joel. This date has been adopted by a large number of modern scholars, including Ewald, Hitzig, Riehm, Delitzsch, Schrader, Kirkpatrick. The priestly interregnum that occurred during the minority of Joash furnishes the situation implied in Joel.

The interruption of the daily sacrifice at the chief sanctuary would, however, have been a calamity of evil omen at any time; the prophet's alarm and his call to the priests to mourn on this account are no proof of post-exilic sacerdotalism.

<sup>1</sup> *Der Prophet Joel* (1831).

Isa. 1 10-15 shows that zeal for the temple ritual had long been prevalent in Jerusalem; the false ceremonialism condemned by Isaiah was probably a corruption of the purer devotion which characterised Jehoiada's administration a hundred years before.

If Joel is priestly in his sympathies, he is at the same time strongly *military*, like the soldier-priest Jehoiada. His mind, resembling that of Nahum, is full of images of battle. He describes the coming of the locust plague in ch. 2 under the figure of an invading army, and with such graphic effect that many good commentators have read him as picturing the invaders as locusts rather than the locusts as invaders!<sup>1</sup> The great judgement on the nations is depicted in ch. 3 9-17, with vivid realism, under the image of an unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem. Such language is natural when addressed by the orator to a war-

<sup>1</sup> This is the *allegorical*, as opposed to the literal interpretation of Joel's "locusts"; it was adopted by the Targumist, Jerome, Luther, Grotius, Hengstenberg, and many others. Merx holds an *apocalyptic* theory, making out both the "locusts" and the "army" to be symbols of the mysterious ultimate foes of the Divine kingdom, like the "locusts" of Rev. 97. Pusey, in the elaborate introduction to Joel in his Commentary on *The Minor Prophets*, develops less clearly a similar view. But this hypothesis is artificial and needless. The prophet is a poet and an orator, and his language is highly wrought and highly coloured; but there is no mistaking his grief, in ch. 1, over the burnt-up fields and ruined crops, the famished and perishing cattle.

like people of high prowess, such as the Israelites still were in the ninth century; but it is inappropriate to the post-exilic times, when Judah was a weak, disarmed province of the Persian Empire.

Nor do we find anything unhistorical, for the ninth century, in the reference of ch. 3<sup>s</sup> to "the sons of Javan" as purchasers of Judæan prisoners from "Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia." Already the Greeks were contesting the supremacy of the Phœnicians in the Eastern Mediterranean. Early in the next century a single city, Miletus, established her colonies at Sinopé in the Euxine to command the Assyrian trade and at the Canopian mouth of the Nile for the Egyptian trade. Ionian merchantmen and pirate-ships must have been familiar objects on the coast of Palestine at this time. The point of Joel's allusion lies in the fact that the Greeks were a far-distant people: "Ye sold them to the sons of Javan, to remove them far from their border," like "the Sabeans (of South Arabia), a nation far-off" in the opposite direction, to whom the children of the Philistines and Tyrians are to be sold by way of retaliation (3<sup>s</sup>). The Greeks had an old maritime connexion with the Philistines, through which, in fact, the name *Palestine* has passed into the speech of Europe.

The resentment against Egypt expressed in 3<sup>19</sup> is the chief reason urged by those who refer

this prophecy to the era of Rehoboam in the tenth century B.C. Judæa was then conquered and Jerusalem captured and spoiled by Shishak (1 Kings 14<sup>25-28</sup>, 2 Chron. 12), and the Edomites were associated with the Egyptians at this time in enmity to the Judæan throne (1 Kings 11<sup>14-22</sup>), much as they appear in Joel. We have no record of any later injury inflicted by Egypt, until the time of the defeat of Josiah and subjugation of his kingdom by Pharaoh Necho in the year 610. If Joel preached in the reign of Joash, he is either recalling the sufferings of his people from Shishak's conquest a century before; or else (and this seems to us more likely) the Egyptians were concerned in the destructive attack of "the Philistines, and the Arabians which are beside the Ethiopians," who plundered Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoram about twenty years previously to the date supposed (2 Chron. 21<sup>16, 17</sup>: see p. 100), and the old antipathy against Egypt had been thus reawakened. The Philistines were often allied with Egypt. The revolt of Libnah, mentioned at this time in 2 Kings 8<sup>22</sup>, was probably connected with the Philistine war of Jehoram's reign; and the rising of Edom against Judah was simultaneous with this.

Having now determined, so far as we are able, the epoch and situation of the prophecy of Joel,

we proceed to analyse its contents. The Book consists of two main discourses: (A) *The summons to repentance*, chs. 1<sup>2</sup>–2<sup>17</sup>, in view of the approaching “day of Jehovah,” of which the plague of locusts now devastating the land is an omen; (B) delivered after some interval, *The assurance of mercy* for Jehovah’s people, to be realised in the restored prosperity of the land, in the universal outpouring of the Spirit of God, and in the advent of the day of Jehovah as a day of vengeance and destruction for Israel’s heathen enemies. Such is the general course of the prophet’s thought, which is skilfully and impressively disposed. He proceeds from the memory of the old men to the most distant future (1<sup>2</sup> 3<sup>20</sup>), from the drunkards that miss their wine to the priests and their empty altars (1<sup>5</sup>. 9. 13), from the blessings of “corn and wine and oil” to that of the outpoured Spirit of Jehovah (2<sup>19-24</sup>. 28. 29), from the punishment of Philistine and Tyrian slave-dealers to the vengeance impending over all the heathen foes of Jehovah (3<sup>3-8</sup>. 9-14).

#### THE TITLE OF THE PROPHECY, 1 1.

##### A. *The summons to repentance*, 1<sup>2</sup>–2<sup>17</sup>.

Three successive calls, each more peremptory than the last, the second and third commencing with the words, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion”!

1. The prophet describes the ravages of the locusts and the drought, and calls the different classes of the people to mourning, bidding the priest *proclaim a fast and public assembly*, because this calamity betokens *the day of Jehovah*, ch. 1 2-20.

2. The locust plague again depicted, as Jehovah's invading and besieging army, being *a foretaste and type of His terrible day*: the people are therefore solemnly called to repentance, 21-14.

3. The two previous calls are gathered up into a *final, universal summons*; and the prophet dictates the prayer that the priests shall use, 215-17.

Ch. 2<sup>18</sup> is the historical link between the two addresses, and the turning point of the prophecy. "Then was Jehovah jealous for His land, and had pity on His people" (R.V.). It implies that the call to repentance had been obeyed, and probably signs of relenting on Jehovah's part had appeared in the falling rain (ver. 23).

B. *The promise of deliverance to Jehovah's people*, chs. 2<sup>19</sup>—3<sup>21</sup>.

(a) On its positive side, in blessing bestowed on Israel, 2<sup>19</sup>-3<sup>2</sup>.

1. The land will recover prosperity, through *the removal of the locusts*<sup>1</sup> and the abundant rains, causing thanksgiving to Jehovah, 2<sup>19</sup>-27.

<sup>1</sup> "The northerner," ver. 20, is an obscure and possibly corrupt expression. The locusts do not invade Judæa from that quarter. By some shifting of the wind, they may, however, have so travelled on this occasion. See Ewald's *Prophets of the O. T.* i, p. 141.



2. This will be followed by *the pouring out of God's Spirit* on all ages and classes of the people, vv. 28-32.

(b) On its negative side, in destruction coming on heathen foes, ch. 3.

1. The recompense of those who had plundered and enslaved God's people,<sup>1</sup> vv. 1-8.

2. The summons of all the surrounding heathen to assault Jerusalem, that they may be annihilated in the valley of Jehoshaphat, vv. 9-17.

3. The rich prosperity then coming to Judah, in contrast with the desolation of Egypt and Edom, vv. 18-21.

Conclusion: *And Jehovah dwelleth in Zion.*

The two main prophetic themes of Joel are *the day of the Lord* and *the promise of the Spirit*.

(1) "The day—the day of Jehovah—that day" rings through the whole of this Book, like the tolling of some great bell that warns of the hour of doom. And this note, which Joel is the first

<sup>1</sup> The word rendered "plead" in 3:2 signifies to "contend at law," as in 1 Sam. 12:7, Isa. 43:26, Jer. 25:31, Ezek. 20:35, 36, 38:22. There is a fine paronomasia (play upon words) in Joel's Hebrew at this point, *yeho-shaphat ve-nishpat-ti*. Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah hath judged," and to "plead" or "go to law" is in Hebrew derived from the verb *shaphat*, to judge. "The valley of Jehoshaphat," the exact locality of which is not known—probably near Jerusalem—was the scene of a splendid victory of this king over the combined Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites (2 Chr. 20), of which the people of Judah in Joel's time had a lively remembrance. This spot he makes the scene of the final overthrow of the heathen.

to strike in Scripture (if our view of his epoch is correct), resounds through all subsequent revelation; in Amos, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Malachi we shall hear it loudly again; and New Testament prophecy takes up the strain, which reaches its finale in the awful voices and thunderings of the Apocalypse. Very possibly, this watchword had been uttered by some earlier voice than Joel's; but he makes it entirely his own. Joel rightly saw a token of some mysterious, crushing judgement on the world-nations known to him, in the crisis of the ninth century, in the concurrence of natural calamity and political disaster which had then reduced his people to so low a state of fortune. The first discourse reveals this judgement as about to settle with fatal effect on the Judæan people. But in the second discourse we find that for them the clouds have parted and a brighter sky once more appears; their repentance wins the promise of rich material and spiritual blessings, while the storm passes over to the surrounding heathen lands, to pour itself with added fury on those who have cruelly wronged Jehovah's people and wasted His heritage.

The day of the Lord exhibits in Joel its simplest and earliest character: it is *the day of Israel's deliverance*, and of *the punishment of its heathen*

*enemies.* In substance, this is nothing more than what is celebrated in the genuine Davidic Psalm 18. And although the *king* does not appear in Joel's picture of the judgement, yet this is a truly messianic prophecy, as it concerns the establishment of Jehovah's kingdom and the ultimate realisation for the whole world of that which David's conquests symbolised to the inspired Israelite imagination. The naïve combination of natural and supernatural blessing—of mountains dripping with wine and souls filled with the Spirit—belongs to primitive thought and feeling.

There are two stages in the judgement on the heathen, as Joel sees it. It is (*a*) a retaliation, or punishment in kind, coming on the Tyrians and Philistines who have dealt in Judæan slaves;<sup>1</sup> and (*b*) a universal destruction coming on the surrounding heathen peoples (amongst which Egypt and Edom appear in chief), summoned by Jehovah in irony to make war on Jerusalem, that He may destroy them there by His "mighty ones" (311), when they gather in "the valley of Jehoshaphat" like a harvest ripe for the sickle, like a

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 3s indicates the callous indifference and contempt with which these unhappy captives were treated by the licentious traffickers, when "a boy was given for a harlot's price" and "a girl sold" for the "wine" that would furnish a carouse.

full winepress ready for the feet of the treaders, or a threshing-floor heaped with sheaves over which the sledge is driven (vv. 12-14).

Let them bestir themselves and go up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,—all the nations ;

For there shall I sit to judge all the nations round about.

Thrust in the sickle, for ripe is the harvest !

Come, tread ye, for full is the winepress !

The vats do swim,—for great is their wickedness. Crowds upon crowds in the valley of the threshing-wain !

For near is the day of Jehovah in the valley of the threshing-wain.

This idea of a last conclusive battle between Israel and the united heathen forces reappears again and again in eschatological prophecy ; it is reproduced in St John's field of Armageddon, Rev. 16<sup>16</sup> ; see also 19<sup>11-21</sup> 20<sup>7-10</sup>. The experience of Joel's time gave to this oracle its original shape, namely, that of a siege of Jerusalem, and suggested the valley of Jehoshaphat for the scene of the supreme conflict. In this instance we can clearly distinguish between the temporal form of prophecy, which changes from one period to another and at last falls away, and its abiding substance of truth,—viz. the conception of a decisive duel between the powers of good and evil, the kingdoms of God and Satan in this

world, which is to close the course of history. The spirit of prophecy has foreseen the end from the beginning; its Alpha is also its Omega. It is true of the Books of the Prophets, as it is with the Epistles of St Paul and the New Testament writings, that eschatology comes in the history of doctrine both first and last.

The thought of the inviolability of Zion and Jehovah's abiding presence there is closely connected with Joel's doctrine of the Last Things, and indeed springs out of it; just as St John's vision of the New Jerusalem follows upon his vision of the final conflict between Christ and Satan. In Joel also, as in Amos 9 8-10, we find the beginning of Isaiah's doctrine of the saved "remnant": see ch. 2 32.

(2) Before "the great and terrible day of Jehovah come," our prophet foresees an *outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh*. In his immediate prevision, "all flesh" does not signify more than all ages and all ranks of Israelites. The Christian fulfilment, beginning with the day of Pentecost when St Peter quoted this prophecy with marvellous aptness and effect, has widened the promise far beyond its primary scope. Here, again, it is easy to separate the Israelitish garb from the spiritual principle and germ of the great prediction. Joel is thinking probably of

the wish of Moses, related in Num. 11<sup>29</sup>: "Would God that all the people of Jehovah were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!"<sup>1</sup> He belonged, moreover, to a generation familiar with the story of Elijah and Elisha and their marvellous spiritual powers, and when the schools carried on by these great leaders had caused a multiplication and wide diffusion of prophetic gifts of various kinds. Here we have the fitting background for this unique prophecy of Joel.

The promise of the Spirit is not taken up by Joel's successors like that of the day of the Lord. Only in Ezek. 11<sup>19</sup> 36<sup>25-32</sup> 37<sup>14</sup> (the prophecy of "the dry bones"), and 39<sup>29</sup>, is it expressly repeated; but Ezekiel gives to it a different setting and application. He sees the fulfilment at a distance, coming after Israel's banishment of which Joel knows nothing, and attending her restoration; so that the blessings of the cornfield and orchard follow upon, instead of preceding as with Joel, this gift of the Spirit. With Ezekiel, therefore, it is emphatically a "*new spirit*"—"My Spirit," says Jehovah (comp. the "new heart and

<sup>1</sup> The story of the prophesying of Eldad and Medad belongs to the Jehovistic narrative, which the critics refer to the ninth or tenth century. There is a like correspondence between Joel 2<sup>13</sup> and Ex. 34<sup>6</sup>.

right spirit" of Ps. 51)—that God gives; whereas Joel thinks of the supernatural effects rather than the moral quality of the Spirit to be bestowed on God's people; he sees them all turned into prophets and "full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, even of judgement and might" (Mic. 3s). Thus Joel's prophecy of the Spirit stands in immediate connexion with the doctrine of the day of Jehovah. In Zech. 12<sup>10</sup> we shall find the promise of the Spirit presented in a third form, intermediate between that of Joel and Ezekiel. Besides those already noticed (see, for Obadiah, p. 90), the following are interesting parallels between Joel and other prophets:—

Comp. Joel	1 4 2 25	with Amos	4 9
"	2 2	" "	5 18-20
"	3 16	" "	1 2, Hos. 11 10
"	3 18	" "	9 13
"	1 10. 18	" Hos.	4 3 9 2
"	2 23	" "	6 3
"	1 15	" Isa.	13 6. 9
"	2 10. 31	" "	13 10
"	3 11. 16	" "	13 3. 13
"	2 9	" "	33 4
"	2 26. 27	" "	45 5. 17
"	3 1. 2. 6. 7	" "	66 16. 18-20
"	3 10	" "	2 4, Mic. 4 3
"	3 11. 12. 15	" "	3 4 1-4
"	3 16	" "	42 13, Hag. 2 6. 21
"	2 17	" Mic.	7 10 (also Ps. 42 3. 10 79 10)

Comp. Joel	2 6	with	Nah.	2 10
”	3 3	”	”	3 10 and Obad. 11
”	2 1. 2. 11. 31	”	Zeph.	1 14. 15
”	1 11. 18	”	Jer.	1 43-6
”	1 13	”	”	4 8
”	1 15 2 11. 31	”	”	3 07
”	3 11. 16	”	”	25 30. 31
”	1 15 2 1. 11 3 14	”	Ezek.	3 02. 3
”	2 3	”	”	36 35
”	2 27 3 2. 16	”	”	38 18-23 39 21-29
”	3 18	”	”	47 1-12
”	3 19. 20	”	”	36 1-15
”	2 18	”	Zech.	1 14
”	3 17. 21	”	”	8 3
”	3 18	”	”	14 8
”	2 11	”	Mal.	3 2
”	2 13. 14	”	Jonah	3 9 4 2
”	1 6 2 4. 5 3 17	”	Rev.	9 7-9 21 27

### ISAIAH XV, XVI.

We may notice at this point the “utterance concerning Moab” which Isaiah has incorporated in his oracles against the nations. The epilogue, vv. 13, 14, says, in quite Isaianic language: “This is the word that Jehovah hath spoken concerning Moab in time past. But now Jehovah hath spoken saying,

Within three years, as the years of an hireling,  
 And the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt,  
 with all that multitude;  
 And the remnant shall be small exceedingly—of no  
 account.”



So far as these words go, Isaiah might himself have uttered the above prophecy "in time past"; but the political situation indicated is not that of Isaiah's time, and "the style of these chapters is about as unlike Isaiah's as it well could be" (Cheyne), being altogether of a ruder and stiffer kind, though full of pathos and poetic feeling. The piece is not so much a prophecy as an *elegy* over the calamity of the Moabite people. Their land has been suddenly entered by a ruthless invader; their fields are ravaged, their cities stormed; the people are in flight southwards, taking refuge in Edomite territory (like the Judæans under the Philistines and Arabian invasion of Joram's time, Obad. 12-14; comp. Isa. 16 1-5)<sup>1</sup>, which appears at present to be under the rule of Zion, where "a throne has been set up in mercy, and there sits upon it in faithfulness, in the tent of David, one that judges and is diligent in justice and versed in righteousness"<sup>2</sup> (16 5). To this ruler the prayer of the Moabite refugees is addressed,

<sup>1</sup> Here we should read, according to the ancient versions and R. V. margin, "Let Moab's outcasts dwell with thee, be thou a covert to him," etc.

<sup>2</sup> The verbs appear to be *perfect*, describing the actual rule (so Delitzsch, Orelli, and others): such a government may reasonably be asked to shelter the fugitives of Moab, who have been first exhorted in vv. 1. 2 to make their submission to

and to him they are bidden in ver. 1 to "send the lambs"—the accustomed Moabite tribute (2 Kings 34)—"from Sela (Petra) over the desert to the mountain of Zion," so putting themselves under the protection of David's throne.

No such juncture as this occurred in Isaiah's lifetime; nor is any other occasion so suitable as that adopted by many critics since Ewald and Hitzig, namely, the epoch of Moab's reconquest by Jeroboam II of Israel (*c.* 780 B.C.), when Edom had been also reconquered by Judah and the powerful Uzziah reigned at Jerusalem; see 2 Kings 11 14<sup>25</sup>, 2 Chron. 25, 26. "Jonah, the son of Amittai," predicted Jeroboam's victories, and this poem has therefore been conjecturally assigned to him; but the poet's sympathies are with the defeated rather than the attacking party, who is not mentioned by name; and it is Judah's, not Israel's, protection that the Moabites are urged to seek. From the Jonah of 2 Kings we should have expected language of a different tenor.

Whoever the writer was, his temper towards Moab is compassionate and not revengeful; like

David's throne. This, however, is rare praise for a reigning Judæan king, and resembles the ideal of Isa. 11; comp. Pss. 45 and 72.

the mild sentiment of Obadiah towards Edom, his attitude marks a comparatively early period in the history of these times, before the deep exasperation manifest in the later prophets had taken possession of the Israelite mind; Isa. 25<sup>10</sup> affords a striking contrast with chs. 15, 16 in this respect. The author shows a minute and, as it proves, a very exact acquaintance with the topography of the land of Moab. It is curious to observe that seven of the place-names mentioned here, some of them found only in these two documents, occur in the celebrated Moabite stone,—a monument inscribed by King Mesha about the year 850. The language of that inscription bears out also the prophet's reproach against the "arrogancy and pride" of Moab (16<sup>6</sup>), and illustrates the devotion of this people to their national god Kemosh (ver. 12; comp. 2 Kings 3<sup>27</sup>, Num. 21<sup>29</sup>, Jer. 48<sup>46</sup>). Jeremiah freely used Isa. 15, 16 in denouncing Moab: see ch. 48.

At the time when Isaiah republished this oracle, handed down to him seemingly from the last generation, Assyria was the expected oppressor; and Moab was destined to share, perhaps exceptionally, with the other States of Palestine in the miseries of the Assyrian invasion. The language and colouring of the older prophet have been carefully preserved by the

younger one, who has played the part of a loyal editor.

If the elegy upon Moab was composed at the date we have suggested, it comes in point of time between Joel and Amos and belongs to the close of the pre-Assyrian age, to the period when the observation of the prophets was still fixed on the small heathen States incorporated once in David's kingdom, which surrounded their people in the Holy Land, and before the national horizon was extended by contact with the great Mesopotamian empire. This ancient lamentation and appeal, addressed as much to Moab as to Judah, is a fitting pendant to the prophecies of Obadiah and Joel, concerned as these are with Israel and its neighbours in the middle age of the divided monarchy. The prophecy falls into three sections :

1. The lament over the destruction of the Moabite land and people (ch. 15).

2. The advice to Moab, to put itself under the shield of the son of David (16:1-5). [Here is a touch of the messianic strain.]

3. The pride of Moab which, notwithstanding, will bring upon it utter ruin (vv. 6-12).

Isaiah's epilogue (vv. 13-14). He reaffirms the elder prophecy, announcing a new fulfilment "within three stipulated years."

## THE ASSYRIAN-ISRAELITE AGE

B.C.	Kings of Judah.	Kings of Israel.	Leading Events.
792	Accession of UZZIAH (or Azariah): reconquers Philistia and Edom.	J E H O A S H reigning at Samaria.	Elisha recently dead. Syria defeated by Israel. Raman-nirari III (811-782), king of Assyria.
790	...	J E R O B O A M II: conquers Moab and Syria.	Jonah prophesies (2 Kings 14 <sup>25</sup> ). Original date of Isa. 151-1612 (?).
790-750	Prosperous state of both the Israelite kingdoms.		...
776	...	...	First Greek Olympiad.
753	...	End of the Jehuite dynasty in	Founding of the city of Rome.
749	Uzziah latterly a leper; Jotham regent.	Z E C H A R I A H (six months).	Civil war and anarchy: rapid decline of Israel after death of Jeroboam II (Hos. 7 <sup>3-7</sup> , Zech. 11 <sup>8</sup> ).
748	...	S H A L L U M (one month).	...
,,	...	M E N A H E M.	About this time Shalman king of Moab (Hos. 10 <sup>14</sup> ).
745-727	...	...	TIGLATH-PILESER II (or Pul, 2 Kings 15 <sup>19. 29</sup> ) restores the Assyrian Empire.
742-739	...	Tributary to Assyria.	Invades Syria, captures Arpad and Hamath.
740	J O T H A M.	...	...

B.C.	Kings of Judah.	Kings of Israel.	Leading Events.
737	...	PEKAHIAH, murdered by	...
735	...	PEKAH.	REZIN, king of Damascus, defeats Pekah; they join to attack Judah; are suddenly arrested by the Assyrians, who overrun Syria and Palestine.
734	AHAZ: Judah desolated by Syrians. Philistines revolt. Ahaz a vassal of Assyria.	Galilee and Gilead desolated by the Assyrians; first captivity of the Israelites.	Gaza captured by Assyrians.
732	...	HOSHEA:	Fall of Damascus (2 Kings 169).
728	HEZEKIAH: restores the military power of Judah.	Rules over country of Ephraim alone.	Rise of powerful Ethiopian dynasty (25th) in Egypt under Shabaku (So, 2 Kings 174).
727-722	Reformation of worship in Judah.	...	SHALMANESER IV, king of Assyria, invades Syria; lays siege to Tyre and Samaria; foiled at Tyre.
724-722	...	Siege and fall of Samaria: second Israelite captivity (2 Kings 17).	SARGON II ascends the throne of Assyria.

## CHAPTER VII

## AMOS OF TEKOA

Undisputed Date of Amos—Amos and Hosea—Prosperity of Israel—Decay of Religion—Overthrow of the Nation determined—A corrupt Aristocracy—High Ceremonialism—Baalite Impurity—Personality of Amos—His Literary Power—A Prophet of the Majesty of God—His large Humanity—Influence upon later Prophets—Construction of his Book.

WE take the Assyrian period in prophecy to commence with Amos. For although this prophet never mentions Assyria by name, and though at the time of his appearance the two Israelite kingdoms enjoyed a rare degree of prosperity and power, and the Assyrian Empire was less threatening to its Western neighbours than it had been for eighty years past, the shadow of coming events had fallen deeply on the spirit of Amos; he foresees the certain and utter ruin of the kingdom of Samaria, and definitely predicts Israel's captivity (5<sup>27</sup> 6<sup>14</sup>).

It is a great satisfaction that we find our-

selves standing, at this important juncture for Israel and the ancient world, upon firm and uncontested historical ground. In "the words of Amos, which he saw concerning Israel," we have a book of certain date and (with the exception of a few minor passages) a book of unquestionable authenticity. Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah in the eighth century; Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah in the seventh century; Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah for the sixth, and Malachi for the fifth century, have left us an extensive and largely continuous body of writing whose genuineness is admitted on all hands. Here we have a ridge of solid rock to build upon, a fixed basis and starting-point for the appreciation of the Old Testament at large and the reconstruction of Israelite history. These central documents have a part to play in the locating and verifying of their companion Scriptures, similar to that which has fallen to the four major Epistles of St Paul in the higher criticism of the New Testament. Amongst these *homologumena* of the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Amos occupies a primary place.

Amos and Hosea are closely associated by their writings, although we have no record of any personal connexion between the two men. They were both prophets of the Assyrian crisis and



the decline of Israel; and both of them were men of surpassing power, in gifts of expression as well as in religious thought and inspiration, whilst singularly contrasted in their temperament and personal history. Together, Amos and Hosea stand out amongst the most clearly cut and most commanding figures in the course of revelation.

Amos proclaims himself a successor of Joel in his opening words:

Jehovah will thunder out of Zion,  
And from Jerusalem will give forth His voice,

—a couplet borrowed from the close of Joel's Book (3 16), but to which, as it is with Joel's conception of "the day of Jehovah" (Amos 5 18-20 and 8 9: comp. Joel 1 15 2 2. 10. 30-32 3 13-21), the new prophet, living in a worse time, gives an altered and very ominous significance. The voice which in Joel thundered against the heathen foes of penitent Israel, now sounds in dreadful anger against Israel herself. In this first sentence Amos strikes the note, equally severe and lofty, which is sustained throughout his Book. The words of ch. 1 6. 9, moreover, recall the denunciation of the neighbouring heathen in Joel. 3 1-8 (comp. Obad. 10. 11. 20); and ch. 9 13-15 distinctly reminds us of Joel 3 1. 18. 20.

In the fifty years that elapsed between Joel

and Amos, the condition of Israel in both kingdoms had greatly improved in outward respects. The tide of Syrian victory was at last turned by Jehoash, the grandson of Jehu, about the beginning of the eighth century (2 Kings 13<sup>14-19</sup> 25); his son, Jeroboam II, actually conquered Damascus and made it a subject city, extending his rule "from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah" (the Dead Sea: 2 Kings 14<sup>25</sup>), including the regions of Southern Syria and of Moab in addition to the proper territory of the Ten Tribes. Meanwhile, Amaziah and Uzziah had retrieved the position of Judah by a succession of victories over the Edomites and Philistines, and the sceptre of David was again swayed over a wide dominion, from the Mediterranean coast to the port of Elath on the eastern arm of the Red Sea (2 Kings 14<sup>7</sup> 22, 2 Chron. 25<sup>5-12</sup> 26<sup>1-15</sup>). The rule of Zion had thus completely recovered from the feebleness into which it sank after the death of Jehoshaphat, although it suffered one severe check in the humiliating defeat which Amaziah provoked his rival Jehoash of Israel to inflict upon him (2 Kings 14<sup>8-14</sup>). Their successors, Uzziah and Jeroboam II, wisely kept the peace; and during the long period of their joint reigns the country enjoyed a security unknown since the times of Solomon.

Israel was again mistress in her own land; the surrounding heathen who had harried and wasted her in the days of Obadiah and Joel, were under her feet. Assyria, which had defeated Benhadad of Damascus and Ahab at Karkar as far back as 854 B.C., and at the close of the ninth century seemed on the point of completing the conquest of Western Asia, just at this epoch fell into extreme weakness, while Egypt counted for little better than a cypher with the statesmen of Palestine. When Amos made his appearance at Bethel, about the year 770,<sup>1</sup> the political horizon of Israel was unusually clear and favourable, and his gloomy vaticinations were received with the scornful indifference of men who were "at ease in Zion, and secure in the mountains of Samaria" (6 1). Amos' allusions to the luxury of Samaria (3 10. 15 6 3-6), and Isaiah's descriptions of the wealth and military pride of Jerusalem in the next genera-

<sup>1</sup> "In the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake," is the canonical and doubtless correct date of the prophecy of Amos. The earthquake of Uzziah's reign was long remembered (Zech. 14 5), but there is no means of fixing the exact time of its occurrence. Uzziah and Jeroboam II reigned side by side for the very unusual period of forty years, B.C. 790-749 (according to the revised chronology). Ewald thinks that Amos preached in "the first half of the long reign of Jeroboam II"; Driver, that "internal evidence points to the latter part" of that reign. Jeroboam and Uzziah can scarcely have com-

tion (2 7.10-17 3 16-26), imply a period of settled peace and commercial prosperity of considerable duration antecedent to the times of these prophets. In the enjoyment of its present good fortune the people had almost forgotten the calamities endured in the previous century (4 6-11).

While the secular condition of Israel both in North and South was highly flourishing, and the signs of wealth and power were everywhere visible, in morals and religion there had been a grievous decline. A change had come about since the time of Elisha and Joel, resembling that which was marked in England on the Restoration of the Stuart dynasty. The reformation of Elijah and the reaction against Baalism in the beginning of the ninth century had given at that time renewed energy to the national faith and great popular influence to the prophets. When Joel, in the reign of Joash, called the

pleted their conquests when Amos wrote chs. 13-5 39 and 62, for Damascus, Gath, and Ashdod still appear as independent powers. On the other hand, in the earliest years of Jeroboam, during the reign of Raman-nirari III at Calah, the Assyrians constantly threatened the West, and must have alarmed Palestine more than once; Calneh, too, and Hamath are spoken of by Amos as separate kingdoms,—a state of things only existing during the eclipse of Assyrian power between the times of Raman-nirari and Tiglath-Pileser, B.C. 784-745 (Maspero, *Histoire ancienne*, 4me ed., pp. 384, 385). Cornill and Kirkpatrick prefer the date 760.

Judæans to repentance, his appeal met with a genuine response; and although Joash of Jerusalem disappointed the promise of his early years and his long reign closed in disaster (2 Chron. 24), his son and grandson, Amaziah and Uzziah, "did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah": and there must have been no small fund of moral vigour in the body of the people at the commencement of this period to account for the complete recovery of the State from the prostration into which it fell under the successors of Jehoshaphat. The Northern kingdom, by far the stronger and more active of the two, and the more exposed to foreign influences, led the way in most of the changes that took place during the two centuries of the schism. It was here, therefore, that the relapse in faith and morals set in which formed so dark a counterpart to the prosperity of the age of Jeroboam II.

Prophecy itself had fallen into contempt in Northern Israel, and was suppressed, where it showed independence, by the royal power (Amos 7<sup>10-13</sup>). Elisha had found no successor. The story of Gehazi goes far to explain this, and to account for the sudden disappearance of "the sons of the prophets" from history. Popularity and power had corrupted them. When a new Elijah is

required for the Ten Tribes, the Judæan Amos must be summoned from the wilderness of Tekoa, in the south; and Amos himself, when warned off contemptuously from the royal sanctuary by the priest of Bethel, repudiates the professional character, and declares, "I am no prophet, nor prophet's son; but a herdman and a dresser of sycomore trees" (7 10-17). Hosea, who is an Israelite, stands alone amongst his countrymen; he condemns "the prophet" along with "the priest" and "the people" to destruction: not only is there "no truth, nor kindness," but "*no knowledge of God* in the land." "My people," says Jehovah, "is destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4 1-12). Later on, Isaiah, in his "Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim" (28 1-8), declares that "the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink; they reel in vision [the prophets], they stumble in judgement [the priests]." And Micah: "The heads of Jacob judge for reward, and the priests teach for hire, and *the prophets divine for money*: yet they lean upon Jehovah, saying, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us?" (Mic. 3 9-12). The leprosy of Gehazi had spread fast and far. No prophet in Northern Israel later than Elisha exerted any controlling influence on public affairs, or commanded the general respect of the people.

To this cause, in the first instance, we trace the condition of things to which Amos addresses himself. The very salt had lost its savour. From this time the true prophecy assumes a hostile position, not toward this king or that, but towards the State: it is no longer the recognised organ of the nation's theocratic life; it severs itself even from the existing religious institutions, and becomes an instrument of destruction (Hos. 6<sup>5</sup>, Isa. 6<sup>9-13</sup>); it abandons the nation to its inevitable doom, working for the formation of a new Israel upon its ruins, and gathering out of the wreck of the political fabric a "remnant for salvation," a "holy seed" that shall take root again in a purified land, when the sinners are destroyed (Isa. 1<sup>24-31</sup> 6<sup>11-13</sup>, Mic. 3<sup>12</sup>, etc.). Amos (9<sup>8-12</sup>) states in the most uncompromising terms the programme of the new, radical prophetism, which demands no mere amendment but a root-and-branch abolition of the Israelite State, while the Israelite race will be preserved for a worthier future.

Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth,—save that I will not wholly destroy the house of Jacob: it is Jehovah's oracle! For, behold, it is I that command it, purposing to shake amongst all the nations the house of Israel, like as

corn is shaken in the sieve and not a grain falleth to the ground !

By the sword shall all the sinners of My people die, those that say, The evil shall not come near nor overtake us !

So God's true wheat will be winnowed out in the sieve of war and exile from the worthless mass in which it is buried ; after this the nation will make a new start, and enter on its messianic blessedness under David's rule (vv. 11. 12) :

In that day I will restore the fallen tabernacle of David ;  
 And I will repair its rents, and its ruins I will restore,  
 And I will build it as in the days of old :  
 So that they may possess the residue of Edom,  
 And of all the nations on whom My name is named :  
 It is the oracle of Jehovah, who performeth this !

Although the kingdom of God is to take a new beginning, this regeneration is still conceived under the ancient territorial and monarchic form. The step which Amos takes in advance, as compared with the pre-Assyrian prophets,—and it is a decisive step,—is, *to pronounce definitively the overthrow of the nation.*

The infidelity of the religious leaders of Israel, priests and prophets, was the most fatal omen of the coming ruin. Still more conspicuous were the signs in Israel of social disorganisation. In the eyes of Amos *the Samaritan nobility* are the



worst offenders. He charges them with luxury, profanity, licentiousness; with heartless cruelty and fraud against the poor; with every vice that marks a corrupt and dissolute ruling class (2 6-8. 11. 12 3 9. 10. 12. 15 5 12 6 1-8 8 4-6). Since the monarchy was founded, and especially since the days of Solomon, when trading enterprise began, there had grown up a military and commercial aristocracy, which governed in a manner very different from that of the old tribal chiefs. These nobles were, in the first instance, the servants of the crown, and owed their elevation to court office and favour; but they came in the end to overshadow the throne, while they bought up the land in every direction, destroying the original settlement under Joshua, and ousting the yeoman families who had formed the strength of the population. By these means they drew into their grasping hands the wealth and resources of the country. The case of Naboth's vineyard was only an extreme instance of a process that was carried on both in North and South on a continually larger scale, and with calamitous results. This pitiless land-hunger of the Israelite capitalists Amos stigmatises with bitter irony in ch. 27: "They pant after the dust of the earth on the heads of the poor," grudging the peasant, it seems, even the handful of dust that he throws

on his head in the time of mourning.<sup>1</sup> Isaiah (5 8-10) and Micah (2 1. 2) inveigh with unmeasured indignation against this passion in the Judæan rulers. It was a characteristic of the age. The nation was ridden by a plutocracy,—a rule which history shows to be invariably fatal.

There are two passages of the prophet Amos in which the sensual court of Jeroboam is powerfully described. With his peasant garb and his rugged speech of the desert, the herdman of Tekoa thus accosts the gilded youth of Samaria (6 3-6):

You that bid the evil day begone,  
 And draw to you the seat of violence!  
 That lie down upon ivory beds,  
 And are stretched wantonly on their couches,—  
 While they feed on lambs out of the flock,  
 And on calves chosen from the stall!  
 Who chant to the sound of the harp,  
 And invent their instruments of music like David!  
 Who drink wine in bowlfuls,  
 And with choice unguents anoint themselves!  
 And they grieve not over the hurt of Joseph!

It is a picture drawn to the life, like Carlyle's of the French *noblesse* before the Revolution,—

<sup>1</sup> It should be said, however, that this interpretation is rejected by some of the best commentators, who take the words to mean simply that the Samaritan plutocrats delight to see the poor in misery. But the other explanation is more appropriate to Amos.

these curled and perfumed darlings of the royal court, drinking, feasting, lolling and trolling at their ease, while the country goes to ruin! Ch. 4<sub>1</sub> presents even a more shocking trait of demoralisation, thus delineating the unwomanly and almost brutal callousness of the fine ladies of Samaria :

Hear this word, ye *kine of Bashan*,<sup>1</sup>  
 That are in the mountains of Samaria!  
 Ye that oppress the weak,  
 That crush down the needy ;  
 That say to their lords, "Come now, fetch wine, that  
 we may drink!"

With this evil condition of public morals, gross irreligion was associated. In ch. 5<sub>26, 27</sub> certain obscure forms of idolatry are referred to,<sup>2</sup> not as

<sup>1</sup> These "kine of Bashan" are the mates of the "strong bulls of Bashan," who beset the terrified and agonised sufferer of Ps. 22<sub>12</sub>. Comp. Mic. 7<sub>14</sub>, Ezek. 39<sub>18</sub>. Bashan was the best cattle-breeding district of Palestine; and its oxen were wild and powerful and full-fed beasts.

<sup>2</sup> Schrader (*Cuneiform Inscriptions*, ii 141, 142) vocalises "Siccuth and Chiun" as "Sakkuth and Kewan," and explains the words as names of Mesopotamian deities, belonging to the Babylonian star-worship imported into Palestine at this time. Kewan is the Assyrian Ka-ai-va-nu, or Saturn. This gives point to the threat, "I will carry you captive beyond Damascus," to the region from which these new gods of the people's fancy come! Compare the conduct of Ahaz of Judah related in 2 Kings 16<sub>10-16</sub>.

practised formerly in the wilderness, but as now in vogue and cited as a reason for the threatened exile. Open heathenism was not, however, prevalent in Israel in the eighth century. On the contrary, the people professed extreme devotion to Jehovah, their national God. His worship was maintained at the ancient sanctuaries with assiduous zeal, and His feasts celebrated by large assemblies and with costly sacrifices. But this lavish worship was hypocritical; it was attended with such ignorance of Jehovah's character and utter disregard of His law, that it was in truth the most rank and hateful of the national offences against God. Thus Amos gives his ironical summons:

Come ye to Bethel,—and transgress;  
 At Gilgal multiply your transgressions!  
 And bring each morning your sacrifices,—every three  
     days your tithes!  
 And kindle incense from the leavened bread of the  
     thank-offering,  
 And proclaim your freewill offerings,—publish them  
     aloud!  
 For so you love to do, ye sons of Israel (44. 5).

The people think, as the heathen imagined of their gods, that Jehovah is “pleased with thousands of rams”; they will propitiate Him by steaming holocausts and pompous ritual,—He cannot

be severe on the misconduct of worshippers who feed His altars so richly! It is just this attempt to bribe and satiate Him, as one might do an epicurean monarch, with the pleasures of the feast, that excites the hottest anger of the God of Israel:

I hate, I scorn your feasts;  
 And I will smell no savour on your solemn days.  
 Yea, when you offer up burnt sacrifices, and your offerings of food,—I have no pleasure in them;  
 Nor will I heed the thank-offering of your fatlings!  
 Away with the noise of thy songs from My presence;  
 And the strumming of thy harps,—I will not hear it!  
 But let judgement roll along like waters, and righteousness as a perennial stream! (5<sup>21-24</sup>).

The familiar passages in which Isaiah and Micah descant upon the superiority of the ethical to the ceremonial, are only variations on this powerful and original strain of Amos. In Israel, half a century earlier, there was found the same union of "iniquity and the solemn meeting," the same "lifting up" to Jehovah of "hands full of blood" which the Judæan prophets condemned amongst their people. Comp. with the above, Am. 2 s 5 4-6 7 9 8 3. 10. 14.

A still fouler trait attaching to the popular religion is indicated by Amos, and very distinctly by Hosea. The Baalism overthrown by

Elijah and Jehu in the ninth century was never re-established; but its vile influences had reacted on Jehovism. The Baalite religious prostitution had gained a footing in the Northern Israelite shrines. So long as worship continued at the native "high places," this danger always existed; and under the forms of Jehovah's worship impure Canaanite rites were again in practice. The sanctuaries became scenes of drunken revelry and lewdness, and the feasts of Jehovah could hardly be distinguished from those of Baal and Ashtaroth (Am. 27. 8, Hos. 2 11-13. 16. 17 4 11-19 6 9. 10). Jehovah's people honoured Him with their lips, but far indeed was their heart removed from Him. His altars were heaped with victims and His courts trampled with the feet of worshippers, while His law was outraged and His character forgotten. The national religion, the old creed of Moses and Samuel, was maintained in form, but it was emptied of its ethical content.

One is surprised that Amos does not, like Hosea, condemn the idolatry of the golden calves, which the Book of Kings emphatically points to as the root of evil in the kingdom of Israel. This omission is equally marked in the story of Elijah; and the like explanation holds good in the two cases. The greater evil for the time eclipsed the less. Just as Elijah and

Elisha had to meet the question whether Baal or Jehovah should be Israel's God, Amos in his turn "was face to face with the scarcely less grave moral question, what conception Israel formed of Jehovah and His requirements."<sup>1</sup> When he predicts, however, the utter overthrow of "the altars of Bethel" (3<sub>14</sub> 5<sub>4, 5</sub>) and calls their ritual "sin" (4<sub>4</sub>), Amos' condemnation embraces surely the whole system of Samaritan worship. He does not *name* the ox-images any more than he names the Assyrians, whose coming overshadows his whole horizon. The exalted and spiritual conceptions which this prophet holds of the Lord Jehovah are the direct antithesis of those enshrined in "the calf of Samaria."

We have dealt at length with the situation on which Amos entered in his mission to Northern Israel; the prophet himself is a personality of singular interest and distinction. Amos was a son of the wilderness, like Elijah and John the Baptist, a man of granite make, stern, fearless, self-contained, of powerful, well-knit mind, vivid imagination, and lofty bearing. His native place, Tekoa', lay some miles south of Bethlehem, and gave its name to the stretch of high moorland to the north of Hebron (2 Chron. 20<sub>20</sub>). The prophet's character has been formed by a life of

<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick's *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 94, 95.

solitude and hardship, and by communion with nature in her severer and sublimer aspects. He has often watched the stars gleaming through the keen desert air and the morning rise over the mountains of Moab, or scanned the sea spreading far and dim on the western verge. "No one can read his Book without feeling that he haunted heights and lived in the face of very wide horizons. The cold wind that blows off the desert hills after sunset; through a gap the Dead Sea, with its heavy mists; beyond the gulf the range of Moab, cold and grey, till the sun leaps from behind his barrier, and in a moment the world of hilltops below Tekoa is flooded with light,—that was the landscape of Amos" (G. A. Smith).<sup>1</sup> He has seen Jehovah of Hosts come forth with the banners of the storm, "turning the dawn to darkness, and treading on the high places of the earth" (4<sup>13</sup> 5<sup>s</sup> 9<sup>c</sup>). Like his fellow-countryman David, Amos has encountered the wild beasts of the desert; he has heard the lion's roar as he leaps out of the thicket, and knows how hardly he is beaten off from his mangled prey (3<sup>4</sup> s. 12 5<sup>19</sup>). He has climbed the rocks untrodden by the horse's hoof and unfurrowed by

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 312-317. The description of the wilderness of Judæa is one of the finest passages in a really splendid book.



the plough (6 12). With husbandry also, with the care of cattle and the tilled field, Amos is familiar, and with the various incidents and scenes of rural life from the Southern wilderness to Carmel.

His style is grave, measured, rhetorical, not profuse but choice and telling in illustration; it swells with a restrained passion the more intense because of its perfect control. He understands the force of repetition, and his refrains beat on the ear with slowly calculated effect like the knell of doom (1 3. c. 9. 11. 13 2 1. 4. 6 3 6. 8. 9. 10. 11 5 27 6 7 7 17). No writer is more powerful in retort, more piercing in irony and crushing in sarcasm, than Amos. No socialist reformer ever burned with a deeper scorn for wantonness and tyranny; none has treated hypocrisy with loftier scorn.

The literary power of Amos is remarkable in a man of his rustic extraction. His "prophecy is one of the best examples of pure Hebrew style. The language, the images, the grouping, are alike admirable; and the simplicity of the diction, obscured only in one or two passages by the fault of transcribers (4 3 9 1), is a token, not of rusticity, but of perfect mastery." Again, "the writings of Amos are not more conspicuous for literary merit than for width of human interest, based

on a range of historical observation very remarkable in the age and condition of the author. . . . His vision embraces all the nations with whom the Hebrews had any converse. . . . The rapid survey of the nations immediately bordering on Israel (chs. 1, 2), is full of precise detail as to localities and events, with a keen appreciation of national character. He tells how the Philistines migrated from Caphtor, the Aramæans from Kir (97). His eye ranges southward along the caravan route from Gaza, through the Arabian wilderness (16) to the tropical lands of the Cushites (97). In the west he is familiar with the marvels of the swelling of the Nile (88 95), and in the distant Babylonian east he makes special mention of Calneh" (62; comp. Gen. 1010). It need hardly be said that he shows ample knowledge of his own people and their traditions and character. This is high commendation, and it comes from a severe critic.<sup>1</sup> But, as the same scholar justly says, "to associate inferior culture with the simplicity and poverty of pastoral life is totally to mistake the conditions of Eastern society. . . . Among the Hebrews, as in the Arabian desert, knowledge and oratory were not

<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 125-129. He thinks that Amos may have travelled abroad, either on military service or in some trade caravan.

affairs of professional education, or dependent for their cultivation on wealth and social status. . . . In Hebrew, as in Arabic, the best writing is an unaffected transcript of the best speaking." Modern literature and the Christian pulpit furnish their examples of men resembling Amos, who, by force of native genius and close converse with nature and with man, have produced work that ranks with the best achievements of literary art.

Amos feels intensely the wrongs of the class to which he belongs. He is the champion of the landless poor. But for all this, and with the sense of social injustice rankling deeply in his breast, it is the rights of God for which he is supremely concerned. He is a religious reformer, not a socialistic agitator; a prophet, and not a politician. He is, above all things, a prophet of *the majesty of Jehovah*,—of that majesty alike in its natural and moral elements; and God's voice had called him from his village home and sent him on this errand, striking his soul with the same sudden and awful force with which the roar of the lion falls on the traveller's ear in the forest (37. 8). A solitary, untutored man, he must confront, in the name of that outraged Majesty, the pride of the court and the pomp of the sanctuary; he must bear Jehovah's fearful ultimatum to Israel, and bid her instantly "prepare to meet her God."

This plain herdsman of the wilderness is chosen to be Jehovah's "mouth," when he would speak with "lips burning with indignation" and with "a tongue like devouring fire" against the shrines and palaces of Bethel and Samaria. It was a tremendous errand on which to send any man; but the instrument was well fitted for its task.

We quote from Dr Cornill's description <sup>1</sup> of Amos' appearance at Bethel:

Just as the festival is at its height, all at once it is interrupted. A plain, unknown man of the people forces his way through the ranks of the celebrants. A divine fire gleams in his eyes; a holy zeal stamps his features. With instinctive respect and shrinking the bystanders make room for him; and before any one quite understands what has happened, he has hushed and silenced the festal mirth with the shrill mourner's cry of wailing for the dead! For the wail of mourning Israel had a fixed rhythmical form of expression and a particular kind of melody, the sound of which recalled to every hearer the most solemn moment of his life, when he stood weeping by the bier of father or mother, of wife or darling child; and this dirge form of utterance is several times used by the prophet with the greatest effect. Such a funeral wail this unknown man raises in the sanctuary

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<sup>1</sup> In his *Der israelitische Prophetismus, in fünf Vorträgen für gebildete Laien geschildert*: a very able and winning attempt to popularise the results of Old Testament criticism, as determined from an "advanced" standpoint.

at Bethel,—it is a dirge over Israel ! Right in the midst of the crowd of feasters he shrills out :

Fallen, to rise up no more,  
Is the virgin of Israel !  
Stretched on her land she lies ;  
There is none to raise her ! (51. 2).

It would seem that his work in Samaria was only an episode in the life of Amos, occupying possibly but a few months,<sup>1</sup> and befalling when he was of mature or even advanced age. He was expelled from the country by the high priest

<sup>1</sup> Orelli thinks Amos must have preached in Israel, more or less continuously, for *two years* at least. He interprets 213-16 as a prediction of the great earthquake uttered "two years" beforehand (11), and traces in 33-8 411 88, and (we might add) 95, references to this calamity after the event,—which, if Amos did thus foretell it, must have given him a high reputation as prophet. Ch. 213-16 is one of the finest bits of description in Amos. If it does not refer to the earthquake, it is very difficult to give the passage any definite meaning. The guilty land is compared to a laden harvest-wain, roughly made, that jolts and creaks as it travels along the uneven road :

Lo, I make the ground to yield under you, as a cart  
yields that is overloaded with sheaves !  
And flight fails the swift, and the strong man cannot brace  
up his strength, nor the hero save his life ;  
Nor the Bowman hold his ground, nor the light of foot  
escape, nor the rider on horseback save his life ;  
And he that is stout in heart amongst the heroes shall  
flee away naked on that day !

These words may well describe the utter panic and swiftly pursuing ruin that a great earthquake brings with it.

of Bethel (7<sup>10-17</sup>), and afterwards, on returning home, at no long interval, composed this Book as a record of his mission, conscious that he had spoken words of deep and lasting import for the people of God. Amos speaks of God, like the other prophets, commonly as *Jehovah* (Eng. Vers., *the LORD*), but also characteristically as *the Lord Jehovah* (3<sup>7</sup> 8. 11. 13, etc.) and *the God of hosts* (3<sup>13</sup> 4<sup>13</sup> 5<sup>14-16</sup>. 27 6<sup>8</sup>. 14 9<sup>5</sup>), who takes oath by Himself (6<sup>8</sup>) and by His holiness (4<sup>2</sup>),—once in irony “by the pride of Jacob” (8<sup>7</sup>) which he “abhors” (6<sup>8</sup>). With the grandeur of the Divine character, the absoluteness of the Divine rule and the fixedness of the Divine purpose, Amos apprehends the vehemence of God’s anger against the wickedness of men as no inspired teacher has done before him.

His lofty conception of God’s being, joined to his wide observation of human affairs, gives birth to the ethical universalism which is so striking a trait in Amos. As Duhm observes,<sup>1</sup> no other prophet, unless it be Micah, has such a sense as Amos for the purely human, or is so much affected by the inhumanity of the age. The offences that he singles out when he arraigns the nations in chs. 1–2<sup>8</sup>, are sins of cruelty and barbarity, outrages committed against common

<sup>1</sup> *Theologie d. Propheten*, pp. 111, 112.

human feeling rather than injuries to his own people.

The august conception of the Divine greatness, which raises Amos above the ceremonial in religion, lifts him equally above the limits of tribal selfishness. There can be no paltry favouritism, no weak or fond indulgence, in the rule of the Lord Jehovah, "the Maker of the Pleiades and Orion," in the God of hosts who "fashioneth the mountains and createth the wind, and showeth to man what is His thought; who turneth the dawn into darkness, and walketh on the high places of the earth" (4 12. 13 5 s 9 e). The God of Israel is no mere local and petty godship tied to Samaria or Jerusalem, He holds at His beck and call the most distant nations; and those who know most of His favour will therefore find His hand the heaviest in punishment on their rebellion. Hence, while in Joel the storm of judgement lifts off from Judah to settle on the heathen, in Amos it moves in the opposite direction; he sees the thunderclouds sweep round the horizon to pour their concentrated fury upon sinful Israel (chs. 1 and 2). With grand impartiality Jehovah cries:

Are ye not as the children of the Moors unto Me, O ye children of Israel?—It is Jehovah's oracle.

Have I not brought up the children of Israel from  
Egypt,—

And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians  
from Kir? (97).

You only have I known, out of all the generations of  
the earth :

So I will visit upon you all your iniquities (32).

This is the very principle which our Lord re-asserted against privileged and presumptuous Judaism, viz. that he who "knew his Lord's will, and did it not," should be "beaten with many stripes"; and Paul, where he taught that "as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by the law."

Amos lays the foundation of international justice and of the rights of a common humanity, when he thus reveals the stern rectitude and equity of the Ruler of nations and the vengeance that pursues the wrongs of man to man. The gentler traits are not wholly wanting in Amos' image of the Godhead. He appeals to the Divine pity for Jacob brought down from his pride :

O Lord Jehovah, forgive now !

How shall Jacob stand erect, for he is so small !

(71-5 ; comp. 515).

It is just His human sympathy that makes the Lord's anger burn hotly against cruelty and treachery amongst men. By vindicating the moral personality of God in its wide bearing on human



affairs, Amos has rendered an imperishable service to morals and religion, and has made a large and weighty contribution to the building of the messianic kingdom. Of his eschatology, closely connected with that of Joel, and the promise he gives in conclusion respecting David's throne (9<sup>11-15</sup>), we have already spoken; see pp. 125, 131, 132.

Like Joel, Amos has greatly influenced later prophets,—Joel perhaps chiefly in expression and form, Amos more deeply in spirit and thought. While Isaiah, for example, rarely appropriates the language of Amos, one feels that he has absorbed his doctrine. He is, in fact, the scholar of Amos more than of any other, though a scholar who outshines his master. The grandest ideas of the younger prophet are in several instances but the reproduction and expression of what his forerunner had already taught. Hosea echoes his predecessor in chs. 8<sup>14</sup> (Amos 1<sup>4</sup>, etc.), 10<sup>5.8</sup> (Amos 3<sup>14</sup> 5<sup>5</sup>), 12<sup>9.10</sup> (Amos 2<sup>10.11</sup>), 14<sup>1</sup> (Amos 5<sup>2</sup>); Jeremiah borrows from Amos 1<sup>4</sup>, etc., in ch. 49<sup>27</sup>, and from 1<sup>15</sup> in 49<sup>3</sup>; Ezekiel from Amos 5<sup>1</sup> (*to raise the funeral dirge*) in chs. 19<sup>1</sup> 26<sup>17</sup> 27<sup>2</sup> 28<sup>12</sup> 32<sup>2</sup>, from 1<sup>11.12</sup> in 35<sup>5-9</sup>, from 8<sup>2</sup> in 7<sup>2,3,6</sup>. Note also the following parallels:

Mic. 1 <sup>3.4</sup>	—Am. 4 <sup>13</sup> 9 <sup>5</sup>	Zeph. 2 <sup>3</sup>	— Am. 5 <sup>4.14.15</sup>
„ 2 <sup>3</sup>	— „ 5 <sup>13</sup>	Hag. 2 <sup>17</sup>	— „ 4 <sup>9</sup>
„ 3 <sup>11</sup>	— „ 9 <sup>10</sup>	Zech. 3 <sup>2</sup>	— „ 4 <sup>11</sup>
Zeph. 1 <sup>12.13</sup>	— „ 5 <sup>11</sup> 6 <sup>1.3</sup>	„ 13 <sup>5</sup>	— „ 7 <sup>14</sup>

Amos 4<sup>13</sup> 5<sup>8, 9</sup> and 9<sup>5, 6</sup> are in the style of the Book of Job; and Duhm, followed by Cornill and several others, regards these sentences as additions to Amos made by some later admirer of that work; while Delitzsch makes a point of this resemblance in favour of the early date of Job, which Amos, he believes, has used. But these passages are quite after the grand manner of Amos, and are very unlike the insertions of an annotator. This strain of natural theology is of great antiquity in Israel. Observe also that Ps. 139<sup>7-10</sup> is parallel to Amos 9<sup>2-4</sup>, and the expression of 4<sup>2</sup> occurs besides only in Ps. 89<sup>35</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

The construction of the Book of Amos is orderly and clear.

<sup>1</sup> St James, the brother of the Lord, made a striking use of Amos 9<sup>11, 12</sup> at the Council of Jerusalem in A. D. 51. He quotes according to the Septuagint, "that the remnant of men may seek the Lord," where the Hebrew text runs, "that they (Israel) may possess the remnant of Edom." The Greek translators read *yidreshu* (*seek*) for *yireshu* (*possess*), and *'adam*, with a different vowel-pointing, for *'edom*; "the Lord" was then supplied as the necessary object to "seek." This is an instructive case of various reading in the Old Testament text. If St James has followed an erroneous reading of this particular passage, he has fairly and justly developed the broad human spirit and intent of Amos, whom he resembles in other respects—in the austerity of tone, and especially the hatred of the vices of the rich shown in his Epistle—more than any other New Testament writer. Several other allusions to Amos may be gleaned from the New Testament, but Acts 7<sup>42, 43</sup> 15<sup>16, 17</sup> are the only quotations.

I. The PROLOGUE, chs. 1 and 2: a series of eight judgements on the nations of Palestine:

Pronounced in turn on *Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah*,<sup>1</sup> and finally *Israel*, on whom the storm of wrath pours itself in unmeasured fury because of her aggravated sins. In this way Amos skilfully leads up to his main discourse. Each Woe begins with the formula, "For three transgressions of—, and for four thereof." The sins marked out have been committed within recent times; fire, sword, and captivity are the punishments announced, implying some general devastation by war, such as the Assyrian invasion brought with it.

II. ADDRESSES TO ISRAEL ON HER SIN AND DOOM, chs. 3–6. There are five distinct speeches: three beginning, *Hear ye this word*; and two, *Woe unto you, Woe to them*, etc.

1. The first threatening discourse (ch. 3) is of a general nature. The prophet declares

(a) That Jehovah is specially bound to visit Israel's sins (vv. 1. 2);

(b) That his alarm is not given without reason and necessity (3-8).

(c) Egyptians and Philistines invited to witness against Samaria (9. 10);

(d) A judgement proclaimed upon the "altars of

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<sup>1</sup> This seventh woe is viewed by several writers as a postscript for the benefit of Judah, verses 4. 5 of ch. 2 lack the force and pointedness of Amos, and may be of late origin. Omitting this passage, the series is reduced to the favourite number of *seven*.

Bethel" and the "ivory palaces" of the wicked nobles, from which the merest remnant will escape (11-15).

2. The second discourse (ch. 4) begins

(a) By attacking the rich women of Samaria (vv. 1-3);

(b) Then the false Jehovah-worship of the sanctuaries (4, 5);

(c) Past chastisements rehearsed, six of them, with the refrain, "Yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith Jehovah" (6-11);—

(d) Culminating in one final crisis, to which Israel is summoned (12, 13).

3. The third discourse (ch. 5 1-17) takes the form of a *funeral dirge* over the nation (*kinah*), interrupted by calls to repentance:

(a) Lament over the fallen "virgin of Israel" (vv. 1, 3);

(b) Exhortation to "seek Jehovah," in view of the people's unrighteousness and His power and glory, with the hope that even at the worst He may be found gracious (vv. 4-15);

(c) The prophet's dirge over Israel's hapless fate renewed (vv. 16, 17).

4. The strain of lamentation continues in the *Woe to Israel's false professors* (vv. 18-27), threatening

(a) Those who "desire the day of the Lord," and will find it bring them ruin and not salvation (18-20);

(b) The unrighteous zealots for religion (21-24);

(c) The idolaters found amongst them notwithstanding (25-27). In ver. 27 Amos gives his plainest intimation of the Assyrian Captivity; see again 6 7 7 17.

5. *Woe on the luxurious and oppressive aristocracy* (ch. 6):

(a) The conduct of the Samaritan nobles, and their fate (vv. 1-7);

(b) The judgement coming like a universal pestilence (8-11);

(c) The pride of the nobles broken by the invader, who will desolate the whole land (12-14).

III. FIVE VISIONS OF WARNING, chs. 7<sub>1</sub>—9<sub>6</sub>. These are interrupted by the scene between Amos and Amaziah in 7<sub>10-17</sub>,—the one passage of autobiography in the Book. Its insertion just here is due to the fact that the third vision, of the plumbline, closes with a threatening against “the house of Jeroboam”:

1. Vision of *the locusts* (7<sub>1-3</sub>), the omen of which is averted at the prophet’s intercession.

2. Vision of *the devouring fire* (4-6), with the like result.

3. Vision of *the plumbline* (7-9), prefiguring an irreversible doom. (Episode of Amos’ encounter with the high priest of Bethel, 10-17.)

4. Vision of *the basket of summer fruit* (ch. 8), premonitory of the “end” of Israel. Here Amos enlarges, recapitulating his previous discourses: the new points indicated are—(a) cheating of the poor by greedy traders (4-6); (b) a threatened famine of spiritual food (11.12); (c) Dan and Beersheba added to Bethel and Gilgal as places of false, probably idolatrous, worship of Jehovah (13.14).

5. Vision of *the smitten sanctuary* (ch. 9<sub>1-6</sub>); comp. 3<sub>14</sub>. The temple at Bethel, like Dagon’s pulled down by Samson at Gaza, crashes in on the multitude gathered to the feast (1.2); and those who escape are

hunted down by the All-searching and Almighty Jehovah (3-6).

The visions collectively rehearse and illustrate the foregoing discourses.

IV. THE EPILOGUE, ch. 9<sup>7-15</sup>. A last word of hope and comfort.

1. The doom of Israel has one saving clause ; it is a *sifting*, not a mere destruction (vv. 7-10).

2. The final restoration (11-15)—(*a*) David's throne to be re-established (11.12); (*b*) the land to become incredibly fruitful (13); and (*c*) the captives to be settled again for ever in their home (14. 15).

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOSEA THE PROPHET OF EPHRAIM

Origin and Characteristics of Hosea—His two Books—His Emotional Style—A Man of Sorrows—Fall of the House of Jehu—Charge of “Whoredom” against Israel—The Prophet’s Wife and Children—Marriage Covenant of Jehovah and Israel—The title Ba’al—Dates of the two Books—Hope of Resurrection—Outline of the Prophecies—Hosea and other Prophets—His References to Early History.

**H**OSEA,<sup>1</sup> the son of Beeri, was a man of altogether different origin and different mould from Amos. He belonged to the kingdom of the Ten Tribes (“in the day of *our* king,” 7<sub>5</sub>), as indeed the whole tenor of his prophecy shows. He was reared amid the pleasant valleys and fruitful orchards and cornlands of Northern Israel. Gilead and Lebanon bound his horizon ;

<sup>1</sup> Strictly *Hoshea*'. The name is identical with that at first borne by Joshua, and with that of the last king of Israel. It signifies *deliverance, salvation*.

Tabor on the north, and the heights of Gibeah and Ramah in the south, are conspicuous in his landscape (5 1. 8 6 8 14 5-7). The old proud tribe-name of *Ephraim* is constantly on his lips; it is used by Hosea as by no other prophet. "In every sentence it appears that he has not merely visited the Northern kingdom, as Amos had done, but that he is acquainted with it from the depth of his heart, and follows all its doings, aims, and fortunes with the profound feelings gendered by such a sympathy as is conceivable only in the case of a native prophet" (Ewald). Hosea's allusions to Judah are cursory and incidental (1 7. 11 4 15 5 5. 10-14 6 4. 11 8 14 10 11 12 2: some of these are suspected by critics as later Judæan interpolations); it is the fate of Ephraim that weighs upon his soul, and that not as a charge laid on him from the outside, as Amos explains in regard to himself,—his message to Israel is his very life. Hosea might well have said with the apostle Paul: "I have great sorrow and unceasing pain at my heart, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,—who are Israelites."

Unlike his austere predecessor, Hosea was of a gentle, sensitive nature, pensive perhaps and inclined to melancholy, but frank, affectionate, and full of domestic and patriotic feeling. His



piety is of the most inward type,—fervent, heartfelt, trustful and clingingly submissive. Hosea is predominantly the man of sentiment, as Amos is the man of principle. He excels in pathos, in description, in power of appeal and expostulation, in acute observation and rich and various fancy. His images, charmingly simple and touching in their use, are drawn from the fireside, from the garden and the farm (4 16 7 4-8 8 7 10 11 11 4 13 3. 15 14 7); while Amos' imagination reflects the desert mountains and the sea. Hosea's address is the transparent expression of the man and his message. His style is emotional in a high degree, quick and sometimes violent in movement,—elliptical, exclamatory, crowded with allusion and metaphor, saying twenty things at once. His sentences are not built into regular periods, but thrown out in brief, glancing spear-thrusts; while Amos plants his blows with the measured crushing swing of the hammer-stroke. "The thought is too full," says Ewald; "the sentence too hasty and abrupt." Hence the obscurity which makes Hosea one of the most difficult and least appreciated writers in the Bible. His vocabulary, as well as his style of composition, is unique. "Peculiar words, or common words in peculiar senses, rare orthographies, unusual constructions, are frequently

found. Some, at least, of these peculiarities may be due to his Northern origin" (Kirkpatrick).

Hosea is remembered by his short sentences and single images rather than by continuous passages. Quite a number of his sayings have become household words with ourselves. Such is the sentence twice quoted by our Lord from this pitiful man, "I will have mercy,<sup>1</sup> and not sacrifice." Amongst his notable epigrams are the following:

Ephraim is a cake not turned.

Grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not.<sup>2</sup>

They have sown the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind.

Like people, like priest.

Her king is cut off as foam upon the water.

I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.

Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help.

I will be as the dew unto Israel.

These winged arrows of Hosea's thought lodge themselves in every memory.

<sup>1</sup> More strictly, "kindness" or "lovingkindness" as *chesed* is so often rendered in the Psalms. This characteristic word, which runs through the Psalter like a golden chain, and which comes nearest of Old Testament words to the New Testament *grace*, is employed six times by Hosea, thrice by Micah, but not once by the stern Amos!

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 79: Orelli renders the latter clause, "yet he has not come to discretion,"—a rendering probably correct, and which gives an even more pregnant sense, *grey hairs on a witless head*.

Hosea has not given us a compact piece of work such as the Book of Amos, for he had not the clear and orderly mind of the elder prophet. The cast of his genius is that of the lyrical poet rather than the orator. Chapters 1-3 form a distinct work,—the *First Book of Hosea*,—complete in itself, and composed before the fall of the Jehuite dynasty (14), while the Northern kingdom was still flourishing (25. 7. 11-15). This little book—half narrative and half prophecy—is one of the most extraordinary things ever written. It is a spiritual autobiography,—the *confessio amantis* wrung from a heart which through the anguish of its outraged human love has won its way to the secret of the love Divine.

Chapters 4-14 make up the *Second Book of Hosea*, manifestly of later date in its contents than the First. This is a continuous and discursive poetical harangue. The conclusion (ch. 14) is distinctly marked and beautifully finished; and at different points of Bk. II, especially toward the beginning, we may detect the commencement of new homilies. But no articulated scheme is visible. Some critics have traced, with but partial success, a chronological order in this book. Ewald discovered an artistic poetical arrangement, which other Hebraists fail to see. There is a general advance in it from

the thought of Israel's *guilt* to that of her *punishment*, beyond which rises the prospect of her *final restoration*. But these themes succeed in no determined order, and the poet passes from one to the other, and back again, as he is carried by the gusts of feeling and the lively play of his imagination. The whole work is a free, and for the most part unstudied, *résumé* by the prophet of his preaching in Israel. Forgetting the occasions of time and place, Hosea pours out in full flood the thoughts and emotions that possessed him during the years of his fruitless ministry.

For the disorder of Hosea's style he has only too much excuse. He writes like a distracted man. "Indignation and sorrow, tenderness and severity, faith and despair, are woven together in a sequence which is no logical plan, but is determined by the battle and alternate victory of contending emotions; and the swift transitions, the fragmentary, unbalanced utterance, the half-developed allusions, that make his prophecy so difficult to the commentator, express the agony of this inward conflict. The doom which he proclaims against his people is the doom of all that is dearest to him on earth; his heart is ready to break with sorrow, his very reason totters under the awful vision of judgment (97); his whole prophecy is a cry of

anguish, as again and again he renews his appeal to the heedless nation that is running headlong to destruction." <sup>1</sup> In Hosea's discourse there is a monotony of grief, uttered in every variety of phrase and cadence, that is more heart-moving than the thunderous denunciations of Amos. Once, in a passing gleam of hope, he cries :

Come, and let us return unto Jehovah :  
 For He hath torn, and will heal us ;  
 He smiteth, and will bind us up.

But his hope as quickly fades, and there comes a new burst of sorrow :

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee ?  
 O Judah, what shall I do unto thee ?  
 For your goodness is as the morning cloud,  
 And as the dew that passeth early away ! (ch. 6).

And again, in bitter reproach and uncontrollable anger :

Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel,  
 Like early fruit on the fig-tree in its first season  
 I looked on your fathers.  
 But they, when they came to Baal-Peor, consecrated  
 themselves to the Shame ;  
 And they became loathsome like their paramour.

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith : *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 157, 158. This author's appreciation of Hosea is particularly fine and sympathetic.

Give them, O Jehovah—what wilt thou give them?  
 Give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts.  
 Filled up is their wickedness at Gilgal,—yes, there  
 I hate them!

For their evil deeds from My house I will drive  
 them out:

I will not go on to love them—all their rulers are  
 rebels!

A blight is on Ephraim—

Their root is withered; fruit they shall not bear.  
 And even though they bring forth children,

I will slay the darlings of their womb!

My God shall reject them, for they hearkened not  
 to Him;

And they shall be wanderers amongst the nations  
 (9<sup>10-17</sup>).

These are smoother and easier passages than many in Hosea; but they indicate the extreme excitement under which he labours, and the passion of disgust and holy wrath, struggling with pity, to which this gentle soul has been lashed by the shamelessness of his people's crime. "Hosea's rhythm," says Dr Cheyne, "is the rhythm of sobs and sighs." "Exhaustless is his sorrow, endless the grief wherever his mind turns. Ever and anon the tossing, restless discourse begins again, like the wild cry of an anguish that can scarcely be mastered" (Ewald). If Psalm 22 is the Calvary of the Old Testament, Hosea 4-13 is its Gethsemane.

Hosea has been called the Jeremiah of the Northern kingdom. Both were ardent patriots, and men of finely sensitive, religious nature; the ministry of each was a martyrdom. But Jeremiah is more studied and self-conscious in his grief, Hosea more artless and passionate. Jeremiah has more of the theologian's wisdom, Hosea of the poet's heart. Hence Jeremiah is far easier to understand, Hosea is more affecting when one can understand and follow him. He is the first and tenderest of the prophets of Israel's sorrow,—the servants of the Lord whose experience is summed up and idealised, and again projected onto the canvas of the future, in the grand picture of the Suffering Servant drawn in Isa. 53. These men drank in bitter draughts from "the wine of the wrath of God"; they tasted by anticipation the anguish of God's judgements on a guilty people. They felt for their nation what the nation had no heart to feel for itself. "Stricken for the transgression of their people," these martyr-prophets showed beforehand the sufferings of the Christ and came as near as sinful men might do to the sacrifice of the cross. None of his predecessors had entered into the compassions of God or touched so intimately the secret of the Divine Fatherhood, as Hosea does. Hear how he sings in Jehovah's name :

When Israel was a youth, then I loved him,  
And out of Egypt did I call My son!

And it was I that taught Ephraim to walk, that held  
him by his arms!

—Yet they knew not that I tended them! (111-3).

Again, it is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of pity,” who cries out in him:

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?

How surrender thee, Israel?

How should I make thee as Admah?

How treat thee as Zeboim?

My heart is turned within Me:

My relentings are stirred together.

No, I will not let loose My hot anger,

I will not destroy Ephraim a second time;

For I am God, and not man—

A Holy One in thy midst!

And I will not visit in fierce wrath (11 s. 9).

Hosea has learnt that God is love,—One with whom wrath, however greatly provoked, can never have the last word. He sees that the holiest Being must be the most compassionate, and that righteousness without mercy for the vilest is no perfect righteousness. He realises, like no one before him, the strange contest that exists, humanly speaking, in the counsels and holiness of God between love and anger, justice and pity,—that conflict which found its solution



upon Calvary. Hosea has contributed, therefore, an essential and most fruitful element to the development of prophecy and the preparation for Christ.

There is a marked difference between Amos and Hosea in the range of their prophetic view. Amos begins with a judicial survey of the surrounding nations; he sees Jehovah directing the fortunes of Philistines and Syrians, no less than of Israelites. But Hosea has no eyes, no thoughts, but for his own people. In this respect Amos is one of the broadest, Hosea the narrowest of prophets. His narrowness is not, however, that of Judaistic exclusiveness or antipathy; it is that of concentration in a single absorbing interest. His limitations make the stream of his thought the more vehement and deep.

When Amos wrote, the kingdom of Israel was at the summit of its material prosperity, but was far down the slope of a fatal moral declension. Jeroboam II was the *grand monarque*, the Louis XIV of Samaria. He stood at the head of an arrogant military despotism, under which the country was powerful abroad, but internally oppressed and demoralised. The prosperous course of his reign was but the smooth swirl of the river nearing the rapids. Now that the Assyrian monuments have corrected the tradi-

tional chronology of this period, we are able to verify with emphasis the impression of swift decadence in the Samarian kingdom given to us by Amos and Hosea. Instead of fifty years, not thirty years intervened between the death of Jeroboam and the fall of Samaria (see pp. 121, 122). Amos had foretold that the reigning dynasty would perish, as every previous line of the Northern kings had perished: "I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (79). Hosea, still speaking "in the days of Jeroboam" (11), takes up this threatening at the outset (14), announcing its quick fulfilment: "Yet a little while, and I will visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." Thus it appears that the savage bloodshed of Jehu, although no censure upon it is recorded in the Book of Kings, was reprobated by the prophets notwithstanding the "zeal for Jehovah" which this executioner of His judgement upon the Baalites showed. Indeed, Hosea's sentence on Jehu is almost a repetition of the sentence of Elijah against Ahab for the murder of Naboth the Jezreelite, which Jehu had quoted as his warrant (1 Kings 21<sup>19-23</sup>, 2 Kings 9<sup>25.26.36.37</sup>). Jehu was himself responsible for the spirit and manner in which he carried out his orders.

Hosea's prophecy had a speedy and awful endorsement. When Jeroboam died and his long reign came to an end, his son Zechariah fell a victim in six months to the plots of Shallum. In another month's time the conspirator was himself overthrown and killed by Menahem, who inflicted frightful barbarities on his opponents (2 Kings 15 8-16). If the "month" of Hos. 57 may be identified with the month of Shallum's reign, then the "king's house" addressed in 51 was presumably the family of this short-lived monarch, and vv. 1. 2 (R.V.) of this chapter relate to the treacherous and murderous revolution by which Shallum was raised to the throne, and in which "the priests" of the North seem to have been involved.

In that case we have a very definite date for the occasion of ch. 51-7, viz. 748 B.C. Gilead may very possibly have been the scene of Zechariah's murder (6s): Shallum's father was Jabesh, and this was a Gileadite name. If Hos. 73-7 refers to the same crime,—and the event must have made a deep impression on Hosea's mind, being the catastrophe of the house of Jehu,—it was a most tragic affair. The opportunity of Zechariah's birthday-feast was taken ("the day of our king"), when the conspirators, who had laid their plans carefully like

a baker kneading his bread while he heats the oven, humoured the dissolute king and his kindred ("the princes") to the top of their bent, till they were completely off their guard; and then in the midst of the jesting and revelry, as the royal party was "sick with the heat of wine," they slaughtered them to the last man. It is more likely that Hosea describes in this way some signal and well-known scene, than that he has drawn a general picture in such terms of the licence and treachery prevailing in Court circles. Hos. 10<sup>7-15</sup> we take to be another allusion to the short reign of Zechariah, and perhaps of Shallum,—“cut off as foam upon the water”; and ch. 8<sup>4</sup> expresses disapproval of the kings subsequently elected without reference to Jehovah (Jehu, it will be remembered, had been anointed by Elisha). Hos. 13<sup>10, 11</sup> describes the breakdown of the Samarian monarchy, and ch. 3<sup>4</sup> indicates how the crown, transferred from one military adventurer to another, had fallen into popular contempt. By the assassination of Zechariah the kingdom was plunged into civil war and into a state of helplessness and anarchy which continued more or less until the end. Robbery and murder became rife, especially in the wilder region of Gilead across the Jordan; and in the neighbourhood of the sanctuaries

(69 98, R.V.) the priests were ringleaders in outrage.

The wantonness and oppression which Amos denounced have now, within twenty years, brought the Ten Tribes to a state of social dissolution. "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel!" so Hosea opens his commission in ch. 4 1. 2 :

Jehovah has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth, and no kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land. There is false swearing, and lying, and murdering, and robbing, and committing adultery; they break out in violence, and one pool of blood toucheth another.

Religion has sunk into the most sensual idolatry; Jehovah's worship is no longer distinguishable, even in name, from that of Baal, though the people profess loyalty to their own God (82). The calf-worship of Bethel has at length produced its legitimate fruit, and is unreservedly condemned by Hosea (85.6 132). *Beth-el*, the "house of God," in accordance with the saying of Amos 55.6, has become *Beth-aven*, "house of nothingness" or "worthlessness" (415 58 105.8); it will suffer like *Beth-arbel* (1014.15),—a town that had been cruelly sacked by Shalman of Moab.<sup>1</sup> Hosea sustains Amos in his denunciation of the injustice of the rulers. The

<sup>1</sup> So Schrader, *Cun. Inscr.*, ii. 139, and others.

Ephraimite traders he attacks with biting irony (127. 8), substituting for *Israel* the hated name of *Canaan*, synonymous with *trafficker*; for the commercial spirit in its worst form had eaten into the national character, and the reproach of mean and fraudulent gain which now attaches to the word "Jew," is thus fastened on his people by Hosea.

But it is *the dissoluteness of family life* on which the stress of Hosea's indictment lies. Whoredom is as conspicuous in his lurid picture as luxury and extortion in that of Amos: "A spirit of whoredom is in them" (54), he cries; "when their carouse is over, they proceed to whoredom,—their shields (*i.e.* the princes, who should be the bulwarks of the land) are in love with shame" (418); "whoredom and wine and the new wine make them senseless" (411). Fathers set such an example of licentiousness, that the unchastity of their daughters can hardly be blamed (413. 14). The scenes enacted in Israel at this time recall the infamous orgies of Baal-Peor and Gibeah, the blackest spots in the nation's early history (99. 10 109; comp. Num. 25, Jud. 19, 20). Under the term "whoredom"—this hateful word recurs sixteen times in Hosea's fourteen short chapters—he comprises the whole sin of Israel; for the expression is used both

literally and figuratively, and denotes at once moral dissoluteness and religious apostasy. These two capital crimes were, in point of fact, identified in the Baalite cultus.

Hosea's private history explains the view that he takes of his people's condition. His standpoint is given us in chs. 1-3. Surely no other servant of God ever received his call in so strange a fashion: "When Jehovah spake at first with Hosea, Jehovah said unto him, Go, *take thee a wife of whoredom, and children of whoredom!*" His domestic life becomes a mirror of the religious state of Israel. Through his ruined home and lacerated heart Hosea had been led to see the moral position of his country and to feel its horror. "For verily the land committeth whoredom, departing from Jehovah" (1<sub>2</sub>): such is the reason given for the cruel providence that overruled this good man's life, and turned his love to shame and loathing. We can understand, reading this, how the idea of whoredom haunts and tortures him, how he is stung by it ever and again to wild outcries.

The story of Hosea's dishonour has been in former times commonly resolved into an allegory, in order to escape the scandal of God's directing His prophet to unite himself with an impure woman. The narrative is an allegory, in the same

sense that the tale of Hagar and Ishmael is made such by St Paul. The circumstances of Hosea's married life have a meaning beyond themselves; they point to *another* union and *another* infidelity,—that of Israel toward Jehovah. Hosea realises as he could not have done otherwise, how the Lord is outraged by His people's treachery. He reads the tragedy of his hearth as a parable, and rehearses in his own action the dealings of Jehovah with His espoused. So the prophet gives to his children, like Isaiah afterwards (7<sup>3</sup> 8<sup>1-4</sup>. 18), names expressing the lessons he is commissioned to teach; and *Jizr'e-'el*, *Lo'-ruchamah*, *Lo'-'ammi* (1 4-9), the offspring of Gomer whose character was but too well known, were by their names embodiments to his neighbours of Hosea's message of woe, and supplied a text from which he could always preach. It is surely the same wife, and not another of like character, whom he recovers as related in chap. 3. We gather that Gomer-bath-Diblaim, after bearing him three children, had forsaken her husband to pursue unchecked her abandoned life; she is deserted by her paramour, and falls into slavery; finally, as may well have been necessary in those disordered times, Hosea had to *buy* her back so that he might bring her home, for his love to her is not extinct



(vv.1. 2). But she is left for a fitting time to the discipline of solitude, as the children of Israel will be left in the destitution of their exile to fit them for ultimate restoration (vv. 3-5). Thus Hosea's autobiography is emblematic, but none the less real throughout; the woman's name, *Gomer daughter of Diblaim*, is not in the least allegorical, and the feeling of the writer is too keen and genuine to admit of the hypothesis of fiction on his part. "It is difficult to understand how any sound judgement can doubt that Hosea's account of his married life is literal history; it is told with perfect simplicity, and yet with touching reserve. We feel that it would not have been told at all, but that it was necessary to explain how Hosea became a prophet, how he was led to that fundamental conception of Jehovah's love and Israel's infidelity which lies at the root of his whole prophetic argument" (Robertson Smith).

Here is a case, then, in which a bad wife made a good prophet! The most intolerable evil is overruled for blessing. Hosea "does not mean us to believe that under Divine command he married a woman whom he knew from the first to be of profligate character. But the point of the allegory is, that Gomer's infidelity after marriage is a figure of Israel's departure

from the covenant God; and the struggle of Hosea's affection with the burning sense of shame and grief when he found his wife unworthy, is altogether inconceivable, unless his first love had been pure and full of trust in the purity of its object." Hosea's fidelity after his abandonment by Gomer (if we read chap. 3 aright), and his redemption of the fallen wife, afford a high lesson on the sacredness of marriage, and carry the parable concerning Jehovah and Israel to its true and happier issue. Hosea's choice of Gomer presents a problem in Providence of the same order as that of Jesus' choice of Judas, and one certainly not more perplexing; such mysteries, though rarely reaching the like degree of acuteness, do happen again and again in the lives of God's saints.

Hosea first gives to the covenant between God and His people that form of the *marriage union*, under which it is afterwards so often represented. Jeremiah in ch. 3, and Ezekiel in chs. 16 and 23, especially enlarge upon this idea; and St Paul's image of the Church as the bride of Christ in Eph. 5, with St John's in the Apocalypse of the New Jerusalem as "the Lamb's wife," while corrupt Rome is "the great whore" who intoxicates the earth with "the wine of her fornication," have their

original in the allegory of Hosea and Gomer. In like manner St James (44) brands those as "adulteresses" (see R.V.) who "know not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God." This figure has become, in fact, a common-place of Scripture.

Apart from his family circumstances, Hosea's use of this conception was extremely bold. For the Baalism then rampant in Israel was, in effect, a worship of the sexual principle. Ba'al (or Bel) and 'Ashtoreth (Astarte) were the male and female deities impersonating the productiveness of nature. At the same time, *ba'al* was a common noun in Hebrew, signifying lord and husband; and this epithet had often been applied, quite innocently, to Jehovah (as, indeed, in Isa. 545: "Thy Maker is thy husband"); in that use the word entered into the names of early Israelites of pious family (1 Chron. 8<sup>33, 34</sup> 147). But the word lent itself to a double sense; and because of its vile Canaanite associations Jehovah says through Hosea:

It shall come to pass in that day—it is Jehovah's oracle—that thou shalt call Me *Ishi* (my Man), and shalt no longer call me *Ba'ali*; and I will take away the names of the Baalim from her mouth, and they shall not be remembered any more by their name (216. 17).

—From this time *Bosheth* (*Shame*: Hos. 9<sup>10</sup>) is habitually substituted for *Ba'al*. The bond of marriage, whose corruption was the very essence of the prevalent idolatry that dragged down Israel in body and soul to the pit of ruin, Hosea snatches out of the filth; he cleanses and elevates it in the fire of his pure passion and his spiritual faith, and makes it for all time a symbol of the covenant which binds the souls of men to God and Christ. In this respect Hosea 1–3 is parallel to the Song of Songs, that exquisite drama of the Trial and Triumph of Love,<sup>1</sup> which was also a work of Northern Israel.

Hosea's children deserve a moment's attention. The eldest boy is called *Jizr'e-el*, which means both *God will scatter* and *will sow* (14. 5 2<sup>23</sup>); hence it symbolises the double import of the threatened exile. At the same time it warns Jehu's house of the recompense due for "the bloodshed of Jezreel," and by its resemblance of sound (*Yizre-el*) it is an ominous play on the proud national title *Isra-el*. The second child is named *Lo'-ruchamah* (*Unpitied*), and the third, *Lo'-ammi* (*Not-My-people*), to intimate the unsparing rejection which Israel must expect; and yet, before

<sup>1</sup> See Dr Davison's *Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament*, pp. 300–311, which treats this delicate subject with great skill and wisdom.

long (1<sub>10</sub> 2<sub>1, 23</sub>), Jehovah's relentings change these cruel titles (how could a father continue to call his children so?) into *Ruchamah* and '*Ammi* (*Pitied* and *My-people*),—a change which St Paul skilfully quotes in Rom. 9<sup>25, 26</sup> to support his doctrine of the acceptance of the long-rejected Gentiles.

Now, this domestic drama (chs. 1–3), with its interpretation, forms a continuous composition, and was written, as we have seen, while Jeroboam II still lived. Its enactment requires a considerable term of years; and Hosea's marriage, with which his career as a prophet began, cannot therefore have taken place much later than 760 B.C.,—within a few years of the startling appearance of Amos in North Israel. Thus the second of the discrepant dates assigned to Hosea in the heading (1<sub>1</sub>) is correct for the First Book of his prophecies. The first of these chronological data—"in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah"—is identical with Isa. 1<sub>1</sub>, and may have been borrowed from that place. At any rate, it is inappropriate to Hosea, for he was not a Judæan prophet; and it covers a period of thirty years or so after Jeroboam,—a period extending, in all probability, much beyond the term of Hosea's prophetic work.

There is nothing in the Second Book that

suggests a date later than the reign of Menahem in Israel, B.C. 748–737. It was in Menahem's reign that Assyria, under Tiglath-Pileser II, began to interfere in the politics of Palestine. This powerful monarch laid the kingdom of Samaria under heavy tribute, but left it still governed by its own kings, as we are told in 2 Kings 15<sup>19, 20</sup>: this agrees with the language of Hos. 5<sup>13</sup><sup>1</sup> 8<sup>9, 10</sup>, from which we gather that the overtures for a tributary alliance with Nineveh came from the Israelite king,—a policy likely enough on the part of a usurper like Menahem, seated on so insecure a throne. Ahaz adopted a similar course ten years later, when attacked by Syria and Israel. At this time Judah and Ephraim were both engaged in courting the favour of “king Jareb” (5<sup>13</sup>); and Tiglath-Pileser's monuments refer to tribute paid by Azariah (Uzziah) about the year 740. Meanwhile the Samaritan Court was intriguing with the rival empire of Egypt,—an experiment repeated with disastrous results by Hoshea in

<sup>1</sup> The name *Jareb* given to the Assyrian king here and in 10<sup>6</sup>, is one of Hosea's riddles; it appears to mean *Striver, Combatant*. The most plausible conjecture is that the name was invented by Hosea to signify the pugnacious character of this monarch, and the consequent folly of relying upon any peace made with him. There may be hidden in it, however, some allusion to occurrences of the time which we can no longer trace.

725 B.C. (2 Kings 17<sup>3-6</sup>): "They make alliance with Asshur, and oil is carried into Egypt" (Hos. 12<sup>1</sup>). The Israelite politicians had begun that practice so foolish, yet so natural in weak States lying between contending empires, of coquetting with each of their stronger neighbours and trying to play off the one against the other. It was the same policy that Isaiah later on condemned in the advisers of Hezekiah (chs. 30, 31). Hosea, in one of his epigrams, hits off this vacillation perfectly :

Ephraim is like a silly dove, that has no sense :  
 They cry to Egypt—they go to Assyria!  
 As they go I will spread over them My net,  
 Like the birds of heaven I will bring them down  
 (7<sup>11</sup>. 12).

Fluttering now here now there and answering to every call, what can be the fate of such a creature but to fall into the toils? However, the prophet as yet only foresees this calamity. From both the powers with which the Government of Samaria is trifling he apprehends punishment will come (7<sup>16</sup> 8<sup>13</sup>. 14 9<sup>6</sup> 11<sup>5</sup><sup>1</sup>). Clearly

<sup>1</sup> In this last passage, if the English rendering is correct, Hosea states distinctly that Assyria, and not Egypt, will be the place of captivity. But the translation is doubtful. Ewald and Orelli read the first clause as interrogative: "Shall he not return to the land of Egypt, and the Assyrian be his king?"

Hosea knows nothing of the destructive invasion of his country by Tiglath-Pileser in 734, nor of the previous attack upon Judah by Rezin and Pekah (735), about which he would certainly have had something to say if they had happened before he wrote.

We thus arrive at the fourteen years between the death of Jeroboam II and the accession of Pekah as the epoch of the events on which Hos. 4-14 is based; and the entire ministry of this prophet, on this estimate, covered a period of twenty years or so, from about 760 to 740 B.C.<sup>1</sup> In this brief period, Assyria, whose image looms in the distance "beyond Damascus" upon Amos'

In any case, there can be little doubt that the Israelites fled in large numbers to Egypt during the Assyrian invasion and conquest and were compelled to settle there, just as it befell with Jeremiah upon Nebuchadnezzar's conquest.

<sup>1</sup> Ewald thinks it probable that Hosea, who feared at one time an attack on his life at Bethel (see ch. 98, R. V. *margin*), migrated to Judah in the end, and there composed his second work. He thus accounts for the increasing severity of the prophet's references to Judah, since closer acquaintance impressed on him a less favourable opinion of the Southern kingdom. The Samaritan authorities are not likely to have heard with patience Hosea's diatribes. His Book, in any case, must surely have found its way to Jerusalem before the destruction of Samaria; and the resemblances of Hosea's to Micah's and Isaiah's prophecies suggest a personal connexion between the men, such as would be likely to take place if Hosea fled south about the year 740.



horizon, has come full into view; but this power has only so far threatened, and not directly assailed the national existence: "The wild beast has laid its paws on the land, but its claws are still sheathed" (Wellhausen). Within the same period the dynasty of Jehu has fallen, and the sentence of the prophets is fulfilled upon it. With its sudden fall the Samaritan kingdom is thrown into anarchy, and licence and violence rage in it with destructive fury.

As Hosea traces the ruin of Jehu's line back to the sin of its founder, "the bloodshed of Jezreel," so he finds rebellion lying at the very foundation of the Israelitish kingdom. Ephraimite though he is, he sees no hope for the separated tribes but in their returning to "seek Jehovah their God, and David their king" (35). He looks forward to the day when "the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel shall gather together, and shall appoint themselves *one head*;" it is only then that Jehovah will address them as "My people, and they shall be sons of the living God" (110-21). At this point the doctrine of Hosea touches that of the mysterious prophet of Zech. 9-11, whom we must study in our next Chapter. Hosea settles thus in radical fashion, as Amos had not done, the vexed question of the national schism.

In his views of the nation's future Hosea was also compelled to go far beyond Amos. For his predecessor it sufficed that a sifted remnant should be preserved, and in due time restored to the old land under the re-established line of David. With Hosea no sifting will suffice; the nation is corrupt to the core,—morally dead (131). There must be *a resurrection*, if Israel is ever to live again; that is the conclusion to which he finally comes,—and this miracle will be accomplished! ch. 13<sup>14</sup>; comp. 6<sup>2</sup> 11<sup>8-11</sup>:

From the power of Sheol I will redeem them,  
 From Death I will ransom<sup>1</sup> them!  
 Where are thy plagues, O Death?  
 Where thy sting, O Sheol?  
 Resentment shall be hid from Mine eyes.

—This is the highest flight of Hosea's prophecy; the apostle Paul pursues it to a yet loftier issue in 1 Cor. 15<sup>55</sup>. It is, however, of a *national*, not at all of individual, resurrection that Hosea

<sup>1</sup> This "ransoming" is the act of the Goël, the Redeeming Kinsman, who is bound by ties of blood relationship to recover the possessions of his house. So God must ransom, *even from the grave*, His son Israel. The great "Redeemer" of Isa. 40-66 is this same Goël.

The above rendering is that of Ewald and (substantially) Nowack. Orelli and others take an opposite view, as though Jehovah summoned the powers of Death and put away His relentings, that He might once and for ever *destroy* Israel. But

thinks; and his idea is followed up, along the same line, in Isa. 25, 26 and in Ezek. 37.

The last chapter of the Book reveals all the charm and all the tenderness of Hosea's nature, by its lovely portrayal of Israel's final repentance and her regenerate state. It is a dialogue between the Lord and contrite Ephraim: the latter "takes with him words" full of self-reproach and renouncement (vv. 2, 3), and Jehovah for His answer culls from all nature its fairest and most gracious emblems—the dew, the blooming lily, the deep-rooted and fragrant Lebanon cedar, the glory of the olive, the wealth of corn and wine—in order to set forth the affluence of His restored favour and the consummate blessedness of the new life on which Israel will enter in the day when she is redeemed from her iniquities.

We add here an outline of Hosea's prophecies, which, as we have already intimated, do not submit themselves to a systematic analysis.

this is not like Hosea; and if consistent with vv. 15, 16, it is in violent contradiction with ch. 14 immediately following. Ewald makes ver. 14 a parenthesis between the words of judgement in vv. 12 and 15, 16,—a vivid ray of hope bursting through the heavy clouds, which soon after clear completely away. Verse 14 is, upon our view, the antithesis of ver. 1 in ch. 13,—the revulsion of Hosea's violently excited feeling: Ephraim has died, but death itself shall not stay Jehovah's saving arm; He will shatter that iron prison-house and free His beloved Israel!

BOOK I.—The Parable of *the Prophet's wife Gomer and her children*, chs. 1–3 [11-11 21-23 of the Greek, Latin, and English Bibles correspond to 11-9 21-25 of the Hebrew].

Chs. 1 and 3 relate in narrative prose the story of Hosea's family, in its two periods of transgression and humiliation, with its moral for Israel briefly applied. Ch. 2, intervening between the two portions of the story, is a discourse on Israel's apostasy, punishment, and restoration, which is thrown into the form of a poetical address to the prophet's children. The rescue of Gomer follows in ch. 3 as a kind of earnest of the hoped-for redemption of Ephraim.

BOOK II.—The Discourse on *Israel's Whoredom*, chs. 4–14.

This long-sustained and impassioned address is a subsequent expansion of ch. 2 in Book I, with the parable dropped. The topics are the same,—Israel's *apostasy*, viewed as the breach of a marriage covenant, her *punishment*, and ultimate *restoration*. While the former discourse reflects the prosperous conditions of Jeroboam's reign, the latter has many allusions to the disorders of the time succeeding this king's death, and to the relations of Samaria with Assyria and Egypt as they existed in Menahem's time. So the Second Book rehearses Hosea's later, as the First his earlier ministry ; and Jeroboam's death is the dividing-point between them.

At 4<sub>1</sub> 5<sub>1</sub> 6<sub>4</sub> 8<sub>1</sub> 9<sub>1</sub> 9<sub>10</sub> 10<sub>1</sub> 11<sub>1</sub> 11<sub>12</sub> (Heb. 12<sub>1</sub>) 14<sub>1</sub> (Heb. 14<sub>2</sub>) there are new beginnings of discourse,

which may correspond in part to distinct occasions in the prophet's preaching; but the indications of this are slight and uncertain, and these breaks may only mark pauses in the plan of composition. (a) Chs. 4-7 dwell mainly on Israel's sin,—ch. 4 being quite general, while the subsequent chapters distinguish the sins of the ruling classes, *priests* and *nobles*; (b) chs. 8-13 are full of threatenings of judgement, with frequently renewed accusations of sin; only (c) in ch. 14 does mercy completely triumph over judgement, and this stormy Book ends in a burst of glorious sunshine. But earlier, in 5<sup>15-63</sup>, in 11<sup>8-11</sup>, in 13<sup>4</sup>, and above all in 13<sup>14</sup>, the same light is struggling through the gloom.

We have already pointed out the principal references to Hosea in later Scripture (see pp. 174, 175). The following may be also noted:

Zech.	9 <sup>10</sup> . 13. 16	10 <sup>6</sup> . 8-10	compared with Hos.	1 <sup>6-11</sup>
„	11 <sup>4</sup> . 5 and 13 <sup>9</sup>	„	„	12 <sup>8</sup> 2 <sup>23</sup>
Mic.	1 <sup>7</sup>	„	„	2 <sup>12</sup> 9 <sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup>
„	5 <sup>7</sup>	„	„	14 <sup>5</sup>
„	6 <sup>1</sup> . 2	„	„	4 <sup>1</sup> 12 <sup>2</sup>
„	6 <sup>10-12</sup>	„	„	11 <sup>12</sup> 12 <sup>7</sup> . 8
Zeph.	1 <sup>3</sup>	„	„	4 <sup>3</sup>
Hag.	1 <sup>6</sup>	„	„	4 <sup>10</sup>
Isa.	1 <sup>23</sup>	„	„	9 <sup>15</sup> <sup>2</sup>
„	3 <sup>13</sup> . 14	„	„	4 <sup>1</sup>
„	18 <sup>4</sup>	„	„	14 <sup>5</sup>
„	24 <sup>2</sup> . 4-12	„	„	43. 4
„	45 <sup>21</sup>	„	„	13 <sup>4</sup>
Mal.	4 <sup>2</sup>	„	„	6 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Where the “rewards” and “hire” are alike the wages of harlotry.

<sup>2</sup> Same play of words in Hebrew.

Jeremiah shows a particularly sympathetic acquaintance with Hosea : see beside Jer. 3,—

Jer. 2 <sub>2</sub>	compared with Hos. 2 <sub>15</sub>
„ 4 <sub>3</sub>	„ „ „ 10 <sub>12</sub>
„ 5 <sub>30</sub>	„ „ „ 6 <sub>10</sub>
„ 7 <sub>9</sub>	„ „ „ 4 <sub>2</sub>
„ 13 <sub>27</sub>	„ „ „ 8 <sub>5</sub>
„ 14 <sub>10</sub>	„ „ „ 8 <sub>13</sub> 9 <sub>9</sub>
„ 30 <sub>9. 22</sub>	„ „ „ 2 <sub>23</sub> 3 <sub>5</sub>

For the New Testament, there are further parallels in Matt. 2<sub>15</sub> and Hos. 11<sub>1</sub>; Luke 23<sub>30</sub> and Hos. 10<sub>8</sub>; 1 Pet. 2<sub>10</sub> and Hos. 2<sub>1</sub> and 23.

The references of Hosea to earlier history and institutions are numerous and valuable. He alludes to Adam's breach of covenant (6<sub>7</sub>, R.V.: the passage is, however, disputed); to Admah and Zeboim amongst the destroyed cities of the Plain (11<sub>8</sub>, as in Gen. 14<sub>2</sub>, Deut. 29<sub>23</sub>: not named in Gen. 19); to the story of Jacob's birth (12<sub>3</sub>), his going to Haran and his courtship of Rachel (12<sub>12. 13</sub>), his wrestling with the angel (12<sub>4</sub>); and frequently to the exodus from Egypt and the wilderness wanderings (2<sub>15</sub> 8<sub>13</sub> 9<sub>3. 10</sub> 11<sub>1</sub> 12<sub>9. 13</sub> 13<sub>4. 5</sub>); to the valley of Achor (2<sub>15</sub>); to the idolatry of Baal-Peor, and the shameful tale of Gibeah in the days of the Judges (9<sub>9. 10</sub> 10<sub>9</sub>). These incidental, popular allusions imply an extensive and familiar knowledge of their early history, as we find it given in the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges, existing among the Israelites

of the eighth century. When, therefore, the prophet says in Jehovah's name (8 11, 12), "Though I write for him [Ephraim] My law in ten thousand (precepts), they are counted as a strange thing" (R.V.), and in 4 6, "Thou hast forgotten the law of thy God," it is a natural inference that the Northern Israelites (and if so, still more the Judæans) already possessed, in some shape or other, a considerable authoritative *written* Torah, which supplied a standard for judging the national conduct. In both places it is to be observed that this Torah of Jehovah is closely connected with the priestly system, as is the case in the Pentateuchal laws; and the infidelity of the priests is made answerable for the disloyalty of the people. Ewald draws the right conclusion from these reproofs when he says that vv. 11-13 relate to "the growing multiplication of foreign religions and of savage customs connected therewith, and a consequent utter disparagement of the genuine Israelitish Mosaic laws, which at that time had been very generally committed to writing,—with respect to which transgressions Jehovah threatens in anger to send the people back again into slavery in Egypt,—a threat the strongest that could be uttered in those comparatively ancient times, and which touches the most deeply-rooted national feelings of Israel."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE EARLIER ZECHARIAH

Starting-point of Zech. 9-11—These Chapters claimed for three different Periods—The Traditional View (Sixth Century)—Zech. 9-14 and Malachi—Contrast between Zech. 1-8 and 9-11—The Latest Hypothesis (Third Century)—The Reference to Greece in 9<sub>13</sub>—Relation of Zech. 9-11 to Jeremiah and Ezekiel—Archbishop Newcome's Theory (Eighth Century)—Resemblance of Zech. 9-11 to Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah—Pleasantness and Bands—"Three Shepherds cut off in one Month"—Woe to the Worthless Shepherd!—Portraiture of the Author—His Standpoint—Zechariah the Son of Jeberechiah—New Testament Fulfilment—Analysis of the Book.

**A**MOS and Hosea, in accordance with traditional belief (2 Sam. 7, Pss. 2, 18, etc.), had indicated the throne of David as the rallying-point and centre of hope for Israel under its impending calamities (see Amos 9<sub>8-12</sub>, Hos. 3<sub>4, 5</sub>). The words with which Hosea concludes his First Book are most explicit, and relate expressly to the Northern tribes:



Many days shall the sons of Israel abide with no king, and no prince, and no sacrifice, and no pillars, and no ephod and teraphim. Afterwards shall the sons of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and *David their King*; and they shall come trembling to Jehovah and to His goodness in the latter days.

This happy reunion will not take place until the nation has been afflicted and scattered,—“sown” amongst the heathen, according to the token *Jizr'e-el* (see p. 176; comp. Zech. 10<sup>9</sup>); first it must be *Lo'-ruchamah* and *Lo'-'ammi*, then in the days of forgiveness *Ruchamah* and *'Ammi* once again. Now it is in this oracle of Hosea that the unknown author of Zech. 9–11 finds his motive and starting-point. He speaks inspired by “Jehovah,” who “hath an eye upon men, and upon *all the tribes of Israel*” (9<sub>1</sub>); he has received a vision of the blessed “latter days” that Hosea predicted, and would fain hasten their coming. To him it seems possible that even now, at the eleventh hour and before heavier chastisement has fallen, Israel may be saved; and taking his two staves of Pleasantness and Bands, furnished with the delightful promises of national reconciliation and victory related in chs. 9 and 10, he sets out on his shepherd-mission to the unhappy people of the Ten Tribes. He preaches to them with some

prospect of success, until his ministry abruptly ends in the manner described in 11<sup>sb-14</sup>. Such is the view of this very difficult section of prophecy that is implied in the title prefixed to the present Chapter, and in the position assigned to it in our order of exposition.

Before proceeding further on this assumption, it is necessary to show the grounds upon which it rests, and to discuss the opinions held as to the date and original connexion of these chapters. Setting aside other less probable hypotheses, there are three conflicting theories in the field respecting the origin of Zech. 9–11: (1) the traditional view, imputing chs. 9–14 to the Zechariah of chs. 1–8, or to an immediate successor or successors of his in *the sixth century*; (2) the theory elaborated by Dr Bernhard Stade and endorsed by a number of recent scholars, who hold chs. 9–14 to be a work of *the third century B.C.*, relative to the circumstances of Israel under the Ptolemies and Seleucids, the Greek rulers of Egypt and Syria at that time; (3) the opinion first advanced by Archbishop Newcome in 1785, and subsequently developed and vindicated by a succession of the ablest critics of different schools,—including Ewald, Bleek, Reuss, Riehm, Schultz, and (with qualifications) Kuenen, Cheyne, Driver,—that

the author of Zech. 9–11 must be distinguished both from that of chs. 1–8 and of chs. 12–14, that he was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, who preached in Northern Israel before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. Thus our author is placed in the midst of the splendid constellation of prophets which distinguished *the eighth century*, and he falls under the Assyrian period.

1. The fact that it is traditional is the one strong reason for the traditional date. There is no ancient evidence for any diversity of authorship in the Book of Zechariah,—with the exception (and it is a serious exception) of the reference in Matt. 27<sup>v.</sup> 10, where the words of Zech. 11<sup>12.</sup> 13 are ascribed to “Jeremy the prophet.”<sup>1</sup> It has been inferred from this that the authorship of the latter part of Zechariah was undecided in the first century; but other explanations are, perhaps, more probable. On the other hand, we have no certain proof that the compilers of the Twelve, when they put chs. 9–11 and 12–14 after the work of Zechariah, intended these pieces to be read as his; the chapter-divisions, it must be remembered, are quite modern and of no account in the

<sup>1</sup> On this account Joseph Mede, in A.D. 1653, assailed the unity of the Book of Zechariah. He first pointed out the pre-exilic marks of chs. 9–11.

argument. The heading of Zech. 1<sub>1</sub> embraces only six verses; each principal section of chs. 1–8 has a new title of its own; and the two sections commencing at 9<sub>1</sub> and 12<sub>1</sub> are marked off from the foregoing by the absence of any author's name, and by a peculiar heading common to them both and to Mal. 1<sub>1</sub>,—"the burden" (or "utterance) of the word of Jehovah." *Malachi* (*My-messenger*) is a most unlikely proper name in Hebrew, and has apparently been transferred, in default of a personal title, to ch. 1<sub>1</sub> (see R.V. *margin*) from 3<sub>1</sub>. It is suggested that Zech. 9–11, 12–14, and "Malachi" were in the first instance anonymous prophecies placed at the end of the collection, and that in course of time the two former sections were annexed to Zechariah, being unclaimed for any author, while a title was found in the body of the Book—intended at first, it may be, as a *subject*-title—for the last of the three.<sup>1</sup>

But for their canonical position, no one would think of identifying Zech. 9–11 with 1–8. Scarcely any sections of prophecy can be named with fewer points of contact than these two. The only marked similarities of expression are in 2<sub>10</sub> and 7<sub>14b</sub> compared with 9<sub>9</sub> and 9<sub>8a</sub>; these identical phrases occur besides, however, in Zeph.

<sup>1</sup> See Driver's *Introduction*, pp. 331–333.

3<sub>14</sub> and Ezek. 35<sub>7</sub> respectively. Chs. 1–8 are as prosaic in style as anything in the Old Testament; only occasionally do they rise to an animated rhythmical movement; and yet visions such as those of chs. 1–6 naturally run into poetry, with a poetical mind (comp. Amos 7–9). Chs. 9–11 are written in Hebrew verse, in a vein of imaginative eloquence resembling that of Joel and Amos; only, the narrative of 11<sub>4-14</sub> is in lively prose. The author of chs. 1–8 is methodical and precise in his references to time, place, and person, beyond any other of the *Nebi'im*: in chs. 9–11 these way-marks entirely fail us. Eight times the former author repeats the declaration, “The word of Jehovah (of hosts) came unto me” (or “Zechariah”), and thirteen times, “Thus saith Jehovah of hosts”: *not once* does either of these expressions occur in the latter,—only once the similar, “Thus said Jehovah my God” (11<sub>4</sub>). The dominant ideas and representations of chs. 1–8 are different from those of either 9–11 or 12–14. One feels in leaving ch. 8 that one has passed into another atmosphere and environment, and is conversing with a very different mind. The existence of the monarchy is presupposed; the houses of Judah and of Joseph, the empires of Assyria and Egypt, occupy the field of view;

Ephraim still has its chariots, Judah its cavalry, and the air is full of the sounds of battle and the fall of kingdoms. The unity of the Book of Zechariah is, however, stoutly defended by some able modern critics.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Kirkpatrick recognises the difficulty of maintaining the single authorship; he holds the writers of the two latter sections of the canonical Book to be successors of the Zechariah of the Exile, belonging to "the first sixty or seventy years after the Return." His reasons for the post-exilic date lie chiefly in the relations of Zech. 9-11 to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and in its advanced messianic doctrine;<sup>2</sup> but they are unconvincing, and wherever this writing is placed subsequently to 722 B.C., it "hangs in the air, and has no solid basis" (Riehm).

2. The hypothesis of Stade<sup>3</sup> is based largely on the relation of dependence in which he finds the author of Zech. 9-14 (a single work, in his opinion) to stand towards other prophets. The one passage in the text itself which speaks

<sup>1</sup> See Dr C. H. H. Wright's *Bampton Lectures* on "Zechariah"; Köhler, *Die nachexilische Propheten*, and article in Herzog's *Real-Encyclopädie*; Mr W. H. Lowe's *Hebrew Student's Commentary*; also Dr M. Dods, *Postexilic Prophets* (B.C. Handbooks).

<sup>2</sup> See his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 438-474.

<sup>3</sup> *Zeitschrift für die A.T. Wissenschaft*, 1881, 1882.

decidedly for the time of the Greek dominion, and "the only grave obstacle to a date later than 722 B.C." (Driver), is the reference to *the Greeks* in 9<sup>13</sup>. Here "the sons of Javan" figure, not as in Joel 3<sup>6</sup> (and naturally in the ninth and eighth centuries: see pp. 88, 89, 105), in the character of slave-buyers at the Phœnician and Philistine marts, but as the military oppressors of Israel, against whom "the sons of Zion" must be roused to wage desperate war (vv. 14-16). Such words would have been simply unmeaning to Judæans of the eighth century. The events a seer of God announces may be very distant, but they must be assumed to stand in some practical relation to the persons he addresses; and "prophecy, however high and far it soars, has always its starting-point from earth, from a spot within human eyesight and contemporary interest" (M. Dods).

This reference to Javan is almost as great a stumbling-block in the way of the traditional theory as of Newcome's hypothesis. In 520 B.C., when Zechariah saw his visions, the Persian Empire was in its first vigour, and to talk then of stirring up Jerusalem against the Greeks would have been more strange than if one should propose to-day to stir up Delhi or Cairo against the Japanese. It is true that Zechariah, if he lived to 480 B.C., would probably hear through

the Phœnicians of the defeats of the Persians at Marathon and Salamis, and might from that occasion predict the rise of the Greek Empire in the East; but the words of ch. 9<sup>13</sup> assume Greece already in the ascendant over Zion. Dr Kirkpatrick, who is a very sober and moderate critic, feels so strongly this anachronism that he decides at last on "the omission of the words *against thy sons, O Greece*" as "the only true remedy."<sup>1</sup> The variant reading of the LXX (*against the sons of the Greeks*) throws doubt on the genuineness of the clause. It disturbs, he says, the balance and rhythm of the sentence, and is out of keeping with "the generality of description" characterising the passage. "Nothing," he adds, "could have been more natural than the insertion of such a gloss in the Maccabæan times; and it was facilitated by a misunderstanding of the meaning of the clause to which it was attached." The Hebrew verb rendered to "stir up," means to "brandish" or "wield (a spear)" in 2 Sam. 23<sup>18</sup>; similarly in Isa. 10<sup>26</sup>. This interpretation makes the disputed clause superfluous; the series of warlike metaphors is completed by the omission, and the rhythm of the verse rectified. Then it reads, in Kirkpatrick's rendering:

<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 472, 473.



For I bend Me Judah for a bow,  
Lay Ephraim on it for an arrow ;  
Wield thy sons, O Zion, for a spear,  
And make them as a hero's sword.

This appears to us a reasonable and well-considered emendation. At the same time, the Maccabæan seer who, upon this conjecture, pointed the text against Greece in application to the great conflict of his age, has added a fine prophetic stroke to the original. He has condensed into his phrase ("Thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece!") the long strife between the Hebraic and the Hellenic spirit which continues to the present hour, and has proved to be a main factor in the development of human history.

Upon Stade's hypothesis, the Judah and Ephraim of Zech. 9-11 represent the revived divisions of Judaism in the third century; Assyria and Egypt become symbols of the Syrian and Egyptian-Greek powers; the "three shepherds" whom Jehovah summarily cuts off, are successive heathen empires; and "the author is no longer a prophet," but a "learned scribe, who has collected unfulfilled predictions of ancient prophets into an awkwardly framed eschatological picture of his own, working in here and there ideas belonging to his own times" (Riehm). This interpretation is arbitrary and

unnatural. There is not a hint in the text that Judah and Ephraim, Egypt and Assyria, are used as symbols and lay figures; the author's references are as actual and straightforward as those of Amos and Hosea. The identification of the three shepherds with three heathen governments is particularly forced. The parable of the two sticks representing Judah and Ephraim in Ezek. 37<sup>15-28</sup> lends no support to the notion of a symbolic or "archaistic" use of the tribal names; for in Ezekiel's time the people of the two kingdoms were both in exile, and a common restoration was hoped for.

Here, and elsewhere (chs. 34, 28<sup>2-4, 8</sup>), Ezekiel is unmistakably connected with Zech. 9-11, as Jeremiah is in 23<sup>1-4</sup> 25<sup>34-38</sup> (R.V.) 31<sup>27</sup> 50<sup>7</sup>.<sup>1</sup> But notwithstanding the keen arguments to the contrary,—both of Hengstenberg in support of the traditional view, and of Stade for his extreme hypothesis,—the priority throughout belongs to Zechariah. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both of them well read in earlier prophecy, and given to echoing and expanding ideas of their pre-

<sup>1</sup> Other interesting parallels, besides those in contemporary prophets afterwards noticed, are as follow: for Micah, comp. 5<sup>5</sup>. 6. 10. 11 and 7<sup>10</sup>. 12. 14 with Zech. 9<sup>10</sup> 10<sup>11</sup> and 10<sup>5</sup>. 10; for Zephaniah (a great imitator), 2<sup>4-7</sup> 3<sup>14</sup> with Zech. 9<sup>4-7</sup> and 9; also Isa. 5<sup>26</sup> 11<sup>11</sup> and Zech. 10<sup>8</sup>. 10; Isa. 61<sup>1</sup>. 7 and Zech. 9<sup>12</sup>; Mal. 4<sup>3</sup> and Zech. 10<sup>5</sup>.

decessors; and the conceptions common to them with our author are expressed more simply and boldly in the latter. On bare literary grounds, we find it impossible to conceive that Zech. 9–11 is the work of an imitator,—a clever third-century scribe, stitching together an apocalypse from remnants of old prophecy, with patches added from his own hand to eke it out and to give a modern finish to the garment! We are reduced to the same alternative here as in the criticism of Joel: the work is either *an old classic* admired and copied by succeeding authors, or *a late mosaic* made up of excerpts from preceding authors. In neither case can our decision be doubtful (see pp. 97–99). Stade's hypothesis has also to surmount the grave difficulty of explaining how any writing so late as 280 B.C. in its origin found its way into the Prophetical Canon.

3. From the third century we are driven back to *the eighth* to find the environment of this prophecy.

The first deliverance, 9<sup>1-8</sup>, resembles Amos 1, 2, and in a less degree Joel 3 and Obadiah; as with the two latter prophets, the judicial review of Israel's heathen troublers ends in promise of blessing for herself. Nothing is said of the neighbours who harassed the Jews of the Restoration; the peoples figuring here are Pales-

tinian powers of the times before the Assyrian invasion. The mysterious *Hadrach* of ver. 1 is now identified by Schrader<sup>1</sup> with a district called *Hatarika* in Assyrian inscriptions about this time, and associated with Damascus and Hamath. Damascus, with the Phœnician and Philistine powers, is threatened here as in Amos: the Syrians had doubtless revolted from Israel on the death of Jeroboam, and the Philistines were always a thorn in the side of Judah. Ammon, Moab, and Edom denounced by Amos are passed over by Zechariah; they remained subject to Uzziah of Judah. The prophet's disgust at the unclean food of the Philistines reminds us of Hos. 8<sup>13</sup> <sup>2</sup> and 9<sup>3</sup>. His enthusiasm for Jerusalem (vv. 8. 9) is that of a fellow-citizen of Isaiah. The "peaceful King coming" to Zion, who is "righteous and *saved*, lowly and riding on an ass," presents a striking contrast to Jeroboam II and his oppressive military rule, exalted with the pride that goes before a fall. When "the chariot" is to be "cut off from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem" (ver. 10; comp. Hos. 14<sup>3</sup>, Isa. 27 31<sup>1</sup>, Mic. 5<sup>10</sup>), both kingdoms exist, in warlike force; in either 520 or 280 B.C. such a threat would have been pointless. The

<sup>1</sup> *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, ii. 153.

<sup>2</sup> See Orelli's or Ewald's *Commentary* on this passage.

“covenant” which in 9<sup>11, 12</sup> affords “hope” to Israel’s “war-prisoners,” is the fundamental covenant between Jehovah and His people, to which Hosea appealed in chs. 6<sup>7</sup> 8<sup>1</sup>; like every ancient covenant (to say nothing of Ex. 24), it is ratified by sacrificial “blood”; and in the eighth century the Israelites already had their exiles, fondly remembered, who were scattered in distant lands (Amos 1<sup>6, 9</sup>, Joel 3<sup>1-8</sup>: see p. 105). The desired reunion of the tribes is pictured in ver.<sup>13</sup> (see also p. 197) by a fine poetical figure, and in terms suitable to the national situation at the middle of the eighth century: Ephraim is to be wedded to Judah as the arrow to the bow-string. The imagery of vv.<sup>14, 15</sup> is powerful, if somewhat crude, and reminds one of the military style of Obadiah and Joel. Israel’s rejection and general captivity are spoken of in 10<sup>6-12</sup> as by a prophet who treads in Hosea’s steps, and who regards as a settled matter Hosea’s sentence against the Ephraimite State; but he promises to the condemned “house of Joseph” a speedy restoration, upon their acceptance of the proffered messianic hope, which from the beginning was lodged with “the house of Judah.”<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to

<sup>1</sup> The language of ver. 6 closely follows that of Hos. 11<sup>11</sup> 12<sup>9</sup> 21. 23 9<sup>17</sup> 14<sup>9</sup>, and might seem designed to extract the utmost hope from Hosea’s varying utterances.

suppose the captivity of the year 734 already past when vv.9-11 were written; but only that such a doom is accepted as certain, and our prophet points to the brighter days that are possible beyond it. It is just this strain that Isaiah takes up in grander style (821-97), a little later, when the stroke of judgement was already falling.

Ch. 111-3 is a bold apostrophe, with the true ring of Hebrew poetry in it, that reverberates the terror of the Assyrian invasion at the moment when it fell crashing on the Northern and Eastern lands of Israel, sweeping down high and low before it, and driving the shepherds from their pastures and the lions from their covert in the Jordan banks. It is a *kinah*, a death-dirge over the ruined kingdom, reminding us of Amos 5 (see p. 145):

Open, O Lebanon, thy doors,  
 That fire may devour thy cedars!  
 Wail, O thou fir-tree,  
 For fallen is the cedar,  
 Yea, the lordly ones are ravaged!  
 Wail, O ye oaks of Bashan,  
 For the forest fastness is laid low!

Hark, the wailing of the shepherds,  
 For ravaged is their lordliness!  
 Hark, the roaring of the young lions,  
 For ravaged is the pride of Jordan!

With this cry of distress the curtain falls, and the scene of the prophet's visions closes suddenly in darkness.

Verses 4-14 read as a veiled narrative of the pastorate whose message and teaching have been given us; it terminates in vv. 16. 17 with a fearful curse on some "worthless shepherd," whose appearance puts an end to the hopes of rescue which the prophet had cherished for Israel's "flock of slaughter." The tale is told with reserve, like that of Hos. 1-3, in such a way that figure and fact cannot be quite disentangled; but its personal traits are sharply marked, and the passion that glows beneath it forbids us to suppose that the writer is dealing in emblems and sketching some distant, apocalyptic scene. A living man speaks to us in these lines, speaks with a burning heart and quivering lips; his story is one of woeful failure, of a ministry of reconciliation on which he entered full of pity and generous ardour, but which ended in ruin for those he would have saved, and in humiliation and insult to himself. "I shepherded," he writes in ver. 7, "the flock of slaughter,—verily the most miserable of sheep"; and he depicts their plight (vv. 4. 5) just as Amos and Hosea described the misery of the poor in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes (see especially Amos 2 6-8 8 4-6, Hos. 11 7. 8).

His call to feed this sorry flock is stated in the same matter-of-fact way in which the elder prophets related their own call: "Thus said Jehovah my God," etc. (ver. 4; comp. Amos 7<sup>15</sup>, Hos. 1<sup>2</sup>).

When the prophet, upon his expedition, takes for the "staves" of his shepherding *Pleasantness*<sup>1</sup> and *Bands*, this figure describes the temper and purport of his teaching. He held out, in the best eloquence he could command, an enchanting prospect of reunion, and of victory and prosperous peace then ensuing to the afflicted tribes on their returning to their God and their rightful king (9<sup>9</sup>, 10 10<sup>6</sup>, 7).

But this zealous pastor can be as stern as he is gentle: "And I destroyed," he relates, "the three shepherds in one month" (ver. 8). There is a singular coincidence between this "month" and that memorable "space of a month" (2 Kings 15<sup>13</sup>) which began with the death of Zechariah,

<sup>1</sup> This *Pleasantness* (or *Charm*), it seems to us, is subjective, lying in the prophet's manner and the spirit of his message, rather than objective as consisting in the *pleasant state of things* promised to the people or the *gracious relations to God* to which they would be restored. Prov. 3<sup>17</sup> 15<sup>26</sup> 16<sup>24</sup> (*words of pleasantness*), Pss. 27<sup>4</sup> 90<sup>17</sup> (*the beauty of Jehovah our God*), are the only other examples of the word. Instead of rating and thundering at sinners as Amos did, or stinging them with reproaches like Hosea, this preacher will *charm* his hearers into goodness; the rod of censure and threatening he will replace by the flower-wreathed wand of hope and fair promise.



Jeroboam's son, and ended with the death of his murderer Shallum at the hands of Menahem. Kings, equally with prophets, are "shepherds" of the people in ancient speech. It is likely enough that some third usurper arose during this struggle for the Samarian throne, only to be cut down at once, whose ephemeral name has disappeared from history.<sup>1</sup> This identification falls in with the other marks of time we have noted, and it supplies the only plausible interpretation of the prophet's "one month." He ascribes the destruction of the evil rulers to himself, or to the prophets collectively, inasmuch as they had fallen through the act of God and in accordance with the prophetic word. Hosea wrote, with similar reference :

I have hewed them down by the prophets,  
I have slain them by the words of My mouth ;  
And My judgement goeth forth as light (6 5).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ewald thought he detected the third competitor under the obscure and probably corrupt Hebrew words *Qobol-'am* in 2 Kings 15<sup>10</sup> ("before the people," Eng. Vers.), which he read as a proper name.

<sup>2</sup> Hosea's allusion in this context (64) to the brief and deceptive signs of repentance in Israel may very well be synchronous with the indications of temporary success in the ministry of our prophet, which we gather from 117. In that case the words of invitation in Hos. 61-3 are parallel to Zech. 9, 10. "My judgement" is the preferable reading of the ancient versions (R. V. *margin*).

In vain, however, does the good shepherd ply his staves of Pleasantness and Bands and free the sheep from the cruel lords who had misruled and slaughtered them. They prove incorrigible; and shepherd and sheep before long are at desperate issue with each other :

Then<sup>1</sup> my soul grew impatient with them,  
 And also their soul loathed me.  
 And I said, I will not shepherd you :  
 As for the dying,—let it die ;  
 And the perishing,—let it perish !  
 And those that are left, let them eat each the flesh  
 of its companion ! (vv. 8b. 9).

What has become now of the staff of Pleasantness? The words of ver. 9 have broken it utterly; our prophet changes his honeyed accents for tones bitterer than those of Amos or Hosea (10); and “the poor of the flock” that still gave heed to him sorrowfully recognise in this rupture “the word of Jehovah” (ver. 11). To complete the irony of the situation, the prophet asks to be paid off as a discharged shepherd, and *thirty shekels* are weighed out to him,—“the goodly

<sup>1</sup> The “For” of the R. V. here is not an improvement. It is not required by the Hebrew, and makes ver. 8b an explanation of 8a, which has its ground already in ver. 5. In reality, 8b commences a new paragraph, and accounts for the prophet’s conduct described in vv. 9-14. See Ewald, or Orelli, on the connexion,

price," he says, "that I was priced at by them!" It was the valuation of a common slave (Ex. 21<sup>32</sup>), and he scornfully flings from him the paltry sum (ver. 13). His last act is to break his second staff of Bands, signifying that the hope of "brotherhood between Judah and Israel," the establishment of which had been the dream of his life, is now abandoned.

If we are on the right historical track, then the breaking of the staff of Bands probably points to the accession of the murderous Pekah to the throne of Samaria in the year 735, who joined Rezin of Syria in the disastrous attack on Judah which forms the occasion of Isaiah's prophesying in chs. 7, 8. No ruler more fitly deserved, or perhaps more fully experienced, the curse uttered in vv. 16, 17 than this reckless and fierce usurper. In the next year (734) the Assyrian invasion overturned his throne and plunged his people into unspeakable misery.

Our inquiry brings us to the conclusion that the author of this little Book was contemporary with Hosea and Isaiah, and closely connected with them both. He stood in the very middle of the splendid constellation of prophetic writers which distinguished the eighth century; and he preached in North Israel, whether continuously or at intervals, from about 750 to

735 B.C. If there are isolated expressions, above all the allusion to "the sons of Javan" in 9<sup>13</sup>, which suggest a far later date, the general strain, style, and intent of the three chapters speak, to our mind, imperatively for the epoch now supposed. To imagine the piece written under pre-exilic forms and names and with eighth-century colouring by a post-exilic author, is to make it nothing less than *a miracle of fiction*. The relevance, consistency, and practical force of the interpretation, when carried out from the standpoint assumed, afford the best argument for its correctness.

It is possible now to form some idea of the character and personality of this unknown prophet, who made a last heroic attempt to save the people of the Ten Tribes. He is a Judæan, as Amos was, but probably a man of Jerusalem; he shares Isaiah's love for Zion and the boundless hopes associated in the circle of Isaiah with the throne and house of David. The grief of the national schism lies heavily on his heart; and he is distressed by the suffering of the Northern tribes, whose kingdom was rent by the fierce strife of their rulers at the fall of the Jehuite dynasty. He is a sanguine and impulsive man, born to be the leader of a forlorn hope. He knows Amos' and Hosea's promises touching the

exaltation of David's throne and the final recovery, after chastisement, of the alienated tribes. There has come to him a clear and delightful vision of the Davidic King who is to reign one day in Zion, and his soul is on fire for its accomplishment. If Israel could but see what he has seen, if all her tribes could understand the blessings in store for them and the irresistible strength that their reunion will impart, surely the prospect would charm them from their rebellion, and God's goodness will lead them to repentance. While Northern Israel is harassed and distracted, at this very time (under Uzziah and Jotham) "Jehovah of hosts has visited the house of Judah" (10<sub>3</sub>. 4); and everything may be hoped from its revived strength, if supported by a united people. Should Israel rally at the Lord's summons around the standard of David, though the threatened captivity befall them, the disaster may be retrieved, and Assyria and Egypt will themselves be humbled by those on whom they have brought affliction (10<sub>8-12</sub>).

For a while the fickle Ephraimites were taken with this new prophet from Judah, and listened to his dreams; but their "goodness" proved again to be as "the morning cloud and early dew" (Hos. 6 4). Before long the same indifference and ridicule are dealt out to him which his pre-

decessors had experienced; and with hot resentment he shakes the dust of Samaria from his feet and leaves the miserable flock of the house of Joseph to their cruel shepherd and their well-deserved fate. His labours and shepherd-like devotion are wasted; his heaven-inspired program is laughed to scorn. As it has been with many an eager reformer and philanthropist since, the prophet's sympathies turn to fierce disgust at the viciousness, the crass stupidity and levity of the multitude, whom he finds it impossible to help. He was a true prophet of God, but evidently not as patient as he was ardent and courageous. Hosea's long day of sorrow closed with a sunlit evening; his comrade's noontide of splendour ends in a storm of black and un pitying wrath.

This prophet does not exhibit the ethical breadth and force of Amos, nor the religious inwardness and depth of Hosea; he may not have seen so deeply into the moral state of the people, nor apprehended so clearly as those prophets did the conditions of national salvation. In these respects he appears to represent an earlier phase of revelation and is nearer to Obadiah and Joel than to the great masters of Israel who were his immediate predecessors, in whose steps he had striven to tread. He is not absorbed as they

were, and as his Judæan contemporary Isaiah was, in the vision and the glory of Jehovah Himself; he adds nothing specially to the doctrine of God, to the theology proper of the Old Testament. There is more in him of the Israelitish patriot, and less of the spiritual teacher of all time, than in Amos or Hosea.

But the author of Zech. 9–11 has his distinction and glory. He has made the hope of the Messiah peculiarly his own. He seized, and has expressed with new and luminous force, that watchword of the inviolability of Zion, the imperishableness of Jehovah's visible kingdom amongst men, which Obadiah and Joel inscribed on the banners of prophecy. The picture drawn in chap. 9 of the perfect King whom Zion is destined to give to Israel and the nations, is his great and original contribution to divine prophecy. This ideal is based on earlier representations, such as those of 2 Sam. 23 and Pss. 45 and 72; but if our dates are correct, it holds precedence of Isaiah's and Micah's messianic passages. Internal evidence, it seems to us, confirms this order, and Isaiah 9 is better understood when Zech. 9 is read before it. The dynastic promise has now become individual. The messianic heirship belongs from this time,

not to the house of David at large and in general, but to *a distinct person* of well-marked character and attributes.

The style of this author is not so individual, so sharply featured as that distinguishing others of his age. His extant work is perhaps too brief to allow us to judge adequately of his powers. Still, even in this respect he is not without decided merit and force (see pp. 193, 200–204). We cannot claim for him the finished grace of Joel, the sustained loftiness of Amos, the quick fancy and thrilling pathos of Hosea, the splendour, wealth, and fulness of Isaiah's thought; but he has a poetic fire, a generous sensibility, and a trenchant energy, that make him worthy to rank with such companions as these. He belongs to the same order of poet-operators.

We may here observe, touching the relations of Isaiah and his unknown contemporary, that the latter is identified by some with the friend of Isaiah, "Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah" by name, whom he took as "a faithful witness to record" the document conferring on his future son the dreadful title of *Mahershalalhashbaz* (Isa. 8 i. 2). The LXX reads for *Jeberechiah* the shorter form *Barachias*. Now, the post-exilic Zechariah is called in the heading of his Book



(ch. 11) "*the son of Berechiah* (= Barachias), the son of Iddo," while in Ezra 5<sub>1</sub> and 6<sub>14</sub> the same man is twice mentioned as "the son of Iddo." It is quite possible that the Zechariah of Ezra was named from his better known grandfather instead of his father. On the other hand, the conjecture is that the Zechariah of ch. 11 was originally designated, as in Ezra, *son of Iddo*, while 9<sub>1</sub> at first contained the name *Zechariah, the son of Berechiah*; and that the double patronymic of the received text in 11 is due to the combination of the names of 11 and 9<sub>1</sub> by the Jewish editors, who erroneously identified the two similarly named authors. This is a curious and a possible suggestion, but incapable of proof.<sup>1</sup> Zechariahs were numerous in the eighth century (see, besides those mentioned, 2 Kings 15<sub>8</sub> 18<sub>2</sub>, 1 Chron. 5<sub>7</sub>, 2 Chron. 26<sub>5</sub> 29<sub>13</sub>); and various identifications have been suggested amongst them. In default of another name, we have ventured to call our prophet "the earlier Zechariah."

Of this Zechariah the saying of St Peter is eminently true, that the prophets spoke of "the grace that should come" to others, and "ministered not for themselves" but for distant and better

<sup>1</sup> See another theory of the union of Sections I and II on p. 192. Possibly the two explanations might be combined.

times (1 Ep. 110-12). For its immediate purpose, his ministry was an ignominious failure; its aim was to be fulfilled at a time and in a manner widely different from his thoughts. He returned from his mission to Ephraim a defeated and sorrowful man. But for his disappointment he has had a splendid compensation. When Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph on Palm Sunday, it was in terms of the Scripture of this prophet that He chose to proclaim Himself the Christ. "When He had found a young ass, He took His seat thereon, as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt!" (John 12<sup>14</sup>. 15). The prophetic signal was recognised after 770 years, and the Jewish multitude cried to Jesus, "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Belied for ages, this sure word of prophecy was accomplished in its season to the letter, and of set purpose, by Him that "cometh and will not tarry."

Another strange coincidence, arising not from the prophet's joyous words but from his sad experience, links him closely to our Lord and his. For "thirty pieces of silver" Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot. When the remorseful traitor flung his bribe on the Temple floor, and the priests gathered up "the price of blood"

and "bought with it the potter's field," St Matthew adds (27<sup>3-10</sup>), "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet,<sup>1</sup> saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was priced, whom they of the sons of Israel did price; and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." So this noble unknown prophet, accepted by Israel only to be insultingly disowned to the undoing of his rejecters, became a mournful type of that great Shepherd of the sheep whom the Jewish people heard gladly, to cry at last, Away with Him!

Thus ended the last attempt of the prophets to save the revolted kingdom of Israel. Within fifteen years of this episode Samaria was destroyed by the Assyrians, and the nation of the Ten Tribes was effaced from the records of history.

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the reference of this prophecy to *Jeremiah* by St Matthew, see pp. 16, 191. The Evangelist quotes freely, not following exactly either the Hebrew text or the LXX. Ewald and others read "treasury" for "potter" (the words are nearly the same in Hebrew), in harmony with the clause that follows: "I cast them into the treasury, *in the house of the Lord.*" The LXX renders, "to the smelting furnace." The *amount* of the money, not its final destination, seems to be the essential point of correspondence. The prophet and the Christ are each in turn valued by the sons of Israel at a slave's worth,— "a goodly price!"

## ANALYSIS OF ZECHARIAH 9-11

I. Vision of Judgement on surrounding Heathen Peoples, 9<sup>1-8</sup> :

1. On the Syrian powers,—Hadrach, Damascus, Hamath (vv.1. 2) ;

2. On the Phœnician cities, Tyre and Zidon, despite their wisdom and maritime wealth (2-4) ;

3. On the Philistine towns,—discriminated with the interest natural in a Judæan (5-7).

4. From this tide of judgement Jerusalem will be shielded by Jehovah (8).

The course which the storm of Jehovah's anger takes is that naturally followed by an Assyrian invading army, entering from the north-east and sweeping down the coast to the south-west.

II. Vision of Zion's coming King and His Kingdom, 9<sup>9-17</sup> :

1. His character and appearance (ver.9) ;

2. His peaceful and wide rule (10) ;

3. The deliverance of Israel's scattered exiles (11. 12) ;

4. The glorious conflicts and victories of the reunited people (13-15) ;

5. The splendour and plenty then to be enjoyed by the nation (16. 17).

## III. Promise of Deliverance beyond the Present Trouble, ch. 10 :

1. The people bidden to seek from Jehovah the annual blessing of the rain, instead of resorting to heathenish devices (vv.1. 2 : see R.V., and comp. Isa. 8<sup>19. 20</sup>).

2. Jehovah's anger against Israel's "shepherds," contrasted with the favour bestowed on Judah (3-5).

3. By Judah's means, *Joseph* also to be saved (6. 7).

4. So the captives will be brought back, and the land will overflow with Israel's children (8-10).

5. Assyria and Egypt to be smitten in their turn, while Israel is strong in Jehovah (11. 12).

This delightful strain is interrupted by the sudden crash of the storm of invasion, which the prophet describes in the brief and powerful detached lines of ch. 11 1-3.

His Book is concluded in Section—

IV. The Story of the Prophet's Mission to a Doomed Flock, 11 4-17.

1. He is called by Jehovah to tend sheep harried by their present shepherds (vv. 4-6).

2. He tends them, using Pleasantness and Bands for his staves; and three of their oppressors perish "in one month" (7. 8a).

3. But the shepherd and his flock fall out, and he disowns them (8b. 9).

4. He breaks his staff of Pleasantness, as a sign of God's broken covenant (10. 11).

5. He asks his wages, and receives in jest thirty shekels; then breaks his other staff of Bands, for Judah and Israel renounce brotherhood (12-14).

6. He describes in symbol, then in words, the cruel ruler now set up over the land (15. 16);

7. And departs with a curse upon this "worthless shepherd" (17).

# THE ASSYRIAN-JUDÆAN AGE

## *Succession of Assyrian Kings*<sup>1</sup>

	B.C.		B.C.
City of Asshur founded . . . <i>circa</i>	1900	syria weakened and declining	
Kassæan Dynasty at Babylon . . . <i>c.</i>	1525-1280	ASSHUR-NIRARI . . .	754
Asshur revolts from Babylon . . . <i>c.</i>	1400	Revolt of Calah . . .	746
SHALMANESER I founds Calah . . . <i>c.</i>	1330	TIGLATH-PILESER II : founder of new dynasty ; re-establishes the Assyrian Empire	745
TIGLATH-ADAR I conquers Babylon, which soon recovers its independence . . . <i>c.</i>	1290	Fall of Arpad . . .	739
TIGLATH-PILESER I makes a victorious march to the Mediterranean . . . <i>c.</i>	1100	Fall of Damascus . . .	732
ASSHUR - NAZIR - PAL accedes ; conquers the Hittites and Aramæans	884	SHALMANESER IV . . .	727
SHALMANESER II : wars against Damascus	860	SARGON II . . .	722
Battle of Karkar . . .	854	Fall of Samaria . . .	722
Homage of Jehu . . .	842	Battle of Raphia . . .	720
SAMSI-RAMAN III . . .	824	Siege of Ashdod (Isa. 20)	711
RAMAN - NIRARI III : subdues Damascus	811	Capture of Babylon (? Isa. 21) . . .	709
SHALMANESER III . . .	782	SENNACHERIB . . .	705
ASSHUR-DAN III : As-	772	Siege of Jerusalem . . .	701
		ESAR-HADDON : invades and conquers Egypt	681
		ASSHUR-BANI-PAL . . .	668
		Fall of Thebes (No-Amon, Nahum 3 s)	660
		Rise of the Median power . . . <i>c.</i>	650
		Invasion of the Scythians . . . <i>c.</i>	630
		ASSHUR-EDIL-ILANI . . .	? 626
		Fall of Nineveh . . .	606

<sup>1</sup> This chronological table extends beyond the period now under consideration ; but it appeared convenient to present the Assyrian dates in one complete view.

## CHAPTER X

## THE COMING OF THE ASSYRIAN

Assyrian Monuments—Origin of the Assyrians—Rise of Assyrian Empire—Tiglath-Pileser I—Asshur-nazir-pal—Conquest of North Aram—First Contact of Assyrians and Israelites—Homage of Jehu—Shalmaneser II and Hazael of Damascus—Victories of Raman-nirari III—Retreat of the Assyrians—Accession of Tiglath-Pileser II—Policy of Transportation—Religious Aim of Assyrian Kings—Submission of Menahem—Campaign of 734—Fall of Damascus—Egyptian Coalition against Shalmaneser III—Siege and Capture of Samaria—Accession of Sargon II—Assyrian Character and Rule.

AT this point it will be well for us to pause and turn aside for a brief excursion into the province of general history. *Assyria* has thrust herself on our attention during the three preceding chapters with increasing prominence, until at last she has almost blotted out the horizon of Israel. This terrible conflict absorbed the energies of the people of Palestine, and constituted the main factor in their condition during the latter half of the eighth century; it dominated the minds of the prophets of this period,

and coloured all their views of the future no less than of the present. The story of Jonah's mission to Nineveh, though written in the Book that bears the prophet's name at a date long subsequent to that with which we are now concerned, bears witness to an interest felt in the kingdom of Assyria and a connexion between its destiny and that of Israel conceived in the mind of the prophets at an epoch still earlier than that of Amos. To understand the part which Assyria played at this epoch and her influence upon the destiny of Israel and the course of revelation, it is necessary for us to know something of her national character. We must trace the progress of this extraordinary people, who ruled South-Western Asia from the banks of the Tigris for nearly two hundred years, and who built up the first of the great series of world-empires that culminated in the dominion of the Roman Cæsars.

Within the last half-century the old Babylonian and Assyrian world has had a marvellous resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Vast quantities of sculpture, and a whole literature imperishably written on clay tablets, have been excavated from the ruins of

<sup>1</sup> See, amongst other instructive works bearing on this subject, the *Records of the Past* (Bagster), series i and ii; M'Curdy's *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*; Sayce's *Higher Criticism*



the Mesopotamian cities, by means of which the religion, laws, manners, and civilisation of their peoples, with their wars and revolutions and the succession and achievements of their kings over long periods of time, are set before us with startling vividness, and with an exactness of detail in some respects exceeding that afforded in any other field of ancient history. Before research has ended its work in this region, it seems likely that the history of the East for the nineteen centuries before Christ will be as certainly known as that of the West for the nineteen centuries after Christ.

The history of the kingdom of Assyria ran a course parallel with that of national Israel. In the Table of the Nations given in Gen. 10, Asshur is placed amongst the "sons of Shem" (ver. 22); and "Nimrod," a son of Cush,<sup>1</sup> is described as "going forth from the land of Shinar"

*and the Monuments* (S.P.C.K), also his *Assyria and Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments* in "Bypaths of Bible Knowledge;" Ragozin's *Chaldea and Assyria*, in the "Story of the Nations" series. Maspero's *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient* (in one compact vol.: Hachette), and Rawlinson's extensive work on the *Five Great Monarchies*, are the best connected histories of the old Eastern Empires.

<sup>1</sup> The Babylonian "Cush" of Gen. 10 is, according to Sayce (*Higher Criticism*, etc., pp. 148, 149; also M'Curdy, i. 143),

(Chaldea) "into Asshur" to "build Nineveh" and its sister cities (vv.8-12). These indications are borne out by the evidence of the monuments. The Assyrians were, in fact, colonists from Babylonia, who migrated northwards along the Tigris and occupied the city of Asshur (60 miles below Nineveh), from which they took their name, at a time probably not very long anterior to the exodus of Abraham. They carried with them the Semitic speech, and the civilised arts and forms of religion which had flourished in the already ancient kingdom of Babylonia. These Northern Semites maintained a close intercourse with the mother country, from which they were separated by no natural barriers or extreme distance, and shared in its language and culture. The Northern dependency, occupying the fertile lands between the Upper Tigris and the Zagros mountains, grew in wealth and military strength, so that early in the fourteenth century before Christ, and not long after the Israelites entered Canaan, Asshur had set up a monarchy of its own and began to measure its strength against quite different from the Arabian and African "Cush" of vv.6.7 and elsewhere, and corresponds to the "Kasi" (Babylonians) of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, and to the Kassæan dynasty who ruled in Babylon. M'Curdy calls them "Kasshites," and extends their dominance to "nearly six centuries (c. 1730-1153).

Babylonia, which was ruled at this time by a foreign (Kassæan) dynasty. A hundred years later (about 1270 B.C.) the king of Asshur entered Babylon as a conqueror; and from that time onward the Northern Empire frequently asserted its ascendancy over the Southern, and Assyria became the dominant power in the Mesopotamian region.

For a long period Asshur's military energies were exercised in subjugating the mountain tribes to the east and north of the Tigris. Tiglath-Pileser I (contemporary with Samuel, about 1100 B.C.) was the earliest Assyrian monarch to set foot on the Mediterranean shore; he resumed the path of conquest which Babylonian armies had trodden a thousand or two thousand years before. Inscriptions of his have been discovered, written in the pious and arrogant vein characteristic of the Assyrian kings: "I am Tiglath-Pileser,<sup>1</sup> the mighty king, the destroyer of the wicked, the annihilator of hostile battalions. . . . Brave in the mêlée, courageous in battle, I have marched, unrivalled, against the kings of

<sup>1</sup> This is the Hebraised (and Aramæan?) form of the word, which appears as *Tukulti-pal-esar* on the monuments (see Sayce's *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 195, 196). The Assyrio-Babylonian Semitic is in general much more flowing and fuller in vowels than Hebrew.

the coast and the upper sea, who had never known submission, and whom Asshur [the national god] had pointed out to me. I traversed inaccessible heights and difficult passes, which none of the former kings had penetrated; I journeyed by steep roads and through dense thickets." This active monarch was the pioneer of Assyria's westward march, and subdued for the time the whole area between the Tigris and the Phœnician coast. The wealthy Hittite towns west of the Euphrates submitted to him; and even the Pharaoh of Egypt sent him presents, including crocodiles and hippopotami from the Nile, which excited lively astonishment on the banks of the Tigris.

This great king's successors did not, however, retain his conquests, and the Assyrian outposts retired eastwards about the time when David was pushing his victories to the north of Palestine. It was not, indeed, till the reign of Asshur-nazir-pal (885-860) that the armies of Asshur crossed the Lebanon again. This time their victories were more enduring. The foundation of Assyria's Western dominion was laid by the capture of the Hittite city of Carchemish in 876. Tyre and Sidon paid tribute to the great king; Amanus and Lebanon yielded their timber

to build his palaces. From this date Syria<sup>1</sup> came within the ordinary scope of Assyrian politics, and Palestine was regarded as the stepping-stone to the conquest of Egypt. Just then Omri, the founder of Samaria, ruled in North Palestine; and it is curious that the kingdom of Israel is always subsequently named on the monuments as "the land of the house of Omri (*Bit-Khumri*)," or "land of Omri,"—even Jehu is called "son of Omri," for it was in Omri's time that the Assyrian Government first came into contact with the Israelites. Asshur-nazir-pal made Calah (Gen. 10 11.12: Assyrian, *Kalakh*), 40 miles higher up the Tigris, his capital, instead of the old Asshur.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to observe that the "Syria" of the Old Testament is entirely distinct from Assyria. It is properly *Aram*, and its people *Aramæans*. They belonged to a widely-spread branch of the Semitic race, speaking a language quite distinct from, though kindred to, that of the Assyrians, as well as to that of the Hebrews. The Greeks, however, meeting with the Assyrians at the time when their empire extended westwards over the North Aramæans, confounded the two peoples, while they shortened the name of the ruling nationality to *Syria*. At a later time, when first the Greek successors of Alexander, and then the Romans, ruled in the East, this latter name, so originating, became the title of the Greek kingdom and Roman province of "Syria," which had Antioch on the Orontes for its capital and answered roughly to the Aram of the Hebrew Bible, extending from the frontier of Palestine to the mountains of Armenia. We shall for the future speak of *Aram* and *Aramæans* instead of Syria and Syrians.

Shalmaneser II (860–824) spent the first years of his reign in securing and extending his father's conquests in Aram. In 856 he received homage from Damascus, which at that epoch was Israel's most formidable enemy. Shortly before this time, Ahab of Samaria had inflicted a succession of defeats on Benhadad II of Damascus, which led to a treaty, favourable to Israel, effected between the two powers (1 Kings 20). On the basis of this treaty, it appears, a league was formed against the Assyrians, which Shalmaneser defeated in the battle of Karkar (near to Hamath) in the year 854. The inscription relating to this campaign informs us that "Ahab of Israel" supported the Aramæan confederacy with 2,000 chariots and 10,000 footmen, while Benhadad brought 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalry, and 20,000 infantry into the field. Ammonite and Arabian contingents were also sent to the confederate army. The union of these hereditary foes evidences the extreme apprehension which the advance of Assyria had already excited, by the middle of the ninth century, amongst both Aramæans and Hebrews. Shalmaneser's troops probably gained their victory at a heavy cost. The Assyrians, at any rate, did not follow it up, and Benhadad and Ahab were soon at war again, the latter falling when engaged, with

the help of Jehoshaphat of Judah, in the disastrous battle before Ramoth-Gilead (about 853 B.C. : 1 Kings 22).

The little kingdom of Damascus bore stoutly the brunt of the Assyrian attacks, and barred for many years the further progress of the Eastern conquerors. Thrice again, if we are to trust the Assyrian records—in 850, 849, and 846—Benhadad was defeated in successive invasions, and still held his ground. The assault was continued upon his successor Hazael (2 Kings 8 7-15), with the same inconclusive result. This war with Shalmaneser prevented the Aramæans, however, from taking advantage of the weakened condition of Israel and the fall of Omri's dynasty. In 842, Shalmaneser once more attacked Hazael, defeating him as before in the open field; but he failed to capture Damascus. On this campaign the Assyrians for the first time crossed the frontiers of Israel, as they ravaged the district of Hauran, which was subject to Damascus. Along with the Phœnicians of Tyre and Sidon, "Jehu, son of Omri," is depicted on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser, now in the British Museum, doing abject homage to the Assyrian monarch,<sup>1</sup> while a long train of his servants, with unmistakably

<sup>1</sup> See Plate xxxiv in the Oxford *Helps to the Study of the Bible* (new ed.).

Jewish features, follow their king laden with tribute, the particulars of which are carefully catalogued, and give us a vivid idea both of the wealth of the Israelite kingdom and of Jehu's anxiety to propitiate the powerful invader.

Jehu's submission, however, availed him little. In 839, Hazael came to terms with the Assyrians, and secured a free hand against his southern neighbours, which he used with disastrous effect (2 Kings 13 3-5, 22, 23, 2 Chron. 24 23, 24; comp. 2 Kings 8 7-15). This Aramæan king seems to have made a thorough conquest of Palestine, and the kingdom of Samaria was reduced about the year 820 to the verge of extinction (see pp. 80, 81). But Assyria again threw her decisive weight into the scale. Raman-nirari III (811-782) renewed, with more success, the attacks of his grandfather Shalmaneser on Damascus. He was, in fact, the "saviour" given to Israel by Jehovah, who is obscurely referred to in 2 Kings 13 5. This monarch enlarged the Assyrian Empire on all sides. In five campaigns (806-803 and 797 B.C.) he brought to submission the land of the Hittites and the West land,—Tyre, Sidon, the "land of Omri," Edom, and the Philistines (Judah, Moab, and Ammon are not mentioned in his inscriptions). The surrender of Damascus Raman-nirari especially signalises, as it was the greatest achievement of his arms.



We can now understand how Jehoash and Jeroboam II of Israel turned the tables so completely on the rulers of Damascus. The power of the latter had been shattered by the Assyrians, and when Raman-nirari's successors, disabled by the rise of a vigorous Armenian dynasty to the north of Assyria, withdrew their troops across the Great River and abandoned their Western provinces, an open field was left to the ambition of Jeroboam II. This able king of Israel extended his frontiers from "the entering of Hamath unto the Sea of Arabah," and made his people masters of the whole of their Promised Land, as they had not been since Solomon's reign. For the last fifty years of the ninth century Assyria had been the determining factor in the struggles of the little Aramæan and Hebrew States; but before the eighth century was far advanced it withdrew from the scene, and seemed to be, in fact, a spent force. The successes of Jeroboam in the north, like those of David, had been prepared for by the previous victories of Asshur over Aram, followed by the retreat of the conquerors.

Such was the situation when Amos prophesied against Samaria about the year 770 (see p. 127). For a century the Assyrian power had been steadily forcing its way across the 80 miles that lie

between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, and southwards from that line along the great valley of Cœle-Syria, which runs parallel for 200 miles between Amanus and Lebanon on the one side and Anti-Lebanon on the other, and forms the highway from the north to Palestine and Egypt. The Assyrians had taken this road, and meant to pursue it to the end. Their march might be delayed, but only to be resumed with greater vigour. Each wave of the tide of invasion rose higher and carried its desolation farther than the last. But for a generation the sound of Assyrian arms was unheard on the borders of Israel; this dread power had struck down Israel's chief enemy at Damascus, and then retired as though its work was done, and was itself chastised by pestilence and civil war.<sup>1</sup> The rulers

<sup>1</sup> Assuming the Book of Jonah (see p. 220), which will be discussed in our concluding volume, to be founded on history and not to be a pure allegory, it is in this period of disaster that we must look for the occasion of Jonah's mission to Nineveh. "Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-Hepher," lived at the beginning of the eighth century, and prophesied Jeroboam's successes (2 Kings 14:25). Although the subsequent prophets have so much to say about Assyria and Nineveh, not one of them alludes to the conversion of the Ninevites under Jonah, or seems to know anything about it; and one does not see how to account for this silence. At the same time, if such a submission really happened and was known as having been achieved by a popular prophet of

of Samaria might well think that they were the objects of God's special favour; they honoured Him with abundant ceremony and sacrifices. They descried no cloud on the political horizon, when the prophet of evil burst upon them with the awful words, "I will carry you into captivity beyond Damascus" (Amos 5 27).

Enlightened by the Spirit of God, Amos saw what the statesmen of Israel failed to see, that the torpor of Assyria was the sleep of a lion, from which it would wake before long to rush on the western lands with new strength and wilder fury. The accession of Tiglath-Pileser II<sup>1</sup> in the year 745 changed everything. This able monarch, the founder of a new dynasty, originated a new régime. In the eighteen years of his reign he re-established and extended in all directions the empire of Asshur, and gave to it

Northern Israel, it helps to explain the blind and infatuated confidence in Jehovah's goodwill shown by the Northern Israelites in the time of Amos.

<sup>1</sup> The Pul of 2 Kings 15<sup>19</sup> and 1 Chron. 5<sup>26</sup> is, beyond a doubt, the *Tiglath-Pileser* of 2 Kings 15<sup>29</sup> 16<sup>7</sup> and 16, 1 Chron. 5<sup>6</sup> 26, 2 Chron. 28<sup>20</sup>. This monarch is *Pulu* in the Babylonian lists, *Phulus rex Chaldæorum* in Berosus, and *Poros* in the Ptolemaic canon for 731. See Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, i. 219-231. Pulu was, presumably, his original name, and Tiglath-Pileser his coronation name. It seems to have been not uncommon for these kings to take for a title the name of some illustrious predecessor.

an administrative unity and stability which it had never before possessed. Tiglath-Pileser had a gift for governing as well as conquering. Professor M'Curdy speaks of him as "the most original and far-seeing of all the rulers of Assyria." He adopted the plan of deporting refractory subjects from one part of his dominions to another, intending thus, as we may suppose, not merely to destroy local independence and prevent conspiracy, but also to blend the various nationalities of the empire and Assyrianise its outlying provinces.

This policy had the effect of breaking up the religious systems of the conquered tribes, indigenous as they were conceived to be to the soil of the homeland and identified with that (Judg. 11<sup>24</sup>, 1 Sam. 26<sup>19</sup>, 2 Kings 17<sup>26, 27</sup>, Hos. 9<sup>3</sup>, Ps. 137<sup>4</sup>). This invention of Tiglath-Pileser's gave a fresh horror to foreign conquest; and it became a trial of the most extreme character for Israel's religion,—a test under which the imperfect and impure Jehovism of the Northern tribes succumbed. It was a systematic uprooting at once of nationalities and religions that this bold and iron-handed conqueror attempted. Tiglath-Pileser and his successors believed themselves to be carrying on a *holy war*; they were fighting for the glory of Asshur, the king of gods, and under

his inspiration and direction. Sennacherib's Rabshakeh uttered no mere rhetorical bravado when he cried :

Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad?  
Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?  
And have its gods rescued Samaria from my hand?  
Who are they amongst all the gods of these lands  
that have delivered their land from my hand,  
that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem from my  
hand? (Isa. 36<sup>19, 20</sup>).

It is Asshur of Nineveh that here taunts and challenges Jehovah of Jerusalem; and the contest was conceived, on both the Assyrian and Judæan side, as a trial of strength between the two gods. The conquerors in the wars of that time were accustomed to carry off the gods of captured cities, by means of their images and other symbols, to the temples of their own god (see Isa. 46<sup>1, 2</sup>, Hos. 10<sup>5, 6</sup>); this appropriation made their triumph, as they believed, complete and secure, and by it a just satisfaction was rendered to the deities who had granted them victory. Tiglath-Pileser had grasped, in his way, the principle so evident now to students of ancient religions, that people, creed, and land were bound up together, and that to rupture the bond between them was the one effectual method of destroying national vitality and local patriotism. The faith of South

Israel and its prophets in Jehovah proved to be an exception to this rule. This was the one religion hardy enough to bear transportation and to strike its roots into an alien soil.

Not that the Assyrian kings displaced rebellious populations wholesale; this was not physically possible. At the capture of Samaria, 27,280 is the number reported as exiled by Sargon; but in this number were included the nobles and priests and the flower of the nation. A people thus treated was not so much decimated as decapitated: it was rendered incapable of any future self-assertion.

Tiglath-Pileser's plan answered its immediate purpose in taming the races of Aram and Canaan. From this time the wave of Assyrian conquest, instead of retreating after each new advance, spread itself in permanent dominion over the West-lands, and its effects were lasting and momentous. The power of Asshur was the mighty axe in Jehovah's hand (Isa. 10<sup>15</sup>), which He used to cut through the jungle of wild heathen creeds and to destroy countless Western Asian godships; "my hand," the Assyrian could say, "hath found the kingdoms of the idols": above all, "Samaria and her idols" were swept from the earth, and "Jerusalem with her idols" saw the like fate confronting her (Isa. 10<sup>7-11</sup>).

The problem of the future was thus greatly simplified, and the Canaanite and Aramaean idolatry never exerted after the seventh century the force and fascination which they had possessed before.

A few words will suffice to describe the advance of Assyrian power in the West under Tiglath-Pileser. In 743 this king led his army across the Euphrates; he then received the submission of Carchemish, Tyre, and other principalities. In the next year a combination was formed against him, headed by Arpad, in which, upon the testimony of the monuments, it seems that Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah took a leading part. The usurper Menahem of Israel, in order to secure his throne, had bought by a heavy tribute the support of the foreign enemy (2 Kings 15<sup>19, 20</sup>). Arpad stood a long siege, but was captured in 739; Hamath fell shortly afterwards, and Rezin of Damascus followed the example of his neighbour Menahem in becoming tributary to the Great King. North and Middle Aram, up to the borders of the kingdoms of Damascus and Samaria, was made into an Assyrian province, 30,000 exiles from other lands being imported in the place of those removed from this region.

For four years the Assyrian king was engaged in other quarters. In 734 he set out unexpectedly for the West again, just at the time when Pekah

of Israel had joined with Rezin of Damascus to crush the weak and incapable Ahaz in his kingdom of Judah, attacking him very probably with the purpose of compelling the Judæans to side with them against the Assyrians. In his extremity Ahaz cast himself at the feet of Tiglath-Pileser; he "sent messengers, saying, I am thy slave and thy son; come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram, and out of the hand of the king of Israel" (2 Kings 16<sup>5-8</sup>).

With the utmost celerity, and with great strategical skill, the Assyrian king threw his forces upon the Northern confederates. He marched down the coast to Carmel, then struck eastwards across the valley of Jezreel, laying everything waste before him. He thus cut Pekah's kingdom in two, and at once annexed the Galilean half of it. A detachment of troops sent across the Jordan reduced Gilead and Moab to submission. Large bodies of the Hebrew population he removed immediately, drafting them off eastwards into exile (2 Kings 15<sup>29</sup>). For the present Tiglath-Pileser left Damascus on his flank unassailed, and pushed on southwards to secure the Philistine fortresses, including Gaza, whose capture brought him within striking distance of Egypt and safeguarded him against attack from that quarter. He now returned to finish his



work in Northern Palestine. The territory of Ephraim was laid waste, and part of its people deported. King Pekah met his death through the conspiracy of Hoshea (2 Kings 15 30), in which the Assyrians most likely had some hand. About the same time Assyrian troops were sent against North Arabia, winning rich booty and the submission of many of the desert tribes. Judæa was already a vassal kingdom.

In one brilliant campaign Tiglath-Pileser had overrun and subdued the whole of Palestine, up to the Egyptian frontier. All this time Damascus had been held in check by a corps of observation. It was not until the following year (733) that this difficult siege was commenced; and in 732, after a ruthless devastation of its country, this rich city surrendered to the Assyrians. The fall of Damascus was the crowning event of the war; here the Assyrian monarch celebrated his triumph, and received the homage of all the tributary princes of the West, including, with Ahaz of Judah (2 Kings 16 9. 10), the kings of Moab, Ammon, and Edom. For the remaining five years of his reign there was peace throughout the West.

The death of Tiglath-Pileser, succeeded by Shalmaneser IV in 727, set the enemies of Assyria plotting once more. Just at this crisis it happened

that a new and ambitious dynasty of Ethiopian rulers had risen to power in Egypt, who were eager to find a vantage-ground against the dreaded Eastern empire. Meanwhile the worthless Ahaz had been succeeded by his son Hezekiah at Jerusalem, and a different spirit began to animate the Judæan kingdom. The political situation was greatly altered. Egyptian diplomacy was busy weaving the threads of a new coalition against Assyria. In the first instance, Hoshea of Samaria renewed his submission to Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17 3). Before long, however, he was detected intriguing with "Seve,<sup>1</sup> king of Egypt"; and, looking for Egyptian support, he had withheld the usual tribute to Assyria (ver. 4). This revolt sealed the doom of Samaria. In 724, Shalmaneser marched to the West with a powerful army, before the hostile coalition had matured its plans. Hoshea was captured and flung into prison, where he disappears. Samaria was at once invested; but though its king was lost, it

<sup>1</sup> *Seve*, not *So*, is the true vocalisation of this name. Schrader identifies Seve with the *Sab'i* of the Assyrian monuments and the Egyptian *Saba'ko*: *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, i. 261, 262. But the Ethiopic-Egyptian Sabako is named *Shabaku* in Assyrian, and other scholars argue, therefore, that Sab'i and Seve are names, not of the Pharaoh himself, but of some subordinate king or viceroy in the Delta. See M'Curdy's *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, i. 422, 423.

made a brave resistance, holding out probably in hope of the succour from Egypt which never arrived. At the same time Shalmaneser was besieging Tyre, which had joined the league against Assyria. This island city, weak for offence but strong for defence, the Assyrians, after prodigious efforts, failed to capture,—a fact which explains the slow progress of the siege of Samaria. The latter capital fell at the close of the year 722, or early in 721, and was completely destroyed, as the prophet Micah foretold (16.7). The chief part of the remaining Israelite population was sent into exile, and the people of the Ten Tribes ceased to exist.

Meanwhile Shalmaneser died, and was succeeded by Sargon II, a monarch seemingly of another house; his descendants ruled Assyria till the fall of the empire. Sargon continued the policy of Tiglath-Pileser, and consolidated the dominion won by his two predecessors. With the annexation of the kingdom of Samaria, the Assyrian frontier bordered immediately on Judah, over which the great king already claimed suzerainty since the submission of Ahaz. From this point onwards we shall be able to trace the relations of Judah with Assyria by means of Isaiah's discourses. It need only be added here that Sargon completed his first war in the West by

inflicting a crushing defeat on the Egyptian king Shabaku at Raphia, in 720. Gaza was recaptured; and the Tyrians appear to have submitted, on honourable terms, to the Assyrians. For nine years Sargon's Western provinces remained at peace.

The above historical review enables us to estimate in some measure the Assyrian character, and the signal effect which the conquests of Asshur had upon Israel and upon the development of its faith. The Assyrian race possessed some eminent qualities. Everything about them bears the stamp of strength,—fierce, masterful, and often cruel, but immense virile strength and working energy. Their activity, courage, and tenacity were amazing. They were great builders, and they were great fighters, like Nimrod, that “mighty hunter before Jehovah” (Gen. 10<sub>8-11</sub>). The sculptured figures of their kings are ideals of stout, soldierly pride and vigour. They love to be represented in the attitude of slaying the lion or wild ox in the chase, or receiving the submission of their human captives. They were a very religious people also, after a sort; their kings regarded themselves as the inspired ministers of the gods, and were constantly building for them new and more sumptuous temples out of the spoil of their wars. The social life of the Assy-

rians was less corrupt than that of the Babylonians and Phœnicians, and they showed to each other no small degree of uprightness and good fellowship. They were skilled in agriculture and commerce; their Western conquests were directed to secure the Mediterranean and Egyptian markets, and to command the great routes that traversed Palestine. They shared in the astronomical and other sciences of the Babylonians, as well as in their literary culture; and their bas-reliefs and statues, without the traits of genius, exhibit considerable skill in plastic art and are powerful and lifelike in the representation of animal forms. They were methodical and orderly in matters of business; and their chronology, as it is exhibited in the clay registers of their archives, is a pattern of exactitude. The art and discipline of war they carried to a perfection never previously attained. There was a thoroughness, an indomitable will, and solid, practical sense in these old Assyrians that one cannot but respect. They have been called, not unfitly, the Romans of the East. Their great empire was won and held, certainly, not without some merit and superiority of character on the part of the conquerors. In judging of their achievements, it must be remembered that the Assyrians were pioneers in the path of empire,—Persians, Greeks,

and Romans followed them, and had the opportunity of improving upon their example.

With all their vigour and capacity, the Assyrians, however, proved to be detestable rulers. They inspired a general and frequently desperate hatred amongst their subjects. Maspero says of them: "They were a people of blood, full of violence and falsehood, sensual, excessively proud, contemptuous of their enemies, crafty and treacherous. Few nations have abused more insolently the rights of the stranger. They demolished and burnt down the towns on their march; they impaled and flayed alive rebellious chiefs. With all the splendour and refinement of their exterior civilisation, they always remained savages." The Assyrian was, in fact, a kind of mixture of the Roman and the Red Indian.

This people were great conquerors, but they were poor administrators. Force and terror were their chief means of government; they never learnt the maxim that "you can do anything with bayonets, except sit upon them." They had nothing of the Roman genius for civil law. No Semite State, in fact, has ever advanced beyond a rudimentary political constitution, or acquired the art of combining local autonomy with imperial supremacy. Hence the office of the Assyrian in history was mainly that of

destruction. They crushed out the petty kingdoms and nationalities of South-Western Asia and left desolation in their track, but they could not build a lasting empire. The work of Asshur was as perishing as that of Rome has proved enduring.

The fate of Assyrian civilisation resembles that of the palaces of the Assyrian kings. The first immigrants had brought from the flat, marshy soil of Babylonia the practice of rearing huge mounds constructed of sun-dried bricks for the foundation of their great buildings. With strange stupidity they adhered to this custom in their new country, though it afforded them abundance of elevated sites and natural fortresses; with labour constantly renewed, they raised spacious and costly edifices upon a substructure which began to crumble and give way so soon as it was built. For want of a solid basement their splendid palaces and temples were doomed to ruin in the very act of erection. The Assyrian Empire has met with the same unhappy fate. It had a thoroughly unsound, immoral basis; no sense of international justice, no human kindness, no care for the welfare of the subject peoples, shows itself in the proclamations of the Assyrian kings and in the thanksgivings offered to their gods. In the possession of the hapless Israelites,

whose feeble arms and inept politics Sennacherib derided, there were found spiritual ideas and a moral force which all the military empires, from Egypt down to Rome, have failed to crush. Here is supplied the one foundation to which communities and peoples may safely trust their hopes. On Israel's Rock of Ages it will be the task of the future to build the new fabric of humanity, the world-empire of Christendom.



## CHAPTER XI

### MICAH THE MORASHTITE

Name and Date of Micah—The Three Parts of the Book—Disputed Passages—Circle of Judæan Prophets—Relations of Micah and Isaiah—The Pessimist and Optimist in Micah—Transition from Samaria to Jerusalem—Micah and the Judæan Reformation—The Land Question—The False Prophets—The Messianic Faith—Little Bethlehem and its Great King—The Twofold Office of the Dispersion—Micah's Dislike of Cities—Book II of Micah—Micah's Love of Antiquity—Style of Micah—Parallels with other Prophets—Analysis of Book.

**T**HE Book of Micah<sup>1</sup> stands sixth in the Hebrew order of the Twelve, and third in the Greek (see p. 4.). He is called here and in

<sup>1</sup> *Micah* is short for *Micaiah* (Jer. 2618; also 2 Kings 2212), which again stands for *Mi-ca-yahu* (or *Micaychú*: 1 Kings 228, etc., 2 Chron. 187, etc.; Judges 171.4,—“Micah the Ephraimite”), which signifies, *Who-is-like-Jehovah?* Comp. *Mi-cha-el*, *Who-is-like-God?* The name is borne by a number of persons of note in the Old Testament.

Jer. 26<sup>18</sup> "the Morashtite," from his native place, Moresheth-gath<sup>1</sup> (1<sup>14</sup>), to distinguish him from the well-known "Micaiah-ben-Imlah" (1 Kings 22, 2 Chron. 18). The heading of his prophecies resembles that of the Books of Isaiah and Hosea: "The word of Jehovah which came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." In Jer. 26<sup>17-19</sup> we have an historical reference to Mic. 3<sup>12</sup>, stating that "Micah the Morashtite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah." The two statements are consistent. The allusion in Jeremiah gives the occasion of one particular and memorable utterance of Micah, and in no way precludes the supposition that his work began in the reign of Jotham, a few years earlier than this.

The unqualified severity of Micah's judgement on the Judæan State in the opening chapters is appropriate to the period antecedent to Hezekiah's reforms (comp. Isa. 1-5); and ch. 1<sup>2-9</sup> anticipates the fall of Samaria (B.C. 722). While chs. 1-3 were probably *written* not very long

<sup>1</sup> This village, to be distinguished from *Mareshah* (1<sup>15</sup>, Jos. 15<sup>44</sup>), was on the Philistine border, the country of Samson, and lay about twenty miles west-by-south of Jerusalem. Here the Shephelah runs north and south, the fertile belt of low hills separating the Judæan tableland from the western maritime plain of South Palestine.

before that event, they may well contain things *said* at earlier dates. Chs. 4 and 5 belong to the times of the Assyrian terror (55.6), and naturally fall, along with the corresponding prophecies of Isaiah, to the last twenty years of the eighth century. This second section of the Book is apparently designed as a counterpart to the first, and if so must have followed it at no very long interval. Part I, we conjecture, was published shortly before Hezekiah's reforms; Part II, with its hopeful strain, was added in view of the more promising, yet by no means untroubled, aspect which the national affairs then assumed. Chapters 6 and 7 stand widely apart, alike in style and import, from the foregoing sections and form a distinct Book. As Ewald says, the gloom of *Manasseh's* time rests upon these closing pages; and if they come from Micah's pen and, notwithstanding, the data of ch. 11 are correct, this prophet's career should have extended over some forty years. We should then regard chs. 1-5 as the fruit of his early and vigorous activity under Ahaz and Hezekiah; chs. 6 and 7, of his later sorrowful years under the apostate Manasseh. To this point we shall return again.

While the general train of thought in the three several parts of the Book thus distinguished

is continuous and clear, there are certain obscure and disjointed passages (especially 2<sup>12.13</sup> 4<sup>5-10</sup> 5<sup>4.5</sup>) which raise suspicions of a later interpolating hand; their disconnectedness is, however, the only real ground of objection to these paragraphs, otherwise they suit Micah well enough. It appears as though the author, like Hosea, had thrown together notes of his discourses without always digesting them into a continuous writing; or new passages may have been introduced into an earlier draft of the work, with the same effect. Possibly omissions or disarrangements of the text have occurred. Wellhausen refers 7<sup>7-20</sup> to the period of the Exile, and sees "a century yawning" between 7<sup>6</sup> and 7. There is no need to make this chasm. The penitent Israel who speaks in 7<sup>7-20</sup>, is in deep humiliation and helpless before the heathen powers; but this was true of Manasseh's time, and *Asshur*, not Babylon, is the tyrant who holds her children captive (7-12).

This last discourse of Micah comes nearest in spirit and tone to Isa. 40-66 of any pre-exilic prophecy; but there is nothing in it that betrays imitation. Rather, the author of Isa. 40-66 has developed in his ampler and grander style the notes here struck with simple pathos and truth (see, *e.g.*, vv. 8-10 and Isa. 49; vv. 15-17 and Isa. 51, 52; vv. 18-20 and Isa. 43, 44, 41<sup>4-10</sup>).

Micah belonged to the group of Judæan prophets of which Isaiah of Jerusalem was the chief. The identical messianic programme of the earlier Zechariah (see pp. 211, 212), Micah, and Isaiah implies a common centre, a distinct school or fellowship to which they alike belonged. The new ideas respecting the glory of Zion and the character and person of its coming Davidic king, which were put forth simultaneously with the like emphasis by each of these three prophets, formed the treasure of a limited circle of believers within Judæan society; they were never adopted previously to the Exile by the community at large. Now Isa. 8<sup>16</sup> points to the existence at this time of just such a fraternity as we have supposed,—a body of disciples who received the prophetic testimony and could be trusted, amidst the general unbelief, to preserve the documents in which it was set down.

Here we trace the beginning of the Church formed within the Israelitish people, which preserved its faith and messianic hope through the national overthrow and dispersion, and supplied a nucleus for the restored Israel of the second Temple. With the fall of Samaria and the breaking up of the Ten Tribes, the necessity came for gathering out of the wreck their relics of sacred books; at this crisis, as it would seem, and

under the care of Hezekiah (see Prov. 25<sup>1</sup>, Isa. 29<sup>18</sup> 34<sup>16</sup>), the inspired literature was sought out and compiled in several directions, and the beginnings made of a definite collection of *Nebi'im*.<sup>1</sup> The superhuman glory of Zion as the seat of Jehovah's rule and the sovereignty of the ideal son of David were dominant thoughts with the master prophets of this epoch; and the writings which they have preserved and used—of Obadiah, Joel, Isa. 15, 16, Amos, Hosea—in various ways lead up to these central truths.

As between Micah and Isaiah, the question of priority is doubtful. So far as Micah's teaching goes, it runs parallel (in chs. 1-5 at least) with that of his great contemporary, and each prophet may well have been indebted to the other. Isa. 22-4 is identical with Mic. 41-3; the setting of the passage speaks for the priority of Micah,<sup>2</sup> but it is possible that both

<sup>1</sup> See Ewald's *History of Israel*, iv. 191, 198.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 41-5 forms a very effective contrast to 39-12; the unique expression, "mountain of the house of Jehovah" (41, Isa. 22), is anticipated in Micah (not in Isaiah) by the foregoing "mountain of the house" (312). The transition between 312 and 41 is the turning-point of Mic. 1-5. In Micah, too, the oracle has its proper conclusion (ver. 4) with the solemn formula, "For the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it," used besides only in Isa. 120 405 5814.

writers are quoting from an earlier authority.<sup>1</sup>  
For other parallels,

Compare Micah 1 <sub>2</sub> , 6 <sub>1, 2</sub> with Isaiah 1 <sub>2</sub>			
“	“	1 <sub>8</sub>	“ “ 20 <sub>2-4</sub>
“	“	1 <sub>16</sub>	“ “ 22 <sub>12</sub>
“	“	2 <sub>2</sub>	“ “ 5 <sub>8</sub>
“	“	2 <sub>6</sub>	“ “ 30 <sub>10</sub>
“	“	3 <sub>5, 6</sub>	“ “ 9 <sub>15, 16</sub>
“	“	3 <sub>11 7<sub>3</sub></sub>	“ “ 1 <sub>23</sub>
“	“	4 <sub>6, 7</sub>	“ “ 27 <sub>12, 13 24<sub>23</sub></sub>
“	“	4 <sub>9</sub>	“ “ 3 <sub>1-3</sub>
“	“	5 <sub>3</sub>	“ “ 10 <sub>20-22</sub>
“	“	5 <sub>5, 6</sub>	“ “ 10 <sub>24-27 14<sub>24-26</sub></sub>
“	“	5 <sub>10-13</sub>	“ “ 2 <sub>6, 8</sub>
“	“	7 <sub>1</sub>	“ “ 17 <sub>6 24<sub>13</sub></sub>
“	“	7 <sub>7</sub>	“ “ 8 <sub>17</sub>
“	“	7 <sub>12-15</sub>	“ “ 10 <sub>24-26</sub>

Mic. 4<sub>5</sub> strikingly resembles Zech. 10<sub>12</sub>; 5<sub>5, 10</sub>, Zech. 9<sub>10</sub>; 5<sub>6</sub>, Zech. 10<sub>11</sub>. The metaphor of Mic. 7<sub>10</sub> is peculiar to these three prophets,—Isa. 10<sub>6</sub> and Zech. 10<sub>5</sub>. The expression “in that day” is particularly common in the earlier part of Isaiah and Micah; in Zech. 9–11 it occurs twice, in Zech. 12–14 it is again very frequent.

On the whole, and considering that Isaiah and Micah were more strictly colleagues than

<sup>1</sup> Joel was suggested by Hitzig and Ewald. Cheyne, on the other hand, regards the paragraph as *a late insertion* in Micah, taken over by the compiler of Isaiah. See his recent *Introduction to the Study of Isaiah*.

any other writing prophets except Haggai and Zechariah, one is struck by the contrast rather than the resemblance between them. Isaiah is a polished and high-bred citizen, versed in affairs of State; Micah is a "homely country prophet" (Ewald), familiar with the wrongs of the peasantry and the scenes of rural life. Isaiah, standing on his lofty watch-tower and with his comprehensive genius, surveys the Eastern world from Babylon to Ethiopia; he passes judgement alike on the great heathen governments of his day and on the intrigues of ambitious Judæan nobles, or the manners of the ladies of Jerusalem. Micah's thought is bent upon his own land and the world immediately round him. The two prophets have the same situation and the same problems to deal with; but Micah views them within a narrower range and handles them in a much simpler way. Compared with Isaiah, Micah, whether junior or senior in point of years, is decidedly *old-fashioned* in his turn of mind, as one might expect in a sturdy countryman. He constantly reminds us of the older prophets of the North, and is nearer to Amos and Hosea in general sympathies and attitude—apart from the great messianic development of the Judæan school—than to his brilliant contemporary. On various accounts, therefore, we prefer



to approach Isaiah through Micah rather than to treat them in the reverse order.

Amongst the prophets last considered (chs. 7-9), Amos and Hosea were pessimists in their view of the national outlook; the "earlier Zechariah" set out as an optimist. The two former are predominantly realistic, dwelling on the moral corruption and apostasy of their people: the latter is an idealist, kindled by the thought of the reunion and glorious deliverance that he sees to be possible for the tribes of Israel if they would but return to their true God and David their king. Only the insolent rejection of his shepherding by the hapless Ephraimites convinced this ardent preacher that there could be no such salvation for the existing people, and drew from him, in words of bitter resentment, the same sentence of destruction which Amos had once so sternly, and Hosea so pitifully, pronounced (Zech. 11<sup>9</sup>. 15-17).

Now in Micah we find the teaching and very much of the spirit of these three predecessors combined. He unites the pessimism of Amos and Hosea with the messianic optimism of Zechariah. He predicts, in more sweeping terms than ever the approaching doom and sees the tide of vengeance advance from the Northern to the Southern kingdom; but he also

discerns beyond it, "in the last days," the redemption of Israel and the realisation, in a larger scope than has been before imagined, of Zion's spiritual ascendancy and of the promised kingdom of the perfect Son of David. He contemplates at once *Zion's ruin* and *her restoration*, and he sets them side by side with each other. It is just in this combination, as it seems to us, that Micah's distinctive position and message must be found. He does not, indeed, work out logically the connexion of his two themes (chs. 1-3 and 4, 5), and he passes from one to the other with perplexing suddenness (see pp. 247, 248); but he makes their general bearing on each other, as the proximate and ultimate dispensations of God toward His people, sufficiently clear; and he supplies the link between suffering and salvation in that figure of the *birth-pangs* of Israel in travail with the Messiah (4<sup>10</sup> 5<sup>3</sup>), which has proved so consoling to the Jewish people through the ages of their sorrow.

Micah delivers the same attack on the sins of Judah that Amos and Hosea had made upon Israel. The significance of chap. 1 lies in this transition, in the shifting of the seat of war from Samaria, now on the point of falling, to Jerusalem. This movement is precisely indicated in ver. 9, when, after bewailing the utter ruin

of Samaria (at this point dismissed from the notice of the prophets), Micah continues: "Incurable are her wounds; for it [the mischief] reaches unto Judah, it cometh right unto the gate of My people, to Jerusalem." This Book, therefore, correctly bears the peculiar title, "The word of Jehovah that came to Micah . . . which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." Although but four verses are occupied with Samaria, it is her fate, now virtually decided, that furnishes the prophet with his starting-point, and with the object-lesson that he uses to enforce his warnings upon the people of Judah. His first three chapters show that the Southern kingdom shares in the guilt of the Northern, and must therefore share in its punishment. In 16 he said:

I will turn Samaria into a ruin-heap of the field, into  
vineyard-plantings;  
And will pour down into the valley her stones, and  
lay bare her foundations;

and finally he repeats, for the other capital,

Zion shall be a ploughed field,  
And Jerusalem shall become ruin-heaps;  
And the hill of the temple shall be forest-heights  
(312).

This prediction, delivered by the bold village prophet in the Temple court "to all the people of Judah," took powerful effect upon its hearers,

as but few utterances of the prophets of this period seem to have done. It was accordingly quoted more than a century later on Jeremiah's behalf, when he threatened the city and king with ruin, and his defenders said (Jer. 26<sup>17-19</sup>):

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him [Micah] at all to death? Did he not fear Jehovah and entreat the face of Jehovah, and Jehovah repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them?

Micah's preaching, along with that of Isaiah—both seconded in their effect, doubtless, by the disasters of Samaria—was a material factor in the great reformation of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18<sup>3-8</sup>, 2 Chron. 29-31), by which the doom of Jerusalem was averted for 140 years and the current of Jewish history was turned in its course. Thus Micah's sentence in 3<sup>12</sup>, like that of Jonah upon Nineveh, proved to be an unfulfilled prediction,—unfulfilled just because it answered its purpose of warning; even in the end it was not carried out with literal exactness, for the site of Jerusalem has never been deserted like that of Samaria. Had Zion fallen then, in Micah's time, it would most likely have fallen for ever. Micah was therefore first of all—and that not without success—a *prophet of repentance*. He acts in Jerusalem the part that

Amos had acted forty or fifty years before in Samaria and Bethel, as a stern censor of the social corruption of the times.

Micah was a villager, and the land-question was a burning one with him. He sees the farms of the Judæan peasants absorbed in all directions by wealthy nobles, who, with violence and gross perversions of justice, dispossess the hereditary yeomanry and carry on a war of extermination against them. The exploitation of the poor by the rich has rarely been carried to a greater extreme than in the decline of the Israelite States; it is described by this rural prophet of Judah in the boldest language, with a concentrated passion in which you feel that the wrongs of generations and of a multitude of mute sufferers are gathered:

Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob,  
 And ye princes of the house of Israel!  
 Is it not your business to know judgement?—  
 You haters of good, and lovers of evil,—  
 Tearing their skin from upon them,  
 And their very flesh from their bones!  
 And they have devoured the flesh of My people,  
 And their skin they have flayed from upon them,  
 And their bones they have broken up!  
 Aye, they deal them out as meat in their pot,  
 And like flesh in the midst of the caldron! (31-3 :  
 comp. Amos 84, Zech. 114.5, and, for the last  
 figure, 1 Sam. 213.14).

Along with the landlords, Micah denounces with bitter irony their abettors, the false prophets of Judah (3<sup>5-7</sup>),—"the prophets," says Jehovah, "that mislead My people":

That while they chew with their teeth, cry Peace!  
But whoso offers nothing for their mouth,  
Against him they proclaim a holy war!

In another place, 2<sup>11</sup>: "If a man pursuing wind and vanity should say in his lies, 'I will preach to thee in wine and in strong drink,' then he would be made preacher to this people!" Here Micah reminds us of the contest of his namesake at Ramoth-Gilead with Ahab's lying prophets. In Amos 7<sup>13. 14</sup> the existence of a mercenary prophetism is implied; but here we first observe an organised, professional opposition to the messengers of Jehovah. It was carried on by men who laid themselves out to win the popular ear by "prophesying smooth things" (Isa. 30<sup>8-11</sup>). This conflict occupies from Micah's time a conspicuous and mournful place in the experience of the prophets (see Jer. 14<sup>14. 15</sup> 23<sup>9-40</sup>, Zeph. 3<sup>1-4</sup>, Zech. 13<sup>3. 4</sup>, Ezek. 13). In contrast with these parasites of the rich and flatterers of the mob, who covered their hypocrisies with the prophet's cloak, the plain-spoken, incorruptible man of God declares himself to be "full of power, even

of Jehovah's Spirit, and of the sense of right and manly courage, to declare to Jacob his rebellion and to Israel his sin" (3s). The obscure verses 6. 7 of ch. 2 read like the echo of some sharp dialogue between Micah and the false prophets, and Ewald not improbably conjectures that vv. 12. 13 of the same chapter are a specimen of the vaticinations of Micah's smooth-tongued opponents.

But Micah is *a prophet of faith*, no less than of repentance. The misery and sin of the present afford to him, as to Isaiah, a background for the magnificent future of redeemed Israel. While chs. 1-3 remind us of Amos, chs. 4 and 5 equally recall the glowing promises of Zech. 9, 10. "Ephraim," indeed, no longer figures in the messianic picture; there is nothing more to be said of help coming from "the house of Judah" to "the house of Joseph." Micah sees more distinctly than did his sanguine predecessor the severity of the conflict from which the kingdom of peace will issue. "The daughter of Zion" has deep suffering to go through before she can receive her King riding on the ass's colt. "Like a woman in travail," she must "writhe and be in labour" (4v. 10), if she is to give birth to the new order of things; and the nations gathered against her will expect a complete triumph over her impotence, though it will be to find themselves in turn the

victims of the irresistible might with which "in that day" she will be armed by her God (4<sub>11</sub>-5<sub>1</sub>).

The lowliness of the ideal king, graphically set forth in Zech. 9<sub>9</sub>, takes with Micah another form. His birth is traced to the hamlet of Bethlehem, from which his shepherd ancestors proceeded (5<sub>2</sub>),—a prophetic trait marvellously verified in the nativity of Jesus Christ. From the thought of his obscure origin Micah rises to dwell with eloquence on the unparalleled dignity of this Son of David. He speaks of the foundation of his rule, based on purposes of God hidden in the remotest past, on the majesty with which it will be exercised, and on its boundless extent. Thus Jehovah says :

Out of thee shall One come forth for Me,

To be made ruler in Israel ;

And His issuings are from of old,

From primeval days.

And He shall stand forth, and shepherd the flock,<sup>1</sup>—

In the strength of Jehovah,

In the splendour of the name of Jehovah His God ;

While they shall abide.

For now shall He prevail to the ends of the earth.

And *He* will be Peace ! (5<sub>2-5</sub>).

We see how much the messianism of the prophets has advanced in one generation upon the

<sup>1</sup> Micah resembles Zech. 9-11 in his fondness for the image of *the shepherd* : see 2<sub>12</sub> 3<sub>2, 3</sub> 5<sub>4, 5, 8</sub> 7<sub>14</sub>,



slight and general auguries of Amos and Hosea (Am. 9<sup>11,12</sup>, Hos. 3<sup>5</sup>). Like Isaiah (9-11), Micah sees the Divine kingdom rising in its glory beyond the Assyrian invasion, the shock of which Judah was now immediately awaiting. In ch. 5<sup>5,6</sup>,—at a later time than the utterance of 3<sup>12</sup>, and when Judah's partial repentance had brought hope of better days,—he anticipates his people's deliverance from Assyria, and even the carrying of the war into the enemies' land! Like the earlier prophecy of Zion's destruction, this prognostication was unfulfilled; in both cases the action of those concerned modified, first favourably and then unfavourably, the execution of Jehovah's word: on the principle involved, see Ezek. 33<sup>13-20</sup>. The "seven shepherds and eight princes of men" to be raised up for Judah's defence, signify a number of princely leaders more than sufficient for defence.

In the same poetical strain "the remnant of Jacob," scattered among the heathen, is described by two finely contrasted figures, as "the dew" (comp. Hos. 14 and Ps. 110<sup>3</sup>) that spreads far and wide its unsought and Divine refreshment, while to God's enemies it will be as the "lion among beasts of the forest, as a young lion amongst flocks of sheep" (vv.7.8). The first of these images associates Micah with Isaiah's uni-

versalism (see chs. 11 and 19<sup>13-25</sup>), as it beautifully signifies the riches which the Gentiles will gather from Israel's loss and chastisement: the Greek Septuagint and the Pauline Churches grew upon the fields visited by this "dew from Jehovah." The opposite lion-figure (comp. Ps. 2) has been equally fulfilled in the ruin brought upon those powers which have striven to crush the messianic kingdom, and in the disintegrating influence which the Jews have exercised upon the fabric of heathen civilisation.

Finally, the prophet returns in 5<sup>10-14</sup> to Israel herself, foretelling like his companions Zechariah and Isaiah the destruction of its "horses and chariots" and "fortresses," the symbols of a proud military despotism, in which the little kingdom of Judah vainly sought to rival the neighbouring empires, and at the same time the extirpation of all tokens and instruments of idolatry (Zech. 9<sup>10</sup> 10<sup>2</sup>, Isa. 2). Micah adds, "and I will cut off thy cities" (vv. 11. 14),—a singular feature of his messianic vision: comp. 4<sup>10</sup>, "Thou shalt go forth of the city, and dwell in the field . . . there shalt thou be delivered"; also 6<sup>9-13</sup>. He is a countryman in all his instincts, whose ideal of happiness is to see "every man sitting under his own vine and fig-tree, with none making him afraid" (44). Samaria and Jerusalem

are in his eyes the head and front of Israel's and Judah's offending: there the magnates live who "build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity," and have reared their palaces out of the spoils wrung from an exhausted peasantry (2<sub>1-3</sub> 3<sub>9-12</sub>). Such centres of evil can have no place in the restored Israel, and Micah does not care to reconcile this abolition of city life, as he knew it, with the glory promised to the renovated Zion of the future.

Chapters 1-5 thus form a single prophetic Book, which, in its two parts, presents a comprehensive view of Israel's present and future, as they were surveyed by Micah the Morashtite in the early years of Hezekiah's reign, about 720 B.C.

Chapter 6<sub>1</sub> (comp. 1<sub>2</sub>) marks a new beginning in Micah's work; and the third section of these prophecies, whether it had the same author as the two former sections or not, is a Book quite separate in character and aim (see pp. 247, 248). The style of chs. 6, 7 is smooth, sustained and finished, free from the abruptness and obscurity we have noted in Micah; but it must be allowed that Micah 4, 5 is more chastened in expression than 1-3, and there are paragraphs in the first Book—1<sub>2-4</sub>, 3<sub>6-12</sub>, 4<sub>1-5</sub> (if this be originally Micah's) and 5<sub>7-8</sub>—as flowing and polished as

any in the second. The difference between the earlier and later Books in this respect is fairly expressed, and explained, by a sentence of Dr Cheyne's written in another connexion: "The strict reproduction of a changeful popular oratory [chs. 1-5] was inconsistent with the smoothness and regularity essential to a literary style" [chs. 6, 7]. Instead of the grim humour of the author of ch. 3<sup>1-5</sup>, his bluntness and dour energy, we find in the last two chapters a softened, plaintive tone, foreboding that of Jeremiah and the Lamentations. Book II is touched with the pathos of Hosea; Book I with the severity of Amos.

The discourse of chs. 6<sup>1-76</sup> is cast into a dramatic form, which resembles the dialogue of Hos. 14, but is carried out more thoroughly (comp. also Isa. 1, Ps. 50); chs. 1-5 are not, however, without traces of the same faculty,—in 1<sup>10-16</sup> 2<sup>6.7</sup> 3<sup>9-12</sup> 4<sup>11-13</sup>. As for its subject-matter: this Book has nothing more to say of Zion,—unless it be in the allusion of 7<sup>11.12</sup> (comp. Isa. 33<sup>17-20</sup> R.V., Zech. 2),—nor about the messianic king; its one theme, like that of Hosea (and mainly of Isa. 40-66), is *the relation of Jehovah to His covenant people*.

Chap. 6, with a brief but significant inter-locution on the part of the people and the pro-

phet in vv. 6-8, is a measured and lofty impeachment by Jehovah, a statement of "the reproach of My people," which begins with God's ancient favours to Israel and comes down to the fraud and irreligion of present-day life. In ch. 7 1-6 the prophet responds, with pathetic confession on Israel's behalf, to the charge he has delivered, his words ending with the sad description of domestic treachery (vv. 5. 6: quoted by our Lord in Matt. 10<sup>35. 36</sup>) which indicates the last degree of social demoralisation. Here the confessor touches the bottom of his despair, and with the exclamation, "But as for me, I will look unto Jehovah" (ver. 7), the closing discourse begins, which ascends through the phases of reproof against taunting enemies and submission to Jehovah's anger (vv. 8-10), rehearsal of former promises in view of the merited chastisement (vv. 11-13), appeal to Israel's true Shepherd (ver. 14; comp. Pss. 23, 80) and remembrance of the redemption from Egypt (vv. 15-17), till it arrives at the exquisite doxology to Israel's forgiving God in which the Book of Micah reaches its climax:

Who is a mighty God like Thee,—  
Pardoning guilt, and passing over transgression,  
To save the remnant of His inheritance!  
He doth not hold fast for ever His anger,  
For *He* is One that delighteth in mercy.

He will turn and have compassion on us ;  
He will tread down our iniquities ;  
And Thou wilt cast into the abysses of the sea all  
our sins !  
Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, kindness to  
Abraham—  
That which Thou swarest to our fathers from the  
days of old (vv. 18-20 ; comp. Luke 1 68-75).

In these chapters the objectivity of the earlier Micah has given place to a new inwardness of feeling. We note already that identification by the prophet of himself with the faithful minority in Israel, which found its full expression in the second Isaiah and wrought in his doctrine of "the Servant of Jehovah." At the same time, there are several striking characteristics common to the writer of chs. 1-5 and 6, 7, such as show the latter to be a near spiritual kinsman of the former, if not, as we prefer to think, the same person with him.

The plain downright moral sense of Micah appears in ch. 6 6-8, expressed, perhaps, with the mellowed and tenderer feeling of old age. This celebrated passage sums up and brings to its final expression the whole argument of the prophets of the eighth century against the substitution of the ceremonial for the ethical in religion. It is the Old Testament counterpart

of St Paul's great saying, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love." In both Books the rich and great (6<sup>12</sup> 7<sup>3</sup>; comp. 3<sup>1-4</sup>, 9-12) bear the brunt of Micah's condemnation; and we may hear in "the voice of Jehovah" that "crieth to the city" (6<sup>9</sup>) denouncing the "violence of its rich men" and "the lies of its inhabitants," the old severity of the Moresheth countryman against the vices of citizens. On the other hand, the reference of vv. 7. 16 to the Moloch offerings and "the works of the house of Ahab," can only be explained in view of the thorough-going heathen reaction that came about under Manasseh, who even "made his children pass through the fire" (2 Kings 21, 2 Chron. 33); and the language of ch. 7<sup>2</sup> implies a *persecution* of godly Israelites by their fellow-countrymen, such as we do not hear of under any Judæan king except Manasseh. In both writings the "mountains," representing to this lowland border prophet the strength of Judah and Jerusalem, are the scene of God's contention with Israel (1<sup>3.4</sup> 6<sup>1.2</sup>; comp. Ezek. 6<sup>1-3</sup>); in both, Jehovah speaks repeatedly in fond reproach of "My people," much as in Hosea; in both there is the same even rhythm and rhetorical force and the same command of striking and apt

metaphor, with more concise vigour in the former chapters and more of amplitude and grace in the latter (see p. 264). It is worth noting, too, that in chap. 1, at the outset, Jerusalem is identified in sin and punishment with *Samaria*; and in ch. 6<sup>16</sup> the crowning charge of Jehovah against His people is that "the statutes of *Omri* are kept, and all the works of *the house of Ahab*, and ye walk in their counsels." Now, Omri was the builder of Samaria, and that city was specially identified with his dynasty. These two representations are virtually one, and they proceed from a point of view peculiar to the Book of Micah (see pp. 254, 255).

The last clause of the Book, "from the days of old" (comp. 52), suggests what seems to us the most remarkable idiosyncrasy stamped on the prophecies of Micah as a whole,—their *archaic* complexion. Amos and Hosea both loved to recall Israel to her sacred past; but Micah surpasses them in this respect. Israel's glorious future, as he sees it, is but the renewal or realisation of what has long ago been assured to her: "the former rule" is to "arise and come" to "the hill of the daughter of Zion" (48), and the perfect Son of David will issue from humble Bethlehem, whence his race sprang,—He whose "goings forth are of old, from time immemorial"



(52). This tendency, Hofmann suggests,<sup>1</sup> may help to account for Micah's sending his people to exile in *Babylon* (4<sub>10</sub>), inasmuch as from that region their forefather Abraham first set out (comp. Hos. 8<sub>13</sub>). Now Mic. 6, 7 is full of the thought of "the days of old" (6<sub>3-5</sub> 7<sub>14, 15, 20</sub>); to those the prophet looks back as to a golden age from the dark days of Manasseh, when Israel's sun was setting in gloom and horror. His last hope, and the very anchor of his soul which clings in every fibre to *the covenant* of Jehovah, is that God will remember His "loving-kindness to Abraham" (comp. Isa. 41<sub>8</sub>). The traits of character we have noticed furnish, to our minds, a substantial proof of single authorship; but the point cannot be decided with certainty, nor is it of vital importance. In any case, we must allow an interval of some thirty years between Books I and II, and a change in the condition of things such as that which separated the earlier years of Hezekiah from the wholly

<sup>1</sup> *Weissagung und Erfüllung*, i. 244. Dr Cheyne proposes to read the clause, "And thou shalt come even to Babylon," as a gloss of exilic times: see his note on ch. 4<sub>10</sub> in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*. It does not harmonise with the foregoing sentence. On the other hand, the thought of exile to Babylon was not altogether foreign to Assyrian times (see 2 Kings 17<sub>24</sub>); and Isaiah predicted the like contingency for Hezekiah's sons (2 Kings 20, Isa. 39).

different régime of his son Manasseh. The relation of the latter to the former part of Micah resembles, on a smaller scale and within a briefer period, that existing between Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66.

Micah shows the fondness for *paronomasia*—*i.e.* for playing on the sound of words—which is a mark of Hebrew poetry and oratory. Chapter 1<sub>10-16</sub> is the most extended example of this kind in the use of place-names. Isa. 10<sub>23-32</sub> and 15, 16, with 2 Sam. 1<sub>20. 21</sub>, afford similar instances. To the prophet's imagination, haunted by the coming judgement, the names of familiar towns and villages become omens of evil; and the invaders' tread wakens echoes of terror in the region through which he must pass. It is as though he wrote (putting Lincolnshire for the Shephelah in our translation):

Speak low of it at Louth, at Driby dry your eyes  
 [two hostile towns];  
 At Rollesby I will roll myself in the dust, etc.

Micah's vocabulary is classically pure, and belongs to the best period of the language; and his style, always graphic, pithy, and incisive, acquired a clearer and calmer flow with the course of years. It reflects in the earlier chapters the conflicts of an active ministry, and in the

latter the more retired and pensive thoughts of a sorrowful old age.

For additional parallels, beside those already intimated, between Micah and other prophets, see, for Joel, p. 115; for Amos, p. 149; for Hosea, p. 185; for Zech. 9-11, p. 198; for Isaiah, p. 251. Compare further:

Mic. 1 <sub>3</sub>	and	Isa.	26 <sub>21</sub>		Mic. 4 <sub>13</sub>	and	Jer.	51 <sub>33</sub>
„ 1 <sub>4</sub>	„	„	64 <sub>1-3</sub>		„ 5 <sub>3</sub>	„	„	31 <sub>7-9</sub>
„ 3 <sub>7</sub>	„	„	44 <sub>25</sub>		„ 6 <sub>3</sub>	„	„	25. 31
„ 3 <sub>8</sub>	„	„	58 <sub>1</sub>		„ 7 <sub>5</sub>	„	„	9 <sub>4</sub>
„ 3 <sub>11</sub>	„	„	48 <sub>2</sub>		„ 7 <sub>14</sub>	„	„	50 <sub>19</sub>
„ 4 <sub>13</sub>	„	„	41 <sub>15. 16</sub>		„ 7 <sub>18</sub>	„	„	50 <sub>20</sub>
„ 6 <sub>3</sub>	„	„	43 <sub>23</sub>		„ 7 <sub>8-10</sub>	„	Lam.	3 <sub>22-66</sub>
„ 7 <sub>8</sub>	„	„	50 <sub>10</sub>		„ 3 <sub>5</sub>	„	Ezek.	22 <sub>25</sub>
„ 7 <sub>17</sub>	„	„	49 <sub>23</sub>		„ 4 <sub>1. 2</sub>	„	„	17 <sub>22. 23</sub>
„ 4 <sub>6</sub>	„	Zeph.	3 <sub>19</sub>		„ 5 <sub>4</sub>	„	„	34 <sub>23</sub>
„ 1 <sub>2</sub>	„	Hab.	2 <sub>20</sub>		„ 7 <sub>6</sub>	„	„	22 <sub>7</sub>
„ 3 <sub>10</sub>	„	„	2 <sub>12</sub>		„ 4 <sub>2</sub>	„	Zech.	8 <sub>20-23</sub>
„ 3 <sub>4</sub>	„	Jer.	11 <sub>11</sub>		„ 4 <sub>11</sub>	„	„	12 <sub>3</sub>

The allusions to Aaron and Miriam along with Moses, to Balak and Balaam (6<sub>4.5</sub>), and to “the land of Nimrod” (5<sub>6</sub>), are unique in the prophets, and indicate Micah’s fondness for the old history of his people. Ch. 7<sub>18</sub> appears to be based on Ex. 15<sub>11</sub> and 34<sub>6</sub>. Chs. 1<sub>10</sub> and 7<sub>4</sub> are echoes of David’s songs in 2 Sam. 1<sub>20</sub> and 23<sub>6.7</sub>; and points of contact between Micah and the Psalms are particularly numerous. Compare:

Mic. 1 <sup>2</sup> 6 <sup>2</sup> with	Ps. 50 <sup>1-7</sup>	Mic. 5 <sup>9</sup> with	Ps. 21 <sup>8.9</sup>
„ 2 <sup>1</sup> „	„ 36 <sup>4</sup>	„ 6 <sup>7</sup> „	„ 50 <sup>8</sup>
„ 2 <sup>7</sup> „	„ 18 <sup>25</sup>	„ 7 <sup>2</sup> „	„ 12 <sup>1</sup> ,
„ 3 <sup>3</sup> „	„ 14 <sup>4</sup>		14 <sup>1.3</sup>
„ 3 <sup>12</sup> „	„ 79 <sup>1</sup>	„ 7 <sup>14</sup> „	„ 80 <sup>1</sup>
„ 4 <sup>3</sup> „	„ 110 <sup>6</sup>	„ 7 <sup>17</sup> „	„ 72 <sup>9</sup>
„ 4 <sup>7</sup> „	„ 2 <sup>6</sup>	„ 7 <sup>18</sup> „	„ 103 <sup>12</sup>

Comparison of 1s 7<sup>9</sup> with Job 30<sup>29</sup> 34<sup>31.32</sup> and 23<sup>10</sup> inclines one to think that, like Amos (p. 150), Micah has either used, or been used by, the author of the Book of Job.

#### ANALYSIS.

BOOK I.—Prophecy of Zion's Ruin and Restoration, ch. 1.

##### 1. Her *approaching ruin*, ch. 1 :

(a) The overture : description of Jehovah's coming in judgement (1<sup>2-4</sup>).

(b) Samaria and Jerusalem the objects of His anger (5).

(c) Prediction of Samaria's ruin (6-8).

(d) Jerusalem to follow suit (9).

(e) Lament over Israel's desolation (10-16).

##### 2. The *sins that are bringing ruin* set forth in two discourses, chs. 2 and 3 :

(a) Violent dispossession of the small landowners (2<sup>1-3</sup>), to be punished in kind (4. 5).

[(b) Attempt to silence the prophet (6), and his reply (7): the most likely interpretation of this obscure interlude.]

(c) Spoliation of fugitive Israelites by their brethren (8-10). [This probably took place when Northern Israelites fled south from the Assyrians: for the heinousness of the crime, comp. Obad. 10-14.]

(d) The people's preference for false prophets (11), with (?) a specimen of their flattering style (12.13).

(e) By way of contrast, Micah repeats more bitterly his charge against the Judæan nobles (31-4);

(f) And then attacks the false prophets (5-7),—men so different from himself (8),—

(g) Summing up the accusation and giving final sentence in vv. 9-12.

3. *Zion's ultimate deliverance after affliction*, chs. 41-51:

(a) Oracle of the exaltation of Jehovah's hill to world-wide eminence (41-5).

(b) The return of the exiles (6. 7).

(c) The re-establishment of Zion's ancient rule (8).

(d) Her distress the travail-pains of a mighty birth, resulting in the overthrow of those who now humiliate her (49-51).

4. *The victorious Israel of the future*, ch. 52-15:

(a) The great Shepherd to arise from little Bethlehem (2-4).

(b) The repulse of the Assyrians (5. 6).

(c) Israel as the kindly dew or the raging lion amongst the nations (7-9).

(d) The purging of Israel from its evils (10-14).

(e) Jehovah's anger finally poured on the rebellious heathen (15): comp. Joel 3.

BOOK II.—God's great controversy with Israel, chs. 6, 7.

1. *Jehovah's arraignment* of His people, ch. 6.

(a) Overture: appeal to the mountains to be witnesses (6.1, 2).

(b) Reminder of His old mercies (3-5).

(c) Blinded Israel asks what sacrifices—even of its own offspring—He will accept? (6. 7).

(d) The prophet states in reply God's moral demands from men (8).

(e) Accusation of present sins, mingled with threats of punishments (9-16), —oppression, fraud, lying, Samaritan idolatry.

2. *Contrite answer* of the prophet on the people's behalf, ch. 7.

(a) Bitter confession of sin (1-6): good men hunted down (1.2), justice corrupted (3.4), friendship and domestic confidence betrayed (5.6).

(b) Yet the true Israel hopes in God, while it accepts His chastening, holding fast His promise (7-13).

(c) Final supplication, and reminder of old deliverances (14-17).

(d) Doxology, based on the patriarchal covenant (18-20).

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE EARLY PROPHETS

The Fall of Samaria a Goal of Prophecy—Jehovah the Righteous, the Merciful, the Faithful—The Holy One—The Almighty, the God of Hosts—Israel His Covenant People—Hosea's View of the Covenant—The Attitude of the Prophets toward the Priesthood and Sacrifices—The Day of Jehovah, its various Aspects—The Outpouring of the Spirit—The Kingdom of David, in Zechariah and Micah—Messianism of Amos and Hosea—The Doctrine of the Holy City.

**F**OR half a century the prophets of Jehovah had looked forward to the overthrow of the Northern kingdom in Israel, which was effected by the Assyrians in the year 722. With that catastrophe part of the task of prophecy was ended; a heavy and sorrowful commission had been discharged, and an eventful chapter closed in the history of the Old Testament revelation. The fall of Samaria was a crisis in Jehovah's dealings with His people,—a judgement upon the

past, and the point of transition and advance to a new future. It is fitting, therefore, at this stage, and convenient in closing the present volume, to review the course of prophetic teaching as we have followed it so far and to summarise its main and permanent results.

### I. THE NATURE OF JEHOVAH

The great prophets of this period spend their strength in setting forth *the nature of Jehovah Himself, the unique character of the God of Israel*. All their views of human affairs are derived from their apprehension of God, and are disclosed to them by the light of His countenance.

The catastrophe which was now happening, the ruin of the Ten Tribes, has its sole explanation here; it is due to the disharmony between the nation and its God. Its mind and will are irreconcilable with His. "Can two walk together," asks Amos, "except they be agreed?" (33). To understand, as Amos and his companions did, what sort of a Being the God of Israel is,—to "know Jehovah,"—was to see that the people's behaviour was intolerable in His eyes and that the Israelite State must be mended or ended. We have already observed, at the outset, the vital bearing of this question on the



character and work of the early prophets (pp. 29-36); but it is necessary for us to return to it and to consider again, and in its relation to their entire teaching and system of thought, the doctrine concerning God held by Obadiah and Joel, by Amos, Hosea, and Micah.

1. With Obadiah, Jehovah is regarded as a God of *judicial rectitude*. The unbrotherly, the inhuman conduct of Edom towards Judah is hateful to Him and ensures condign punishment. Amos carries out this principle in the widest and most impressive way (pp. 146-149). When, at the outset of his book, "Jehovah roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem," it is to thunder vengeance on the peoples of Palestine for their barbarous cruelty shown to His people and towards each other (13-23); the same vengeance in heavier measure is to be meted out to Israel, because of the crushing oppression and extortion practised in it by the rich upon the poor (26-8 41 511-13). Micah bears the like message to the Judæan nobility a generation later (chs. 2, 3). The Lord God of these prophets is the "*righteous Jehovah, who loveth righteousness,*" who will have civil and social justice amongst men, and pronounces doom on every nation in which these virtues are not found.

2. Joel proclaimed Him to Judah, using words

once spoken to Moses, as, "Jehovah, your God, *gracious and merciful*, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (2<sub>13</sub>). This view of the Divine character was equally ancient and equally powerful in its moral effect with the former. Hosea was its chief exponent (pp. 163-165). The fact that in such an age and with such a history, with everything in his surroundings to embitter and poison his heart, Hosea still held to his faith in the goodness of God and his sense of the Divine grace toward men became even deeper as his vision of the coming judgement grew darker and more distressing, is one of the most wonderful testimonies in the Bible to the power of such faith over the human soul. The affections of a tender husband and a yearning father are to Hosea signs and proofs of the love that is in Jehovah toward His chosen; by these signs he reads the heart of God.

The Lord Jesus saw in Hosea a forerunner, and adopted his characteristic sentiment, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," for a watchword of His own (Hos. 6<sub>6</sub>, Matt. 9<sub>13</sub> 12<sub>7</sub>); He condemned upon this principle the hard legalism and the heartless pride of the Jewish leaders of His time. Micah, in the brief and touching act of praise which concludes his book (7<sub>18-20</sub>), echoes the teaching of Joel and Hosea concerning God's

covenanted mercies to Israel, and strikes the note of thanksgiving that was taken up by Mary and Zacharias in the opening songs of the New Covenant (Matt. 1 21, Luke 1 50. 54. 68-79).

3. With mercy, *faithfulness* is associated in Hosea's and Micah's thoughts of God,—*i.e.* fidelity, truth to one's character and plighted word.

Jehovah's original calling of this people, His dealings with the forefathers of Israel and promises to them, have formed a tie between Him and them which can hardly be broken. "I called My son out of Egypt," He says in Hosea (11 1-4); and in Micah (6 3. 4), "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and from the house of slaves I redeemed thee,"—sayings that remind us of the first of the Ten Words of Moses. To those old days of Israel's youth belong the most tender and binding recollections on Jehovah's part (Hos. 2 14. 15 11 8. 9 12 3-6. 9 13 4. 5, Mic. 7 14. 15; comp. Jer. 2 1. 2, Rom. 11 16-32); and "if we are faithless, He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." It is this moral fidelity of God, the Rock of Israel, that warrants His servants in hoping and prophesying. "Out of the depths" they still cry unto Him, and "watch for the morning" that is sure to follow the black night of His judgements (Mic. 7 7. 8). Where such mercy and faithfulness are found,

there must needs be "plenteous redemption" (Ps. 130).

Now, it is because these qualities of Jehovah are lacking in His people and "there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land," that He is holding His awful "controversy" with them (Hos. 41, Mic. 61-12). That they have no "knowledge of God" is the damning fault of the Ephraimites (Hos. 28 46 54 63. 6 81-3 113 149), the root of their vices; and it is this *ethical* knowledge that is wanting to them. Amos and Hosea are both possessed by the idea of the moral being of God; they interpret everything and foresee everything by the light of this glowing conviction. In these two prophets we find expressed in all its purity and intensity and practical force, the principle of *the sovereignty of character*,—the very principle which distinguished the Israelite from other ancient creeds and lies at the basis of the religion of the Bible. "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so Jehovah shall be with you" (Amos 514); "Kindness I desire, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings" (Hos. 66; comp. 149):—such are the watchwords of the prophets of the Samaritan crisis; and they hold good for all time.

4. Obadiah (ver. 17) and Joel (21 317) associ-

ate holiness with God's dwelling in Zion; Amos speaks of His "holy name" (27) as outraged by Israelite wantonness and profanity. "By His holiness *He has sworn*," as by that attribute which is most Himself,—the essence of His nature, which burns in consuming fire against impurity,—to punish the monstrous, shameless sin of the Samaritan women (41.2). On the contrary, Hosea, in a singular passage (119), finds in the fact that Jehovah is "God and not man, a Holy One in the midst of thee," the reason why He forbears to "destroy Ephraim": His holiness, as it were, restrains His anger,—God is infinitely superior to the resentments and the affronted pride in which human littleness betrays itself.

But it remains for Isaiah to employ and expound that grand title of God, "the Holy One of Israel." In this expression he has brought to its burning focus the theology of his predecessors. From it, in turn, he derives his lofty, far-ranging view of Israel and the world. When Micah (if it be Micah) in his later work thus states the Divine demands,—"*He hath told thee, O man, what is good: and what doth Jehovah seek from thee, except to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (6s),—the first two of those requirements sum up what is learnt from Amos and Hosea, while the third belongs to

a time when Isaiah's lofty teaching on the Divine holiness had begun to take effect.

5. The *almightiness* of Jehovah was a commonplace of prophetic thought; the earliest titles given to God in the Old Testament are witnesses to this primitive belief. Joel hears the Almighty's voice in the thunder shaking heaven and earth (2<sup>11</sup> 3<sup>16</sup>); Obadiah portrays Him reaching His hand to Edom, though its "nest" were "set among the stars" (ver. 4).

Both the above thoughts are echoed in Amos (1<sup>2</sup> 9<sup>2, 3</sup>), who is excelled by none in his conceptions of the grandeur of God in nature (3<sup>8</sup> 4<sup>13</sup> 5<sup>8</sup> 9<sup>5, 6</sup>: see pp. 140, 147; also Mic. 1<sup>3, 4</sup>): the earth quakes and the hills melt at His touch; the floods swell or sink at His word of command; He marshals the powers of the storm; He built the storied heavens, He fashioned Orion and the Pleiades. Amos gives to Jehovah a dominion no less complete over nations and the human world. The fact that He is the the God of Israel in no degree limits His power or right over other races: Ethiopians, Philistines, Egyptians, no less than Israelites, are at His call (9<sup>7</sup>); it is He, "the God of hosts," who "raises up" the mighty "nation" that is to "afflict" Israel from Hamath to the Southern wilderness (6<sup>14</sup>). Just because He is God of Israel, He must needs command

and use for His instruments all other peoples. Hence Amos habitually speaks of *the Lord Jehovah* (Eng. "the Lord God"), *Jehovah, the God of hosts*,—titles rare in his contemporaries (see, however, Hos. 12 5, Mic. 1 2 4 4, Zech. 9 14. 15 10 3), which indicate the majesty of Israel's God, His absolute command over the forces of the material and the human world.

## II. THE COVENANT PEOPLE OF JEHOVAH

*The covenant relation of Jehovah to Israel* is a truth fundamental to Old Testament thought, and is realised in the fullest degree by the prophets of the time (see Chap. II). The exilic Isaiah alone carries it to a higher development.

Obadiah and Joel, Amos and Hosea, move within the limits of this conception. The Second Book of Micah, however, which belongs to a new age,—to the days of Manasseh, when the public exercise of Jehovah's worship ceased and it was confined to a circle of persecuted disciples,—gives distinct utterance to the necessities of personal religion and the conditions of individual acceptance and communion with God, in chs. 6 6-8 7 7-9. But in its general strain this deeply instructive prophecy dwells still on the dealings of Jehovah with His "people, the flock of His

heritage." It strikes, however, quite clearly the inward, subjective note, which was afterwards developed by the teaching and experience of Jeremiah.

Obadiah has for his simple theme the judgement of the Lord Jehovah between Judah and Edom. Joel's cry is :

Spare Thy people, O Jehovah,  
And give not Thy heritage to reproach,  
That the heathen should mock them.

Wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where  
is their God? (217).

"Prepare to meet thy God, *O Israel!*" is the message of Amos (4<sub>12</sub>); the unique relation of this people to God and the unparalleled privileges they had thus enjoyed, render their guilt inexcusable and desperate (2<sub>9-12</sub> 3<sub>1-3</sub>). The shepherd prophet who made the last, abortive attempt to save the doomed tribes, loves to speak of them as Jehovah's flock (Zech. 9<sub>16</sub> 10<sub>3</sub> 11<sub>7</sub>); neither he nor the others betray any thought of themselves, or make any reflexion on their private relations to God apart from those of the people. Hosea affords an extreme instance of the prophet's absorption in the religious commonwealth, his subordination of self to the sacred community. His domestic tragedy affords to him a mirror imaging the conduct



of Israel towards Jehovah (see pp. 170–177). The “whoredom” of the covenant-nation, the breach of its marriage-bond with Jehovah,—this is the subject of his passionate lamentations and reproofs. This fact is a speaking witness to the reality and strength of the conception of religion which underlies it. The doctrine of the Covenant must have been profoundly rooted in the national conscience to have possessed in this way Hosea’s patriotic and kindly nature.

Joel attaches great importance to sacrifice and the priestly offices (1 9. 13 2 12-17),—a feature of his Book which, as we have maintained (pp. 102–104), does not really make against its early date. Notwithstanding his “priestliness,” he regards the spirit of prophecy as the supreme bestowment of Jehovah made to Israel (2 26-29). On the other hand, it has been inferred, but as we think mistakenly, from the language of Amos and Hosea, as also from certain expressions of Isaiah (1 11-15) and Jeremiah (7 21-23), that these prophets condemned the priestly ceremonial,—that, in their conception, the relation of Israel to Jehovah was purely ethical and allowed no place for sacrifice and ritual. Such an ideal was foreign to their age, and quite impracticable. We are persuaded that it never entered their minds.

On the worship of the Northern sanctuaries

as it was, the prophets passed unqualified condemnation; and they opposed with all their might the heathenish notion then prevalent, that lavish and extreme sacrifices and imposing ritual and frequent festivals were in themselves pleasing to God, and would make up for moral delinquencies in the worshippers. It was the union of "iniquity and the solemn meeting," the lifting up in prayer of "hands full of blood" (Isa. 1 13-15), the offering of sacrifice by men without kindness or truth, that Jehovah hated and that led Him to say, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings" (Hos. 6 6). But there is no intrinsic opposition, no real incompatibility between the two. To proclaim the abolition of sacrifice was far from Hosea's thoughts in saying this; and the stress that he lays on the corruption of the priests (chs. 4, 5, 6 8-10) and the offensiveness of Samarian ceremonial, goes to show that priestly ministry and formal worship were, in his eyes, an essential part of Israel's service to Jehovah.

Micah 6 6-8 is to be understood in the same sense: not that justice, mercy, and humility are substitutes for the appointed sacrifices, but that these dispositions of the heart are the essential things in God's sight and no sacrifices can be substituted for them; their possession will render

the Moloch offerings that were proposed utterly abhorrent, and will prompt the worship which God approves. Compare Isa. 61:8 65:2-7 66:1-4.17: a right inward disposition will remedy the abuses and put an end to the abominations of false worship, and will bring about the ideal worship foretold in ch. 66:20-24. Similarly, vv. 18.19 of Ps. 51 are in real accord with vv. 16.17, whether from the same pen or not; and in Ps. 50, while Jehovah has no need to take "bullock" or "he-goat" from the house and fold of His people, nevertheless He appeals to them as those who "make covenant with Him by sacrifice" (vv. 5.8-14). The cessation of priesthood and sacrificial ordinance is threatened in Hos. 3:4.5 and 9:1-5 as amongst the heaviest punishments that the prophet can imagine falling upon his people.

Further, the fact that *the sabbath* is but twice, casually, mentioned by these writers (Am. 8:5, Hos. 2:11), and *circumcision* not once mentioned, is no sign that these and kindred institutions were non-existent or unimportant in the religion of the prophets. They were not the theoretical expounders of a system, bound to enumerate and explain all the articles of the national creed, but practical religious leaders whose business it was to enforce the present truth. They bent all their powers of thought and eloquence to set

forth the moral attributes of God, and the moral duties of His worshippers that are immovably grounded thereupon. They set themselves to inculcate just that knowledge of Jehovah for lack of which their people were perishing, which they alone possessed in a world full of the deadly corruption bred by immoral religions. They fought for the very life of godliness against creeds in which ritual took the place of right-dealing and low superstition of manly faith, whose priests were tricksters and their prophets flatterers and hirelings.

By virtue of their concentration upon the one thing then needful, the prophets of the eighth century have developed with unrivalled force the ethical side of religion; and in doing this they rendered imperishable service to the cause of God. We must not infer from this that they denied the other necessary elements of a living and operative creed, that they rejected external ordinances and formal public worship as things needless and even displeasing to God. It is a relative, and not an absolute opposition between the ethical and the ceremonial for which the prophets contend. They insist, not upon the abolition of sacrifice and temple service, but upon their subordination to moral ends and motives. They assert the utter worthlessness of outward

rites apart from the inward virtues of justice, mercy, and faith. For the Spirit of Christ was in these His noble forerunners and the preparers of His way. The prophets of this great epoch were entirely one with Jesus Christ in their theory of religion, in their views as to the things that are essential to a right relation between God and the community of men.

### III. THE DAY OF JEHOVAH

Amos is the first among our writing prophets clearly to announce *the day of Jehovah*, which he views as a day of judgement upon the nation of Israel (5<sup>18-20</sup> 8<sup>2, 3, 9-14</sup>: see pp. 115 ff.). The gloom of "that day" hangs over his entire Book, until in the last section, ch. 9<sup>11-15</sup>, the darkness lifts to reveal shining beyond it the light of the messianic age. "The day of Jehovah" is a leading theme with all the prophets of these times; and though its brighter issue is never quite lost to view, nor does despair absolutely prevail even with the most desponding, the state of the people compelled its inspired teachers during the eighth century to dwell increasingly on the judicial aspects of "the day."

The ruin of the Ephraimite kingdom is Hosea's main preoccupation and forms the

proximate goal of his thought and preaching, although he does not use the phrase "day of Jehovah" in the manner of Amos; see, however, ch. 15. 11 59. He attains at last a happy and satisfying vision of Israel's restoration, lying beyond the approaching judgement (13<sup>14</sup> 14: see pp. 182, 183).

The Zechariah of chs. 9-11, if we have read his words rightly, was one who hoped against hope that the dire chastisement visibly descending upon Israel, might be averted, or at least speedily reversed, by the return of the Ten Tribes to their old allegiance to the Son of David. He foresees a great judicial conflict between Israel and the heathen, but tells how "Jehovah their God shall save them *in that day*, as the flock of His people," provided only that Judah and Ephraim are reunited for the bow and arrow of His warfare (9<sup>13-16</sup> 10<sup>3-7</sup>: see pp. 189, 201). This condition, alas, was not fulfilled; the sanguine prophet who announced it saw his hopes wrecked by Pekah's accession to the throne of Samaria (11<sup>14-17</sup>), and the Day took the disastrous course which Amos and Hosea had foreseen. The "earlier Zechariah" sought, in effect, to revive the more favourable view of "the day of Jehovah" indicated by Obadiah in vv. 8, 15, and developed in Joel 3.

Amos discusses this expression in ch. 5<sup>18-20</sup> as a phrase already familiar in his time, and even a popular catchword in Israel. Granting their early date, the language of Joel and Obadiah goes far to account for this. These prophets foretold a "day of Jehovah near upon all the heathen" (Ob. 15); Joel had powerfully described this "day" under the form of a battle-scene beneath the walls of Jerusalem (3<sup>9-17</sup>: see pp. 111-113). He had seen in the locust plague, which scourged the land when already overrun and harried by the surrounding heathen, a token of complete and speedy ruin. But the repentance of Judah changed for her the curse and blight into blessing (2<sup>12-19</sup>); and a period of respite, and even of unwonted prosperity, had subsequently ensued for both Israelite kingdoms. It was upon this experience that the corrupt Israelites presumed who confronted Amos, professing to "desire the day of Jehovah" (5<sup>18</sup>). The Judæans who, as Micah says (3<sup>11</sup>), "leaned upon Jehovah, and said, Is not Jehovah among us?" doubtless pointed to similar favourable facts in the recent history of the Southern kingdom.

Micah (1<sup>6-9</sup>) and Isaiah (ch. 28), speaking in the last ten or fifteen years of Samaria's existence, account her fall as a settled thing; what concerns them is that "her wound extends to

Judah, even to the gate of My people, to Jerusalem" (see pp. 254, 255). Isa. 28 is "a glance at the sad fate of Samaria, followed by an invective against the frivolity, perversity, and superstition of the ruling classes in Jerusalem" (Cheyne). Isaiah's early ministry (chs. 2, 3) was largely spent in preaching Amos' doctrine of the Day of Jehovah to Jerusalem, in the time of its wealth and luxury before the Aramæan invasion of 734. But it was his special work, and in this Micah (chs. 4, 5) was joined with him, to unfold the happier outcome of "that day" (see 2<sup>2-4</sup> 4<sup>2-6</sup> 9<sup>1-6</sup>, etc.). Micah, however, stood at this time alone in pronouncing the word of *the destruction of Jerusalem*, ch. 3<sup>12</sup>. This prophecy it took a century and a half to fulfil. In general, Micah puts the fall and recovery of Judah more simply and roughly than his great contemporary; he sets them side by side, with little attempt to mediate between them or explain their sequence (see, however, pp. 253, 254). Nor does it seem to concern him that vv. 7. 8 of ch. 4, in their literal sense, contradict and cancel the sentence of destruction passed in ch. 3<sup>12</sup>.

The grand promise of *the outpouring of the Spirit* given in the Book of Joel (2<sup>28-32</sup>), is an essential part of the prophetic view of the Day of Jehovah. It will not seem strange that this



expectation was formed and cherished thus early, when we consider how great a height prophecy had reached in the ninth century, and that Joel was the successor of men like Elijah and Elisha in whom the power of the Spirit of God was recognised working with superhuman and almost unbounded energy (see pp. 113-115). This prophecy of Joel carries out in a new and apt way the idea of a universal consecration of the chosen people, which was inherent in the faith of Israel (comp. Ex. 19 6). This full possession by the Spirit of God will prove, like nothing else and as no material blessing can do, that Jehovah is "in the midst of Israel," that He and "none else" is their God, and that He justly calls them "My people" who shall "never be ashamed" (2<sup>26-29</sup>). Only thus can Israel be brought into thorough inward harmony with its prophets and understand the mind of God in them. And thus inspired, God's people will be prepared to meet the terrors and conflicts of the Day of Jehovah, which has still to come upon an evil world, even though the signs of its immediate incidence on Israel have passed away (2<sup>30-32</sup> 3<sup>9-21</sup>). The descent of the Spirit of God in His more extraordinary energies upon His servants is always the precursor of some new crisis in the world's history; it prepares His people for their part in

each great day of the Divine judgements amongst men and nations. So St Peter apprehended Joel's meaning, and so turned the sign of the Day of Pentecost into a presage at once of hope and of warning for the Israel of the last times.

#### IV. THE PERFECT KINGDOM OF JEHOVAH

The promise of *the perfect kingdom of Jehovah established by the Son of David*,—or, in brief, *the doctrine of the Messiah*,—is developed in its full scope only by Isaiah, whose teaching lies beyond the limits of our present review. The fuller discussion of the messianism of the eighth-century prophets, in its relation to the times, we must reserve for our second volume and the chapters on Isaiah.

But Isaiah's influence, or that at least of the circle to which he belonged (see pp. 208, 249), made itself manifest in Micah and the Zechariah of chs. 9–11. In Northern Israel before the year 734, as we gather, the coming had been predicted of a lowly and righteous King of Zion, who would be the Saviour of all the sons of Israel near and far, whose kingdom would stretch over the heathen lands and bring victory and boundless happiness to the people of God now divided and distressed (9 9-17).

Micah, preaching some years later to Judah alone, sees the same Prince arising, like his father David, out of humble Bethlehem, but playing His shepherd part in the strength and the majesty of Jehovah; He beats back the dreaded Assyrian, and makes Israel now as a dew of blessing amongst the Gentile peoples, and now as a lion amid flocks of sheep, rending in pieces the rebellious (5<sup>2-9</sup>).

Amos and Hosea, preaching before the epoch of the Judæan group of prophets just mentioned, had but little to say concerning the throne of David; and even that little is disputed to them by able critics,—though, it seems to us, without valid reason. Amos (9<sup>11-12</sup>) predicts the restoration to power of David's house, in his time fallen into weakness and contempt on the part of Samaria, and the recovery of its sway over Edom and other heathen subjects of Jehovah's rule. This was surely a modest expectation, and reasonable enough at the time that Amos spoke. Hosea, racked with fear and distress for "Ephraim," sees but one hope in the dim future, that "the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel shall be gathered together and appoint for themselves *one head*" (1<sup>11</sup>); and there is but one quarter from which this single head can be looked for: "afterwards (after their exile) the sons of Israel shall return

and seek Jehovah their God *and David their king*" (35). From a stem of sustained promise like this, growing ever since David's time (2 Sam. 7), we can understand the flower of the messianic hope unfolding itself suddenly in Zechariah, Micah, and Isaiah.

It belongs to the messianic doctrine—for David's house and David's city were one in their origin and in their fate—that Obadiah and Joel amid the perils of the ninth century firmly maintain the inviolability of Zion. They prophesied that it should be the centre of deliverance for God's people and of judgement on His enemies (Ob. 17. 21, Joel 3<sub>16-21</sub>). Micah, though foretelling the ruin of Zion and Jerusalem in the most uncompromising fashion (3<sub>12</sub>), yet in the next chapter (4<sub>6-51</sub>) makes it the place of Jehovah's rule and His triumph over the insulting heathen. It remained for Isaiah to raise to its summit the glory of his mother city, and to vindicate her unique place in the Divine regard by the miracle of her deliverance from Sennacherib. To this prophet are owing, more than to any man besides, the unrivalled sacredness of the Judæan capital and the imperishable name which Mount Zion holds in the faith of the Church of God. The home of all the saints is known as "the city of the living God, heavenly

*Jerusalem.*" All ages since have learnt to sing, with the sons of Zion taught by Isaiah,—

As we have heard, so have we seen  
In the city of Jehovah of Hosts,  
In the city of our God !  
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