

THE REACTION OF THE PROPHET TO HIS MISSION

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TO
MY MOTHER

...בשובה ונחת תושעון

כחשקט וכבטחה תהיה גבורתכם...

(ישיהו ל"ט"ו)

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FOREWORD

For one who is about to enter the Rabbinate, I can conceive of no better review of my work than that which was afforded me through my research in the prophetic literature. But in addition to its academic value, the material itself has been inspiring. If anything, I have often been carried away with the fervor and exaltation of the words I have read and recorded, and to such an extent that at times I have lost sight of the objective goals which I was seeking. However, this is not a new experience to anyone who has dealt with the prophets, and only the trained scholar seems to know how to avoid this particular pitfall. In all honesty, I cannot say that I made an effort to avoid it. It was too thrilling an experience, and one which has more than remunerated me for the duller and more mechanical factors involved in the preparation of this essay. In any case, I feel that, for a period of time, at least, I have been in company with the messengers of God.

Only those verses in Amos that are regarded as original by Dr. J. Morgenstern have been dealt with in this paper. In regard to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah, I have discussed only those sections considered as original by Dr. S. H. Blank. For Hosea, I have been completely dependent upon the International Critical Commentary and the Cambridge Bible. The emendations inserted herein are those accepted by Dr. Morgenstern and Dr. Blank in their respective courses at the Hebrew Union College.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Dr. S. H. Blank, my referee, for his guidance, help, and constructive criticism. During the period of my investigation and writing, he has been ever ready to be of service.

L.A.B.

Chapter I

What is the Prophet's Conception as to the
Source and Authorization of His Mission?

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In attempting to treat any phase of the "Prophets," one must of necessity consider the phenomenon of "revelation." It is not, however, the purpose of this essay to attempt to go into detail on this subject, or even to summarize the major discoveries and theories in this complex, yet intriguing field. Rather we shall limit ourselves to mentioning those fundamental ideas connected with "revelation," as they pertain to the subject matter of this chapter. It is obvious that, in order to penetrate into "The Prophet's Conception as to the Source and Authorization of His Mission," we shall be confronted directly or indirectly with the term "revelation." With this in mind we proceed to discuss in broad outline a few essential thoughts concerning "revelation."

It is an obvious fact to both student and scholar that the inspiration of the great literary prophets has nothing in common with the ecstasy of the prophets of the older type. Theirs was a state which could be artificially produced at will. "The utterances of the literary prophets, on the other hand, proceed from an apperceptive state of mind."¹ Undoubtedly, with them, for the first time in the history of the human race, the essential truth was distinctly realized and "unequivocally expressed that the relation of man to God is a moral relation, that it is in the conscience of man that God speaks, that man's moral convictions² and promptings are the very voice of God."

1 Battenwieser, Moses, "Prophets of Israel," p. 138

2 Ibid., p. 156

The religious advance marked by such a conception of inspiration assumes an even greater significance to those of us living today, when we recall that even a Plato, a couple of centuries later, had not outgrown the primitive pagan notion of revelation, but conceived of it as a necessarily irrational and subnormal phenomenon.¹ To the literary prophets, most certainly, God spoke not in magical processes, "but by a clear intelligible word addressed to the intellect and the heart."² If anything, one of the major characteristics of the "true" prophet is that he retains his consciousness, and, in most cases, his self-control under revelation.

The inspiration of the literary prophets is usually in the nature of a spiritual experience, and, as spiritual experiences are something which cannot be directly expressed, the prophets resort of necessity to an indirect method of description. This we find to be the case when we investigate the consecration visions of the various prophets. This very indirectness makes it difficult, if not impossible, for us to determine the exact authorization of the prophet to set forth upon his mission. Their inspiration is not a miracle in the sense that it has no basis. Intimate experiences in their own lives, personal thoughts based upon observation, a deep religious sense,--all of these are present in their minds, and all these ingredients have slowly but surely been fermenting in their thoughts. However, in all probability, they remained separate ideas, perhaps held together in a loose fashion by various vague bonds and ties. But there comes a moment in their lives when all the parts

1 Buttenwieser, Moses, *op. cit.*, p. 138

2. Smith, W. R., "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 289

are suddenly joined and become a whole. The disconnected ideas are now an integral part of the one fabric and design of life. Each part has been transformed into a vital cog in the mechanism of the one unified personality. This moment, when the loose threads are suddenly utilized for a clear specific design in the rug of life, is a divine moment when, as by a flash of light, they have beheld the mystery of life revealed. With sudden intuition they have pierced to the reality of things, and, their individual mind "standing face to face with the infinite universal mind," suddenly realizes itself the chosen instrument of God's purpose. This moment marks a new epoch in their existence; never again can their life be just as it has been. From this moment they are pledged to God's purpose--they have found their mission. "Such spiritual experiences are not the fruit of an inert, passive mind, but of a mind consciously ~~sounding~~ the very depths of its being, a mind awakening to the fullest realization of its moral and spiritual constitution."¹

Keeping in mind the fact that in the world of man there is no effect without its initiating cause, and also the psychological basis even for intuition, nevertheless, realizing that the phenomenon of intuition is limited in its larger scope to genius, we can, for the main, accept Battenwieser's dogmatic statement that "literary prophecy must be accounted the spontaneous creation of genius, the immediate product of the intuitive human mind."²

Reduced to its essence, divested of all the miraculous features and supernatural accomplishments usually associated with it, prophetic inspiration can be made to seem a simple matter. Jeremiah, of all the

1 Battenwieser, Moses, op. cit., p. 155

2. Ibid., p. 155

literary prophets, being the most subjective and analytic of them, naturally gave it the most reasoned and definite expression. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, yes, even Ezekiel, in the writings of every one of them, there is evidence that when they spoke of revelation, they meant the divine force or voice which they felt within their heart. "None of them claimed anything else than the impulsion of this force, the authority of this voice."¹ It was so simple, so elemental, so self-evident to them, that any particular explanation or demonstration would have seemed superfluous. They refer to their divine authorization in the most matter of fact way--God spoke to them, and they say without ostentation "Thus says Yahweh...." After our examination, later in this paper, we shall, after detailed study, discover that there is, outside of the consecration visions, little mention of their authorization to speak forth their message. They proclaim with a calmness and a certainty founded upon an inner sense of surety, for in their heart of hearts there is never once a doubt but that what they say is divinely inspired truth. They are the mouthpieces of God, and as such never once doubt their own words, or the source of those words. In fact, so positive are they of the verity of their statements, that they find no need to introduce their message with more than--"Thus says Yahweh"--

"The earnest man of today might ponder over the initial mystery of man's moral consciousness--not so the prophets. For them it was no mystery, it was an a priori fact, the manifestation of God. It was the source from which they derived the moral vision and the moral energy,

¹ Battenwieser, Moses, op. cit., p. 150

which constituted their prophetic gift."¹ As poetically beautiful as the above sounds, we must not forget that Psychology, Sociology, and History can give us some bases for understanding the moral consciousness of the prophets, as well as for that of our own day.

Psychologically considered, prophetic inspiration should not be considered as "materially different from the furor poeticus of the master poet or artist. Both are phases of human genius acting in the most vital sphere of human interest, the interpretation of human life and its relation to the universal life. Not that such an explanation makes spiritual prophecy a whit the less mysterious, or more commonplace, for in its last analysis human genius is inexplicable, just as are the ultimate relations of all things, and as is, above all, the conscious moral life of the soul."² In this respect we can find no argument. Heredity, environment, ideas,--all these may give us definite clues and foundations in order to understand and appreciate the work of genius, but the actual process of intuition, of penetration, of synthesis--still remains a secret hidden from us--for the present.

Thus we can attempt to pose the question, "Whence springs the ardent faith of the prophets?" Battenwieser tells us that they themselves give us the answer. "Their consciousness of divine inspiration and of immediate communion with God is their fountain light, the mainspring of their faith."³ Poetically and religiously this is a beautiful and complete answer. Scientifically the answer is not so simple. Actually one finds difficulty in placing his finger upon this "mainspring of their faith." To this purpose the remainder of this chapter is devoted.

1 Battenwieser, *Moses*, op. cit., p. 151

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7

3 *Ibid.*, p. 7

A. Amos

With the ministry of Amos we have the inception of the literary prophets. His prophecies are in no way an outgrowth, or even faintly connected with the usual dervish type of prophetic schools, current at his time. His is a new phenomenon upon the stage of Israel's history. Inspiration, intuition, and revelation are at the basis of his visions, and not the self-invoked fury of the professional prophets. It is worthy of notice that in Amos, as well as in the later prophets, the vision plays a major role. However, as regards the source and authorization of his mission, we do not find a specific "consecration vision" as in the cases of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Still, "Is it not probable that the first visions, viz. those of the fire, locusts, and plummet constituted, not the beginning of Amos' work, but also, in a large measure, his actual awakening and incitement to the task which he endeavored so faithfully to perform?"¹ To this rhetorical question by Harper, we can answer in the affirmative. Further, our affirmation is supported by Morgenstern, who says, "These four visions were the indispensable preparation for Amos' prophetic career. All four must have preceded his setting out for Bethel. Without all four visions in their proper sequence his message would have been incomplete, incomprehensible either to himself or to his audience, ineffective, and his commission as a prophet would have been unconvincing to both himself and the people whose doom he was sent to pronounce."²

According to Morgenstern's reconstructions of the "visions,"³ we find in the first one that Amos has been permitted to see God:

1 Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C. on Amos," p. CVIII

2 Morgenstern, J., Amos Studies, Vol. I, p. 106

3 Ibid., pp 83, 84, 101

Thus Yahweh caused me to see, (omit 'Jk)

And behold, He was fashioning locusts

At the beginning of the coming up of

the aftergrowth; (omit from 'Jk to end of v. 1)

And it was intended to completely consume

the herbage. (Emend 'Jk to 'Jk)

(Amos 7:1, 2a)

One of the most striking facts of this vision is the introductory line, "Thus Yahweh caused me to see." These words form the title verse of all four visions. Amos has not accidentally intruded himself upon a secret scene. God, Himself, is responsible for his observations. Yahweh not only permitted the prophet to see Him, Yahweh caused Himself to be seen, for such was the divine purpose. The prophet has been selected by his God for a specific cause. There is no refusing such a summons. Later, Amos enlarges upon the idea that he who is chosen has no alternative but to obey. Whether he wills it or not, the prophet now observes symbolic action forecasting future events. The picture is only too clear, and the destruction only too evident. Another point of interest is the fact that Amos is in direct relation with God, watching Him prepare destruction. The prophet is overcome with compassion-- and pleads directly with God on behalf of the people. The Lord answers Amos without the aid of an intermediary. Amos tells us:

And I said: O my Lord, Yahweh,

Forgive; how can Jacob endure (Emend 'N to 'N)

For he is small!

Yahweh revoked His purpose in the matter

'It shall not be,' said Yahweh.

(Amos 7: 2a^b, 3

Still again in the Second Vision does Amos behold God directly:

Thus Yahweh caused me to see,

And behold, He was summoning fire (omit *לִקְרֹא*, add *לְקַדֵּשׁ*)

To destroy the entire earth... (omit *יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ*, change *לְקַדֵּשׁ* to *לְהַחֲרִיב*)

(after *לְקַדֵּשׁ*) add *לְהַחֲרִיב אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ*

(Amos 7:4)

and once more intercedes for Israel, and receives the identical answer:

It shall not be, said Yahweh. (omit *יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ* and *אֱלֹהֵינוּ*)

(Amos 7.6b)

In Visions three and four Amos continues in direct contact with God, but this time there is a definite pronouncement of doom, and there is lacking any intercession on the part of the prophet. Amos describes the third vision as follows:

Thus Yahweh caused me to see (Add *יְהוָה*, omit *אֱלֹהֵינוּ* and *אֱלֹהֵינוּ*)
Emend *חֹמַת* to *חֹמָה*

And behold He was standing beside a wall

And in His hand was a plumbline...

(Amos 7.7)

but now God turns directly to Amos to inform him:

Behold I will set a plumbline (omit to *יְהוָה*)

(Against) the walls of the cities of Israel

(Emend *לְקַדֵּשׁ* to *לְקַדֵּשׁ*; omit from *לְקַדֵּשׁ* to end of v. 8)
I shall surely smite them with the sword,

And their walls shall collapse beneath them...

(Amos 7.8)

Vision four is similar in form to Vision three, except that the doom is positive and certain beyond doubt or hope:

1 plus additions of Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies", Vol I, p. 101

Notes composed
of
Amos Studies
I p. 82

Thus Yahweh caused me to see (omit 'JQ/c)

And behold, in His hand a basket of summer fruit
(add '1Q'2; now omit 2a)

And Yahweh said to me,

'The end has come for Israel (omit 'NY)

Never again will I pardon him...'

¹
(Amos 8.1,2)

In all four of these visions, the message is not of our concern, but what does strike us at once, as regards our purpose, is the intimacy and very closeness of the Prophet to his God. After reading these accounts we have a definite feeling that here the Prophet does see God "face to face." Here we have the remarkable situation of a mere mortal conversing on intimate terms with God. Yes, and even influencing Him to desist from carrying out His plans and purposes, in the first two visions. We are convinced without further questioning, that Amos felt a close tie, an intimate bond existing between himself and his God. Yet, we must not lose sight of the fact that at no time, in any of these four initiatory visions, is Amos commanded, or even authorized, to go forth and preach a message. We may assume this authorization to be implicit, but never, by any stretch of the imagination, can we say such authority is explicit, and definite. For such a statement of authority we must wait until Amos faces Amaziah and is "forced to show his warrant" from God.

It is at Bethel that the insults and mockery hurled at him by Amaziah, the High Priest, force Amos to cite the authority for his words.

Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah:

'I am no prophet nor a prophet's son (omit 'JQ/c)

But I am a shepherd, and a dresser of sycamore trees
(Emend '1Q'2 to '1Q'2)

And the Lord took me from following the flock,

And the Lord said to me, Go!

1 plus changes as per Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies" Vol. I, p. 101

Prophecy against my people Israel.
(Emend לך to לך)
(Amos 7.14,15)

What Amos says here of himself and of the nature of his prophetic commission and of his consciousness thereof is tremendously significant. He states in the most positive and unqualified terms the source and authorization of his mission. It is God. He was but a simple, ordinary man in a very humble walk of life. Yet, despite that simplicity and lowliness of origin and occupation, Yahweh had taken him, Yahweh Himself, and charged him with the high commission to go and prophesy against His nation Israel. When did Yahweh give this charge to Amos? Was it after the four visions? The visions contain no direct statement to this effect. Was it even before the visions? We are at a loss to say. This is the first direct statement of Amos' authority. But it leaves no doubt in our minds as to its validity.

In passing, it should be noticed that Amos divorces himself completely from the professional prophets of his day, when he objects to the name נביא . However, this problem is not of our concern.

Morgenstern reconstructs the dramatic moment at Bethel in the following manner: Amos 7. 10-15; then Amos 3.3-8; then Amos 7.16,17.¹ According to this reconstruction, the following verses occur after the previous statement of authorization (Amos 7.15):

3.3 Will two walk together,

Except they have agreed?

3.4 Will a lion roar in the forest

When he has no prey?

¹ Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies", Vol. I, p. 64.

Will a young lion give forth his voice, (omit וְיִשְׁמַע)
If he has captured nothing?

.....

Shall the horn be blown in the gate (Emend וְיִשְׁמַע to וְיִשְׁמַע)
And the people not tremble?

(Amos 3.3,4,6)

The argument of the above verses is, of course, that no effect happens without its cause; or, more specifically, nothing transpires in this life without its initiating cause. Therefore, if some event or phenomenon becomes manifest, it is not that it came about of its own accord, without cause or initiating agent or instrument.¹ Amos concludes his list of examples with the very dramatic and direct:

3.8 The lion has roared,

Who will not fear?

The Lord has spoken (omit וְיִשְׁמַע)

Who will not prophesy?

(Amos 3.8)

In response to the challenge by his doubting and resisting audience, Amos states in no uncertain terms the source of his commission as a prophet. It must not be imagined for a moment that he is speaking only upon his own initiative. Amos makes it clear that he dares speak as a prophet only because Yahweh has spoken first to him. As such he has no alternative but to speak out as Yahweh's agent. The two who walk together in mutual understanding and agreement and for common

¹ Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies" Vol. I, p. 32

purpose, as mentioned in Amos 3.3, undoubtedly are Yahweh and His prophet.¹ He speaks with the indisputable authority of a personal call directly from Yahweh, and such a commission is irresistible as well as inescapable. This personal implication does have a definite relationship to the four visions mentioned above, and emphasizes the personal note already present and manifest within them.

"A new technical term [for prophet, not נביא] would undoubtedly have emphasized the divergent and superior nature of the direct divine commission of this new messenger of the Deity and would have established once and for all the supremacy, the higher authority, of the latter over the old professional prophet."² The truth of this statement becomes more and more evident with a detailed study of Issiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Such a differentiation may have spared these prophets much of the trouble and controversy with the professional prophets of their own day. In many cases it is evident that the so-called "false prophets" were animated by an absolute sincerity in their short-sighted view of life. Often, as in Jer. 28.1ff., Hananiah ben Azzur is as sincere as Jeremiah. But the genius of a Jeremiah saw further and clearer than his opponent. Too often the "false prophet" is false only in his short-sightedness in believing the sanctuary inviolate, conceiving of Yahweh in narrow nationalistic terms. But his integrity cannot be questioned. Unfortunately the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 13.2-6; 18.15-22) deals very ineffectually with the entire problem and fails to comprehend the delicate differences present among the prophets, or even to comprehend the true³ nature of the exalted prophet and his divine commission. Attempts

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 32

2 Ibid., p. 48

3 Ibid., p. 49

to contrast the "true" and the "false" prophets with the view in mind to discover the authority of the "true" prophet, will more often than not prove fruitless. However, in the case of Amos, the contrast between professional and non-professional is still clear cut and in bold relief. The evidence gathered from the above sources points to the definite conclusion that from the very first moment of his active prophetic career, unlike the professional seer, Amos was completely conscious, and aware of the full content of the divine call, his commission, his message, and "of the far-reaching import thereof."

We may therefore conclude that:

1. At the end of a period of reflection and observation there came to Amos an intuitive awakening, which joined all his thoughts into a connected whole.
2. He believed this intuition to have been inspired by Yahweh. (Amos 7.1)
3. Yahweh chose Amos as his prophet. (Amos 7.14f)
4. He saw God performing symbolic acts, forecasting future events. (The Visions: Amos 7.1ff)
5. Amos pled with God to desist from His intended punishment of the people. (Amos 7.2,5ff)
6. God spoke to him directly. (Amos 7.3,6ff)
7. God sent him upon his mission. (Amos 7.14,15)
8. As a prophet of Yahweh, he has no alternative but to proclaim Yahweh's words. (Amos 3.8)

x

relevance

B. Hosea

A clearly defined statement presenting the source of his divine mission, is conspicuously absent in the writings of Hosea. Nor is there present anything even resembling a consecration vision. The prophet proclaims his message with an assurance and conviction that permits no doubts to enter our minds as to his sincerity or as to the divine source of his message. However, we have little or no direct mention of his authorization. The nearest thing resembling a divinely inspired commission present in Hosea, is verse 2 of Chapter I, which states:

(In) the beginning, the Lord spoke with Hosea,
and the Lord said to Hosea: Go, take a wife
of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the
land surely is committing harlotry by departing
from the Lord.

(Hosea 1.2)

Chapters I (verses 2-6,8) and III (verses 1-4) relate how the prophet followed out this command. The majority of students and scholars feel that this experience was a real-life event and constitutes the inaugural vision of the prophet. Harper is convinced that, "His call, together with the message he was to preach, came not in a vision, but in an experience, one of the saddest known in life."¹ By this statement, he gives us to understand that he interprets this section as saying that Hosea's wife proved unfaithful only

¹ Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C.", p. CLV

after their marriage, and that obviously the father of her children was not Hosea. However, the case is not quite so simple. After reading these same verses, the following questions do occur in the mind of the thoughtful student. Do these chapters report one or more stages in the life of the prophet? (Hosea 1.2-6,8; 3.1-4) Are the accounts supplementary or contradictory? Is the story an allegory or a fact? Using the very same verses, Cohon understands them to mean that the prophet, harassed by the moral corruption about him, was driven to marry a known prostitute named Gomer. His intent was to refine and redeem her by pity and love. "What explains this marriage is the prophet's burning desire to arouse his people to a realization of their infidelity to their God and the inevitable consequences. He hoped thereby to startle Israel into a realization of its idolatrous and adulterous conduct as the people of God. It was an object lesson. By it Hosea meant to dramatize the existing situation between God and Israel. Like Gomer, Israel was disloyal and ungrateful--this despite God's¹ infinite compassion."

Here is an interpretation quite different from that of Harper. Here, Hosea consciously marries a prostitute, while Harper speaks of an average marriage, but only later does the wife prove unfaithful.² Cohon regards it as an object lesson. Harper regards the events as later being the inspiration of Hosea's divine call. It is quite a problem to decide between these two interpretations.

Harper, however, proceeding on the basis of interpreting the story as a domestic tragedy after marriage considers the narrative of this

1 Cohon, Beryl, "The Prophets" p. 39

2 Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C." p. 206

experience as having been written some time afterward, and showing that the prophet has interpreted into the narrative much of his later experience. The call to preach this message was one which only years of experience and reflection made certain and definite. "In other words, the logical order was the experience, the great truth which it suggested, the narration of the experience in the light of this truth."¹

The interpretation given by W. R. Smith is the same as Harper's. He, too, goes on the assumption that Hosea did not understand in advance the deep prophetic lesson which God desired to teach him by these sad experiences. "It was in the struggle and bitterness of his spirit in the midst of his great unhappiness that he learned to comprehend the secret of Jehovah's heart in his dealings with faithless Israel, and recognized the unhappiness of his married life as meaning-^{no} less calamity, but the ordinance of Jehovah, which called him to the work of a prophet."² Smith, of course, bases himself upon Hos. 1.2, which he takes as meaning that God first spoke to Hosea when He directed him to marry Gomer. Similarly in Jer. 32.8 the prophet tells us that he recognized an incident in his life as embodying a divine word after the event.

There is no such thing as certainty in any interpretation given these verses. Upon closer inspection there are many faults to be found in both Harper's and Cohon's interpretations. True enough, symbolic action is common in the prophetic writings, yet, even in the most eccentric examples such as Ezekiel might present, it is dubious whether a man would go to such an extreme as to marry a prostitute for the sake

1 Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C." p. CXLV

2 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel", p. 181

of a vivid object lesson, even for a nation. There is the possibility, that a wife who proved unfaithful after marriage, could be interpreted as symbolic. The vague doubts, and nebulous questionings that were present in the mind of this writer, were crystallized and aptly summarized by Dr. Sheldon Blank in his review of Cohon's "The Prophets," when he states: "One might question the author's interpretation (p. 39f) of the marriage of Hosea...and attempt to show more precisely the bearing of the prevalent Baalism...upon the incident and upon Hosea's application of it to Israel."¹ Undoubtedly the start of a rational solution and interpretation has been made by the above statement.

In addition to the family life of Hosea, there are present in the text a few verses that demonstrate the lofty position of the prophet, and indirectly give us clues to the authorization of Hosea's ministry. Hosea, speaking in the name of the Lord, says:

Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,

I have slain them by the words of My mouth.

(Hosea 6.5)

There is little doubt that Hosea here speaks of the prophets as the direct agents of God. The Lord has chastised and punished the people through his authorized emissaries. Here is a positive statement of the function of the prophet as one carrying out divine commands, and in that capacity punishing the² populace.

Similar to the above is the following:

¹ Blank, S., "Review of 'The Prophets', by B. Cohon," H.U.C. Monthly, February, 1940, p. 16

² Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C." p. 285

I have also spoken through the prophets,
And I have multiplied visions;

(Hosea 12.11)

Such a verse is in itself convincing that Hosea conceived of the prophet as the mouthpiece of God. Identifying himself with them, he indirectly but nevertheless conclusively, informs us, that what he utters is but the word of the Lord, initiated and inspired only by God, and by no other. X

However, Hosea too, like Amos before him, and the host of others after him, delineates the true from the false, and denounces the latter: X

Therefore you shall stumble (in the day)

And the prophet also shall stumble with you...

(Hosea 4.5)

Surely this is a different type of prophet from those who are the "mouthpieces" of God. Here is a type who is no better than the sinful nation which shall be made to stumble. Here is a prophet, who, rather than being an agent of the Divine, performing His missions, is instead to be punished by the Lord Himself, or a worthy agent. These, indeed, are the prophets who prostituted their calling for the sake of support.¹ The exalted position of the true prophet is brought out in bold relief by the despicable and lowly position held by the "false" ecstasies in the eyes of God. Here was the true prophet, confident in his authority, preaching the words inspired within him; acting as the agent of his God, and as such an agent, forced to condemn those who would not, or could not see God with the compassion, the

1 Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C." p. 253

love, the far-sightedness, and the genius of a Hosea.

Perhaps, a more fitting tribute cannot be expressed for a prophet than that given by Cheyne on Hosea. "God only knows the love of God," and if the words of the prophecy are stamped with the genius of Hosea, they are none the less truthful revelations of the¹ divine Heart."

Hosea offers us very few clearly defined concepts as regards the source and authorization of his mission. We must therefore, satisfy ourselves with a summary of the major ideas proposed by scholars in this connection.

1. Hosea married a woman who was unfaithful to him

(Hos. 1 and 3)

2. After reflecting upon his own unhappy domestic situation, he intuitively realizes that it is symbolic of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. (Nevertheless there is reason to believe that many of his figures of speech are based on the prevalent Baalism of his time)

3. He takes this intuition as having been inspired by Yahweh. (Hos. 1.2)

4. He considers himself as selected by Yahweh for a prophetic mission.

5. He spoke the words of God, for he believes that God speaks through his prophet. (Hos. 6.5)

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying:

Whom shall I send,

And who will go for us?

Then I said,

Here am I; send me.¹

(Is. 6.1-8)

"On this one occasion Isaiah has been permitted to see Yahweh; but not every day, nor, so far as we know, ever again after this first ¹ experience, did Isaiah see Yahweh in the same peculiar fashion that he is able to observe Him in this consecration vision, despite the fact that Yahweh is to communicate with the prophet very often during his ministry. Yet ² "...what he had once seen he must have known to be always there, though by no means there alone; the power that ruled the world was Yahweh...."

In regard to the title verse of the above vision, it is assumed by some that the verse is speaking generally. Morgenstern poses an interesting theory when he ventures to say that Isaiah's inaugural vision took place on New Year's Day. Since the Kevod Yahweh supposedly enters the Temple on this particular day, the ritual in the vision is explained. Furthermore, King Uzziah died this particular New Year's Day. ² Morgenstern's supposition is very plausible, with the exception that one could be justified in doubting that this is the exact date of Uzziah's death. In any case, the facts as presented by the prophet are that on a certain day, perhaps within a few months of the death of

1 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.", p. LXXXVII

2 Morgenstern, J., "Book of the Covenant", Vol I, p. 42ff

Uzziah, though whether before or after that event is uncertain, Isaiah came up to the Temple. "And falling into an ecstasy, he saw and heard more than he had been wont to see and hear--things that others who were present that day in the Temple Courts neither saw nor heard."¹ Isaiah saw Yahweh in kingly state, in His Holy presence he felt his own uncleanness. He is purged of this taint. He saw, he heard, he thinks about it; he understood, and obeyed God's call to service, for he had been authorized by Yahweh himself.

All "this is a record of fact; but the fact is (a) spiritual experience, [and as such] must be described, though inadequately, by means of material terms and pictures."²

"The central fact is the authorization of the prophet to deliver Yahweh's message to His people; and this decision to do so was taken on a single particular day."³ Of particular significance is the fact that God communicates directly with Isaiah, and He Himself sends the prophet forth to preach:

Then he said: 'Go, and tell this people...'

(Is. 6.9)

The introductory remarks to this chapter emphatically state that there is a psychological basis even for the genius of prophetic intuition. Rightly so, one may hesitate to agree without qualification to the idea that, "literary prophecy must be accounted the spontaneous creation of genius, the immediate product of the intuitive human mind."⁴ Gray, too, supports this more scientific attitude, yet in a cautious

1 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.", p. 101

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel" p. 155

scholarly manner by making clear that, "although we cannot be certain, we may somewhat safely assume that the vision of Yahweh, bringing with it the clear apprehension on the prophet's part of Yahweh's purpose concerning him, was the culmination of a longer experience; not, we may well believe, for the first time on that day had he felt his own unworthiness, or contrasted the moral uncleanness of his people with the ethical holiness of God...; he had been anxious to speak to his people, but had not yet been sure of the divine commission to speak, nor certain what to say. It is generally held, and certainly probably, that this account of his call was not written by Isaiah immediately after the event, but some years later, when it was natural to define the year to which the record refers. It may be then that the terms of the divine commission in v. 9ff reflect the discouraging effect on Isaiah of years of fruitless warning...." ¹ It is well to keep in mind the above stated idea, for future reference in connection with the other prophets studied herein, and especially for our investigation on Ezekiel, against whom is brought the charge that his consecration vision is something composed in a rational, studied manner long after the actual event took place.

Returning now to Isaiah's consecration vision, it is interesting to note that after having described what he saw, the prophet passes on to speak of the effect on himself. The alarm which he felt was the effect of the whole of what he saw, not merely of the last or any other single detail. The modesty of the man is admirable. There is

¹ Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.", p. 101

no conceit based upon a sense of divine preferance, but rather a human-
ness expressed in self-accusation:

Woe is me! for I am undone;

Because I am a man of unclean lips,

And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;

(Is. 6.5)

This humility in the presence of the Lord, similar to the recorded experience of Moses, is bolstered by the action of one of the seraphim. Flying to the altar of the Temple, a seraph takes off a glowing coal, or stone, and flies to the place where Isaiah stands. By touching his lips with the fire, he makes them clean. His guilt, by this action, is immediately removed and stoned for, since the coal has the effect of a moral purgative. This is the first of the three consecration visions in this study in which the lips play a vital role. In each case the prophet regards himself as the mouthpiece of God, speaking forth only those words implanted within him by Yahweh. The "mouth" is of major importance in prophetism.

This purification has set Isaiah free to understand Yahweh's will. He now hears Him consulting the members of His court and asking who shall be His messenger. Isaiah offers himself. To the neophyte is given the direct and clearly stated divine commission to

Go and tell this people...

(Is. 6.9)

by Yahweh Himself.

In addition to the formal consecration vision there are numerous

verses in the writings of Isaiah which directly or indirectly refer back to the divine source of his prophetic mission:

For thus Yahweh said to me when the Hand grasped
(me) or (...said to me with a strong hand), and
caused me to turn aside from going in the path of
(Emend 'יָגִיד לִּי לְדַרְכֵּי יְהוָה to 'יָגִיד לִּי לְדַרְכֵּי יְהוָה)
this people, saying:

(Is. 8.11)

Gray translates יָגִיד לִּי לְדַרְכֵּי יְהוָה as "when the hand grasped me," and proceeds to discuss it with the idea in mind that prophetic inspiration was traced not only to the "invasion of the personality by the spirit of God, but also the hand of God, which, grasping and sometimes throwing down....induced [the prophetic inspiration.] [Allusions to the hand of Yahweh as accompanying inspiration are to be found in Ezekiel 1.3;3.22;37.1, and also in Jeremiah 15.17: "because of Your hand I have sat alone; for you have filled me with indignation." However, the communication that follows need not necessarily be of a¹ special nature."

Isaiah 3.1 and 2 also emphasizes Yahweh alone as the true strength of the universe. Yahweh has the power to take and to destroy that which is His own, and the prophet is not excepted:

3.1 For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, takes
away from Jerusalem and from Judah

Stay and staff (יָגִיד לִּי לְדַרְכֵּי יְהוָה is a gloss)

3.2 The mighty man, and the man of war;

The judge and the prophet,...

The commands of God also involve members of the prophet's family;
for in chapter 7.3, Isaiah states the divine source of his action:

¹ Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.", p. 151

Then Yahweh said to Isaiah, go out now to
meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Yashub your son....

(Is. 7.3)

The novelty and meaning of the verse will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this essay, but what concerns us most at the moment is the expression of the authorization for this bit of action. As is true in Is. 6.9, so here too, Isaiah receives his command directly from the Lord. For to the prophet, not only his message, but his entire life and that of his family is closely connected with God. Not only did Yahweh authorize Isaiah as His agent, but with his commission was included indirectly the children he might beget. In Chapter 8.18 he speaks of the use of his children (their names serve as omens and prophecies) as also authorized by the Lord of Hosts:

Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given
me shall be for signs and for wonders in Israel,
from the Lord of Hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.

The intimacy that exists between the prophet and his divine source is expressed in the verse:

And the Lord of Hosts revealed Himself in my ears...

¹
(Is. 22¹⁴)

The word "revealed", and the entire expression "revealed in my ears," tells us of the constant presence of God with His prophet, and His ever-recurrent authorization to speak in His name. Similar in idea is Is. 1.20b which closes with the majestic

וְהָיָה כְּמִלְכָּה
וְהָיָה כְּמִלְכָּה

For the mouth

of the Lord has spoken.

1 According to the J.P.S. Bible

"Never once suspect that all I say, is my mere personal opinion, no; it is far more than that, it is the message of God. I merely serve as His mouthpiece," is what the prophet implies. Surely there is no doubting his source.

In connection with the political situations during his lifetime, Isaiah again was forced to proclaim that which was God's will. His proclamations are not based upon shrewd political insight or forecasting, but rather upon his inner religious vision as to what is right. Often his warrant of authority was questioned, but he never failed to produce the source of the validity of his pronouncements. During the Syro-Ephraimitic alliance of 734, Isaiah cautions Ahaz: 'take heed not to do anything, fear not nor be dismayed, because of the two stumps of smoking firebrands.' But this is not a personal bias or opinion; he is but the agent of God, who has commanded his earthly agent saying:

And you shall say to him...

(Is. 7.4)

A brief biographic passage in chapter 20 of the book of Isaiah gives a vivid description of the prophet's extraordinary conduct and reveals his attitude towards the rebellion against Assyria and the flirtation with inconstant Egypt. God commands:

Go, and loose the sackcloth from off your loins, and take off your shoe from your foot.

Then

And the Lord said: Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot to be for three years a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia...

Here, too, he was but symbolizing that which God had commanded him.

It was during his opposition to an alliance with Egypt, about 701,

that he called out to the people:

30.9 For it is a rebellious people

Lying children

Children that refuse to hear the teaching of the Lord;

10 That say to the seers: 'See not;'

And to the prophets: 'Prophecy not unto us
the right things,

Speak unto us smooth things, prophecy delusions;

11 Get out of the way,

Turn aside out of the path

Cause the Holy One of Israel

To cease from before us.

(Is. 30.9-11)

In the above there is no demand to produce the warrant for his right to speak. No, in fact the people are only too conscious of that authority--Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel--if anything they want to forget Him. It is the people themselves who quote Isaiah's authorization, for they say in Chapter 30, verse 10:

Prophecy not unto us right things

They know he is a true prophet and agent of the Lord, and all that he speaks is true. They know that he speaks only for the Lord, and as a valid messenger of Yahweh. They tell him to

Cause the Holy One of Israel

To cease from before us.

(Is. 30.11)

Here the people make it unnecessary for the prophet to quote the source of his commission.

The above verses have dealt with the world political situation. But even in cases of "inner politics" the prophet claims divine authority. The prophecy beginning with verse 15 of chapter 22 contains the only piece of personal invective ascribed to Isaiah. It is addressed to Shebna, an official of high rank. It predicts his exile and death, and the promotion to his office of Eliakim. The details of the story are not of importance to us. What is worth our attention is the introduction to the account:

Thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, get you
to this steward.

(Is. 22.15)

And also the conclusion, which says:

For the Lord has spoken it.

(Is. 22.25)

Even in such a domestic affair the prophet speaks not in his own name, but only as a representative of God. Once he had been consecrated as a divine messenger, his life, thought, speech, and action ceased being his own, and belonged entirely to his God. His entire life is a record of the trust and adoration of a messenger for his God, and of the prophet's love for one whom he revered as "The Holy One of Israel."

We may conclude with some amount of certainty that:

1. Isaiah's vision of Yahweh was the culmination of

a long experience of meditation and possibly experience.

2. By a symbolic act his lips are touched, thereby purifying him, and also implanting Yahweh's words therein. (Is. 6.7)

3. This purification sets him free to hear Yahweh. (Is. 6.8)

4. During this intuitive experience, Yahweh asks for a messenger to volunteer.

5. Isaiah offers to assume the mission. (Is. 6.8)

6. Yahweh speaks to him directly. (Is. 6.9)

7. Yahweh sends him to fulfill his mission. (Is. 6.9)

8. He speaks only as the mouthpiece of God.

D. Jeremiah

The innate simplicity, humility, and honesty that brings us so close to Jeremiah, and causes us to love him, are all present in his inaugural vision:

And the word of the Lord came to me saying:

Before I formed you in the belly,

(I knew you, and before you came
out of the womb I sanctified you;

I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

(Jer. 1.4,5)

Unlike the other prophets whom we have discussed, Jeremiah was appointed to his post at the moment of his conception. His was not a consecration at a certain period of his life, rather his was a divine appointment even before he drew the breath of life. Chosen by God from the very beginning, his entire life thus far has been lived only to fulfill this task, and his entire future will be lived only for it. Jeremiah's source of authorization is not only from Yahweh Himself, directly; the prophet's very life is the work of the Lord who authorized him. "I sanctified you a prophet....," even "before you came out of the womb," even before life began. In chapter 1, verse 5, the expression, "I knew you," is used in the same sense that the verb *יָדַע* is sometimes used in Amos; with the implication of being singled out, of God being particularly interested in the particular person to whom He speaks in this fashion. When God says of Jeremiah "I knew you....," He is even at that moment authorizing him as His confidant, as His particular agent. There exists not even the faintest trace of doubt concerning the prophet's

*thought
of himself
as -*

authorization by God to be His agent; Jeremiah's very life is a concrete proof of that authority.

The intuitive feeling that he has been chosen by God from his very beginning, does not relieve the inner doubt as to his capacity to carry out the assigned task. With a sense of humility and awe before the Lord, as well as before his mission, he humbly beseeches:

Alas, Lord God! behold I do not
know how to speak; for I am a young man.

(Jer. 1.6)

But the commands of God will brook no such thing as mortal fear or doubt:

But the Lord said to me: Do not say
I am a young man, for wherever I send you,
you shall go, and whatever I command you--
you shall speak.

(Jer. 1.7)

Can there be a more positive statement of authority for prophetic activity? Yet, take note that the prophet is to speak in the name of God, only that which he is commanded by the Lord. Despite divine assurance,

Do not be afraid (omit פֶּן יִשָּׁנ) for I am
with you, to sustain you, saith the Lord,

(Jer. 1.8)

to obey a command is one thing, to erase a gnawing fear from one's heart, and to willingly assume the burden of such a task, is still another. Jeremiah gives vent to his objections (they shall be discussed in detail in chapter 2), and probably never, until near the very end of his life, is he completely adjusted to, and satisfied with his divine commission.

In this consecration vision, too, as in the case of Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, the mouth of the prophet is touched. This action fits perfectly the conception of true prophecy; namely, that the prophet produces from his mouth that which is placed there by God. The prophet, basically and essentially is, and considers himself, "the mouthpiece of God." (viz. Dt. 18.18)

Then the Lord put forth his hand and
touched my mouth, and the Lord said to
me: Behold, I have put My words in your
mouth.

(Jer. 1.9)

But, unlike Isaiah, whose mouth is touched by a coal held by one of the seraphim (Is. 6.7), the mouth of Jeremiah is touched by the Lord personally and directly, by the very hand of the Lord Himself. Anthropomorphic, yes; but also explicitly clear even in its symbolism. In contrast with Isaiah, is also the fact that his God commands him not only to uproot and tear down, but also to build up and replant:

See I have set you this day against the
nations and against the kingdoms, to uproot
(omit *וְלִבְנוֹתָם וְלִבְנוֹתָם*)
and tear down, and to build up and replant.

(Jer. 1.10)

It is neither a simple nor a happy task which he is asked to accomplish, and many are the times in the face of danger and disappointment when he is forced to fall back upon and take new courage from the consciousness that he is doing God's work.

With the assumption of his prophetic duties, Jeremiah's life becomes a turmoil both within his soul, and without in the world of men. When

not hunted by his oppressors, he was haunted by the commands of God:

Therefore, I am full of the fury of the Lord (Emend *Jer. 16* to *Jer. 17*)

I am weary with (containing it or) holding in; ()

(Jer. 6.11)

To Jeremiah, inspiration is a driving elemental force allowing neither peace, nor acceptance, nor rest, but drives one on unmercifully until he relieves his soul of its responsibility, and fulfills the commanding instructions of the Lord. God, too, knows of the inner ragings which He has implanted, for He asks the prophet:

Do not my words scorch like a fire?

Saith the Lord;

And is ^xnot like a hammer that

breaks the rock in pieces?

(Jer. 23.29)

His prophetic inspiration is as a raging fire shut up in his bosom, which he has striven vainly to withstand. This divine force, this inward fire, cannot be withstood, he says here, anymore than the persistent force of the hammer can be resisted by the solid rock. Yet, there is no questioning the fact that God alone is the source of this pent-up "divine fury."

citation.

Whether or not Jeremiah saw God again, as he witnessed Him in his inaugural vision, is a matter of conjecture. But this much we can be sure of, that whether or not the prophet witnessed God with his "consecration vision clarity," nevertheless he certainly felt His presence throughout his life, and with that presence came an ever more reassuring statement of his authority, and the source of his mission:

I am a present God, and not a far-off God.

¹
(Jer. 23.23)

So close is his God to him, that he feels toward Him as near as a child is to its father:

And I said: 'You shall call me, my Father;

And shall not turn away from following Me.'

(Jer. 3.19b)

*Not spoken
to Jer.*

This nearness of his source is presented in his consecration vision, and throughout his ministry.

The fear and hesitation that Jeremiah already felt at the time of his consecration was realized in its severest form. If we are willing to admit that the inaugural vision is the culmination of a period of thought and observation, and not a "spontaneous intuition," without a basis, it is not difficult to imagine that Jeremiah realized long before he began what opposition and persecution would be his lot in the role of Yahweh's prophet. The very humanness for which we love him, is also his weakness. Like any mere mortal, he dreaded pain and suffering. No small part of his constant concern were the so-called "false" prophets. They were a source of infinite pain to him both subjectively and objectively. Either he was fighting the lies they preached in the name of Yahweh, or else he was on the defensive trying to avoid the violence they devised against him. In both cases he was constantly forced to reiterate his divine source and authorization as a prophet of God:

1 As interpreted by M. Battenwieser, "Prophets of Israel," p. 146

The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream;
But he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully.
What has the straw to do with the wheat?
Saith the Lord.

(Jer. 23.28)

To Jeremiah it was as simple as that. Those who proclaimed prophecies contrary to his were no more than straw, and just that unimportant. In his self-assurance of his God, he regarded all other prophets as professionals who spoke that which the people desired to hear, in order to obtain a livelihood. However, Yaweh's "Inspiration, he tells them, is an elemental force which acts within the human heart, and with which their imaginary possession by the spirit has no more in common than 'chaff has with grain.'¹" And no doubt Jeremiah was right in the many instances, when he complains:

For from the least of them even to the greatest of them,
Everyone is greedy for gain;
And from the prophet even unto the priest,
Everyone deals falsely.
And they have healed the hurt of my people in a
light manner,
Saying: 'Peace, peace'; when there is no peace.

(Jer. 6.13-14)

The politics of the time do not concern us. What is obvious is that Jeremiah condemns the other prophets for preaching that the people shall

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 149

have peace, when in reality this is untrue. He continues his complaint:

...Alas, Lord God! behold the prophets
say unto them: 'You won't see the sword and
famine is not meant for you, but real peace
will I give you in this place.'

(Jer. 14.13)

As has been stated above, this undoubtedly was a common message of the professional prophets, and for it "their palms were crossed with silver." Yet, as we shall later observe in this chapter, when actual cases of false prophets are discussed by name, the realization will come that some of these so-called "false" prophets were as serious and sincere as Jeremiah. They were no more interested in "greedy gain" than was he. They probably felt as sincerely as did Jeremiah that they spoke in the name of the true God. Why, then, this tremendous conflict? The answer is not too difficult to discover. The prophets opposing Jeremiah believed in a more nationalistic Yahweh, who being all-powerful would never consent to the sanctuary being violated. Their basic cry was: "the sanctuary is inviolate." Jeremiah had a far greater scope for his God concept, and firmly believed that to God the sanctuary is not inviolate, and that He would punish His people as He saw fit. This is but one item of difference between the "false" prophets and Jeremiah. Reduced to its simplest terms, Jeremiah's "far-sightedness" was true. The "short-sightedness" of the other prophets has been proven false. In this respect Jeremiah is and was without doubt the true prophet. However, the matter of sincerity and honesty is not the basis of "true" and "false" prophet. A narrow nationalism, and a correspondingly narrow

God-concept is the real basis. This idea is supported by Morgenstern.¹ However, neither his conscience nor the seriousness of the immediate situation would allow the true prophet to exercise tolerance. Nor can we blame him. To Jeremiah there was only one truth, he had seen Yahweh, he had stood with Him, and he had been sent by Him. Of all this he was positive. He had been sent by God, but not the others. To follow their advice meant death and destruction--sincere or not sincere. Divinely inspired, Jeremiah pleads with the people (in God's name) each time implying his divine warrant of authority:

And the Lord said to me: 'The prophets
prophecy falsehood in my name, I haven't
sent them, and I haven't commanded them,
and I haven't spoken to them; false visions,
divination, a thing of nought--and the deceit
of their own heart have they prophesied unto you.'

(Jer. 14.14)

Jeremiah repeats again and again in the name of God, "I haven't sent them, and I haven't commanded them..." Undoubtedly he recalls his own consecration vision in which the clarity of his command and his mission bears absolutely no taint of ambiguity. We find constant reference to action taken in that inaugural vision, implying indirectly that only he, Jeremiah, is the true agent. In his letter to the captives in Babylon, he writes:

For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of
Israel: Let not your prophets that are in your

¹ Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies" Vol. I, p. 49

midst, and your diviners, beguile you,
neither listen to their dreams which they cause
to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to
you in my name. I have not sent them, saith
the Lord.

(Jer. 29.8,9)

And again,

I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran;
I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

(Jer. 23.21)

Is not the implication very obvious? "These were not sent, these were
not spoken to,--but I, Jeremiah, prophet of God, was sent, and God did
speak to me." Continuing the declamation against false prophets:

...they lead you into vanity,
They speak a vision of their own heart,
And not out of the mouth of the Lord.

(Jer. 23.16)

The touching of the mouth was a vital factor in Isaiah as well as in
Jeremiah. Jeremiah recalls his own experience--God Himself, touched his
mouth, and forever after the prophet spoke that which God had put
there. Not so the others. There is still another recollection of his
consecration, as proof of his own authority:

For who has stood in the council of the Lord,
That he should see Him, and hear His word?
Who has paid attention to His word and heard it?

(Jer. 23.18)

For surely,

If they had stood in my council,
Then they would cause my people to hear my words,
And turn them away from their evil way,
And from the evil of their doings.

(Jer. 23.22)

In almost every respect Jeremiah has, in the above verses, recalled every significant factor in his own inaugural vision. He has asserted by implication that he alone has been authorized as Yahweh's agent. The use of Yahweh's name as authorization was heresy:

You shall not prophesy in the name of Yahweh
...in order that you do not die at our hand."

(Jer. 11.21)

and Battenwieser is undoubtedly right when he says⁵: "...that in all such cases it was not the prophesying per se which constituted the real offense, but the prophesying in the name of YHWH..."¹

Thus far we have dealt with the general theme of false prophets. In order to combat them, Jeremiah was forced to remind his audience of the source of his mission. Now let us turn our attention to specific cases, in which the two types of prophets, "false" and "true" meet face to face, or at least in direct opposition. In the Temple, before all the priests, two men faced each other. Both sincere, both firmly believing that God had spoken to him, both believing the other was the

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

false prophet. It was left to history to vindicate Jeremiah. The so-called "false" prophet did not see far enough. But how can we question the sincerity of Hananiah ben Azzur who with the eloquent fury of one who is convinced he is right, calls out:

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel,
saying: I have broken the yoke of the King of
Babylon. Within two full years I will bring
back into this place all the vessels of the
Lord's house....

(Jer. 28.2,3)

The scholar may object and cite as proof of Hananiah's professionalism the fact that he prophesies a specific period, "two full years," as a definite time when his prophecy will be fulfilled. The true literary prophets did not quote exact years and days for their prophecies. This is a valid objection; however, we should not be too dogmatic in this connection, and believe that the literary prophets never cited an exact time for the fulfillment of their prophecies:

In answer to Hananiah, Jeremiah answers with an unexpected calmness:

The prophet, that prophesies peace, when the word
of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the
prophet be known, that the Lord has truly sent him.

(Jer. 28.9)

Strangely enough, Jeremiah is basing his answer on Deuteronomy 18.22, which sets forth a definition of a true prophet. Our first reaction is to adopt such a formula at once, and dispense with all this discussion.

Yet, let us consider carefully the so-called formula, which states:

When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord,
if the thing does not follow, nor come to pass,
that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken....

(Deut. 18.22)

The first difficulty we encounter is that the formula is stated in the negative; secondly, there is no time limit set as to how long the people are to wait. Many of the prophecies, even of the so-called true prophets, never came to pass,--they are eternal truths for which we are striving still. This, then, would have indicted the true literary prophets in the eyes of their own generation as well as in the eyes of our own. The absurdity of this is obvious. Further, "...this law (Deut. 18.15-22) has always been interpreted as if it were written from the point of view of the literary prophets, that is, as if the literary prophets' standard of true and false prophets were at the basis of it.

Obviously, however, there is a radical error in such an interpretation. The authority of the literary prophets from Amos to Jeremiah was never recognized by the exponents of the official religion of their age.¹ We may conclude with Morgenstern, that the problem has been dealt with ineffectually and with manifest failure to comprehend the true nature of the exalted prophet and his divine commission and message, in the Book of Deuteronomy. *Source ?*

Returning now to the Temple scene, we read of Hananiah taking the wooden bar from Jeremiah's neck, and breaking it, and in the midst of

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

this scene, charged with emotion, proclaiming:

Thus saith the Lord: Even so will I break
the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from
off the neck of all the nations in two full years...

(Jer. 28.11)

Jeremiah leaves; he returns wearing bars of iron to serve as a symbol
of the Babylonian yoke of iron upon the neck of all the nations, and
accusingly singles out Hananiah:

Hear now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you;
but you make this people trust in a lie.

(Jer. 28.15)

Harking back to his consecration vision, Jeremiah states implicitly
that he was sent by the Lord, and not Hananiah. This scene is a
tragedy of two sincere men, both convinced they speak God's truth, but
only one of them genius enough to be certain beyond all doubt.

Before leaving this chapter, let us note that even a true prophet
is not averse to predicting an exact date for the fulfillment of a
prophecy, for, speaking in God's name Jeremiah tells Hananiah:

...this year you shall die...

(Jer. 28.16)

Hananiah is not alone in citing specific time limits.

Another example of Jeremiah coming into conflict with a false
prophet is quoted in his letter, (But again in God's name):

Because Shemaiah has prophesied unto you
and I did not send him....

(Jer. 29.31)

original

Over and over again rings the refrain, "I did not send him," and just as often is the direct implication, "I sent you," and with it the certainty and expression of the prophet's source of authority.

Perhaps the following is one of the best and most positive expressions, outside the consecration vision, of Jeremiah's direct and divine authority:

5.13 And the prophets shall become wind,

And the word is not in them.

(Insert last three words כִּי יִשְׁכַּח in
14a after word וְהָיָה)

14 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Hosts:

Thus shall it be done to them

Because they have spoken this word

(Emend וְהָיָה to וְהָיָה)

Behold I will make my words in your mouth fire,

And this people wood, and it shall devour them.

(Jer. 5.13,14)

The symbolic actions in which the prophet indulged so often for the sake of impressing specific object lessons upon the populace, are also acts performed by the will of God's inspiration, and by no means initiated as personal or voluntary. The symbolic action of the girdle is introduced by:

Go, get you a linen girdle.

(Jer. 13.1)

The incident of the breaking of the bottle begins:

Thus saith Yahweh: Go, get yourself an earthen

bottle (and take) some of the elders of the people,

and some of the priests (with you)

(omit ^ו ; the Vav of ^ו ; the second
^ו ; add ^ו to ^ו)

X

(Jer. 19.1)

In chapter 15, verse 1, we find a comparison which may be taken as conceit, but in reality is only a positive certainty of a divinely inspired messenger who knows beyond doubt that he is a spiritual son of the men he mentions, when he announces:

Then the Lord said to me: 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people...'

(Jer. 15.1)

In summing up our investigation of Jeremiah's source and authorization of his mission, we remember once more his consecration vision, and recognize the commanding tone, and are convinced beyond doubt that the prophet acted only upon the authority of the Lord, who tells him:

I have made you a tower among my people (omit ^ו)
 That you may know and try their way.

(Jer. 6.27)

We can assume that:

1. Intuition causes Jeremiah to believe that he has been selected by Jahweh.
2. He regards this intuition as inspired by Jahweh.
3. The word of Yahweh within him informs Jeremiah that he has been appointed "a prophet to the nations." (Jer. 1.5)
4. ^{He has done that} Yahweh sanctified him from the moment of his conception. X
 (Jer. 1.4)

that

5. By touching Jeremiah's mouth, Yahweh implants His words therein (Jer. 1.9)

that

6. Yahweh speaks to him directly, and sends him upon His mission. (Jer. 1.5)

7. This voice of God within him speaks to him throughout his life.

8. He is convinced that he hears the true message of Yahweh.

E. Ezekiel

"In the year 593 B.C.E.--in the fifth year of the captivity--the heavens opened and a rush of strange, fantastic visions overwhelmed an extraordinary soul. Henceforth the hand of God rested upon Ezekiel, consecrating him as 'watchman' over his brethren in exile....

Strange and fantastic is his inaugural vision....Overwhelmed by a power beyond himself the prophet has a most extraordinary experience. A furious storm tears the heavens into shreds. Lightning flashes; a 'great cloud' with glowing embers in its lap is swaying over his head. Out of the cosmic chaos gradually emerges the moving throne of God.¹ Ezekiel, like Isaiah, saw Yahweh sitting upon a throne; but in Is. 6, the throne is stationary; here it moves. Cooke feels that, "The difference corresponds with the situation in each case. Isaiah was in the temple at Jerusalem, Ezekiel far away in Babylonia; and when he saw Yahweh approaching on the throne of heaven, his imagination pictured wheels to account for the movement...."² To the prophet, four creatures having four faces stand revealed; creatures who move in straight lines with their strange bodies. Throughout is the red color of fire, and the wheels at the feet of the creatures are topaz, and above their heads a firmament glistens like transparent ice. Then emerging through this combination of color and strange creatures there appears a throne of sapphire. The prophet falls to the ground overwhelmed. A voice haunts him: "Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you." (Ez. 1-3)

It is well to recall at this time that "a man sees that which by temperament and training he is prepared to see. In Ezekiel's case, we may

1 Cohon, B., "The Prophets," pp. 151-2

2 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C.," p. 29

believe, a natural sensitiveness to the reality of the invisible world, and the habit of reflecting upon the holiness and supremacy of Yahweh enabled him to see the vision that changed his life. The symbolic figures of the vision that took shape in his own imagination, though, at the same time, he experienced the contact of a Power outside of himself; just as in other cases, the word which the prophet has to deliver comes from God and yet bears the stamp of the prophet's own mind.

...At any rate the accompaniments of the theophany, cloud, fire, light, thunder, were derived from Hebrew sources.¹ The same may be said of the throne and the idea of Yahweh surrounded by other figures, for these were embodied in Solomon's temple.

If the above vision is strange and unearthly, the commission that comes to the prophet is not. The entire subject of chapter 1, verses 27 and 28 deals with:

...the appearance of the likeness of the glory
of Yahweh.

Ezekiel "will not name Yahweh directly, but resorts to a circumlocution."² In Ezekiel, "the glory of Yahweh, the glory of the God of Israel," denotes an "outward manifestation of the divine Presence, seen by the prophet in ecstasy, but invisible to the natural eye..."³

And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I
heard the voice of one speaking: And He said
to me: 'Son of man, stand upon your feet, and
I will speak with you.' And a spirit entered

1 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C.," p. 28

2 Ibid., p. 22

3 Ibid.

into me when He spoke to me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard Him conversing with me. And He said to me: 'Son of man, I send you to the children of Israel, those rebels. (Omit פ'14 ח/כ, and remainder of verse after פ'9 ו/ח ה)

(Ez. 1.28b;2.1-3)

As a mortal he received from his God a designation of a mere man, but as a prophet he is the mouthpiece of the divine will. Like Isaiah (6.8) and Jeremiah (1.7) before him, Ezekiel, too, has definite authorization for his prophetic mission in God's words, "I send you...." In addition to this, he is commanded:

And you shall speak my words.

(Ez. 2.7)

We have constantly emphasized the fact in our discussion of both Isaiah and Jeremiah, that the prophet is the one in whose mouth God placed His words. The prophet merely spoke God's words. It is in this consecration vision of Ezekiel that we get the most detailed description of this vital factor of true prophecy. God again, orders:

'...open your mouth and eat what I give you.'

And when I looked, behold, a hand was put forth to me; and, lo, a scroll was in it. (Emend יא to ו/ח)

And He spread it before me, and it was written on inside and outside, and written in it were lamentations, moaning and woe.

(Ez. 2.8b,9,10)

Still again a "hand" is stretched out to affect the lips of a prophet. In Jeremiah's case the contact was direct, in Ezekiel's indirect. The

symbolism continues:

...eat this scroll, then go speak to the
house of Israel.

(Ez. 3.1)

In this connection, also:

And He said to me: 'Son of man, go, get you
to the house of Israel, and speak with my
words to them. For you are not sent to a
people of an unintelligible speech and of a
slow tongue, but to the house of Israel.

(Ez. 3.4,5)

(Ezekiel's mission is clearly only for Israel and not to the other nations.)

So I opened my mouth and He caused me to eat
this scroll. And He said to me: 'Son of man,
cause your belly to eat, and fill your bowels
with this scroll that I give you.' So I ate
it (Emend to $\int \frac{1}{x} dx$)

And it was in my mouth like honey for sweetness.

(Ez. 3.1,2,3)

"It is in keeping with the realism of Ezekiel's thought that he imagines
the substance of his message as something objective, and conveyed to him
in this manner. With characteristic self-effacement he regards himself
merely as the organ of the divine decrees. The prophet obeys, and in-
wardly digests the scripture....

This passage throws some light upon the nature of prophetic inspi-
ration. On the one hand a prophet does not discover the truth by any
reasoning of his own, it is revealed to him by a Power external to him-
self. On the other hand, it is revealed only to one who has been specially

called to receive a word from God. Again, a prophet's inspiration, so far from overwhelming his natural faculties, quickens and uplifts them. Not only the language which he speaks, but the particular truth which he has to proclaim, is colored and to some extent determined by his own individuality. He responds with something of his own to the divine approach; so that the truth which emerges is due neither to God's action alone, nor to man's effort alone; it is due to both.¹ Certainly the above scholarly and scientific thought on prophecy touches the very core of the problem far more than the dogmatic, "literary prophecy must be accounted the spontaneous creation of genius, the immediate product of the intuitive human mind."² Cooke is attempting to explain a hidden phenomenon in understandable terms of reality; he does not resort to explaining one mysterious act, by giving it other names which are just as secretive and just as baffling.

If ever a prophet had positive warrant for his ministry, Ezekiel did. In addition to the numerous statements of divine authorization such as "speak with my words to them," and others, we also find the following:

Moreover, He said to me: 'Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears. And go, come to the exile...and speak to them, and tell them: Thus saith the Lord God...'

(Ez. 3.10,11)

The above may be understood as a final charge to the prophet. He has received his message (2.8-3.3), and twice he has been warned to look

1 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C.," p. 38

2 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 155

for opposition (2.3-7;3.4-9). (This matter will be discussed in chapter three of this paper.) His mission to the house of Israel (3.4) is now renewed in the form of a mission to the exile. The vision departs, and the prophet sets out, still under the influence of his ecstasy, so that when he reaches the chief colony of the exiles, he continues for some time unable to move or speak. As he says:

Then a spirit lifted me up, and took me away...

Then I came to the exile...to those who were
dwelling by the river Chebar...and I sat there
seven days appalled among them.

(Ez. 3.14,15)

Some scholars bring forward the accusation that the writings of Ezekiel are not the immediate product of inspiration, "but the labored product of speculation and study. If we compare, e.g., the visions of Ezekiel...with those of Isaiah and Jeremiah, we find that the vital element of spontaneity which characterizes the latter is altogether absent from the former, and in place of it we meet with a minutely elaborated symbolism, which serves as a fantastic garb for the prophet's theological views. This symbolic and studied imagery of Ezekiel...it should be noted, has nothing in common with the poetic imagery in Isaiah's consecration vision, by means of which the prophet effectively describes his spiritual experience. The difference between the artificial method of Ezekiel and the direct presentation of Isaiah and Jeremiah may be further illustrated by the fact that Ezekiel, though he devotes fully twenty-five verses to the description of his vision of consecration...does not until the very end communicate the fact that he is facing God; while Isaiah

and Jeremiah...bring out immediately the dominant thought that their soul was standing face to face with the eternal and heard the secrets of His counsel.¹ If we agree with Battenwieser in entirety, then the "source and authorization" of Ezekiel is seriously indicted.

Much of what Battenwieser states is true, especially the fact that in the consecration visions of Isaiah and Jeremiah the dominant thought that they are in the presence of God, is brought out immediately.

However, if we are to concede that the prophet's call to preach his message is based upon past experience and reflection, and that a prophet's consecration vision is "the culmination of a longer experience,"² then the accusation of being "a labored product of speculation," loses some of its force. If we grant in prophecy that "a man sees that which by temperament and training he is prepared to see,"³ then we can make allowance for the differences present in Ezekiel. It seems plausible to say that if we are to credit Ezekiel with being a prophet at all, and with having been commissioned by Yahweh, then we must prefer to think that, "As he recalled this crisis in his life, the prophet was more concerned to give a faithful account of what happened than to write a perfectly coherent narrative."⁴ Ezekiel was not the master stylist that an Isaiah or a Jeremiah was. Even among the prophets there were degrees of genius. But in the matter of authorization there were no degrees; in all cases the source⁵ is the same--God.

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," pp. 162-3

2 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C. to Isaiah," p. 101

3 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C. to Ezekiel," p. 28

4 Ibid., p. 41

In addition to the consecration vision there are present in Ezekiel, numerous other statements expressing the source of the prophet's mission. Speaking against the popular religion of the populace, who observed these rites "on the high places," Ezekiel is told

Son of man, set your face toward the mountains
of Israel and prophesy (/עֲזֹב אֶת /) against them,
and say: O mountains of Israel, hear the word
of the Lord our God.

(Ez. 6.2,3)

In such an obvious transgression of the people, the prophet does not dare speak in his own name, but even here, quotes his source:

Then, too,

Calamity shall come upon calamity,
And rumor shall be upon rumor;
And they shall seek a vision from the prophet...

(Ez. 7.26)

When the calamity comes, vainly shall they seek a comforting word from the prophet. For our purpose it is important to note that the people do attribute insight and truth to the prophet, and do not doubt his authority.

However, "a spirit" transports Ezekiel between Babylon and Jerusalem, and he quotes the source of this vision, who aids him at necessary moments, thereby signifying that he is a credited agent of the Lord:

And a spirit lifted me up,
And brought me in the vision
by the spirit of God into
Chaldea, to them of the captivity...

(Ez. 11.24)

It is Ezekiel, possibly, who develops the highest concept of the prophetic mission, and certainly one of the most responsible as far as the prophet, personally is concerned:

Son of man I have appointed you a watchman
to the house of Israel; and when you shall
hear a word from my mouth, then you shall
warn them on my behalf.

(Ez. 3.17--belongs to Ez.33--)

"The designation implies that the prophet is charged not only with a message to the nation, but with the duty of warning individuals."¹ And the source of this noble concept is Yahweh Himself, as is repeated in:

So you, Son of man, I have appointed you as a
watchman for the house of Israel; therefore when you
hear a word from my mouth, warn them from me.

(Ez. 33.7)

This was not enough, merely to assume a duty, by God's word, the prophet is made responsible for failure in his duty, and for such failure, he, the prophet, will suffer serious consequences. Where, in the other agents of God, do we find such a self-effacement, where among the other prophets can we find such an exalted sense of moral responsibility? Discussing the basis of the doctrine of "individual responsibility," God tells Ezekiel that if a righteous man goes astray and sins, and suffers the penalty of death because he has not been warned, then:

¹ Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C.," p. 44

...I will require his blood at your hands.

(Ez. 3.20)

What a burden did the prophet assume upon his shoulders, at the very time when he relieved the people of the collective burden of sins of the entire group, which they believed they must bear. He lifted them from the morass of despair by telling them that each man need bear his own sins alone, and these too, could be erased. At the same moment he assumed the tremendous task of guarding all the people. Undoubtedly he meant for individuals to help him in his work of guarding and warning. The choice ones of the community could shoulder part of the responsibility by showing the right way to others.¹ But it was left to the prophet alone to pay for neglect in his duty, with his very life. He was but an agent of the Lord. His was but to follow the commands of his God.

Just as we have already discovered in the case of the others, so too here, In Ezekiel's conflict with the false prophets, he is forced to remind them, by implication, of his own consecration and, in some cases, to produce the warrant of his authority:

Thus saith the Lord God: 'Woe to the vile prophets
who follow after their own spirit, not having seen.'

(Ez. 13.3)

Ezekiel had seen God. But "seeing" was not the only faculty used in the consecration vision. Still speaking of the false prophets:

Thus saith the Lord: 'And I haven't spoken
[to the other prophets]'

(Ez. 13.7)

So, too, Ezekiel had heard the divine commands--really. The others may

¹ Blank, S., "Class Notes" of Bible 3

believe they have heard the true word. But only an Ezekiel knew. As in Jeremiah, so in Ezekiel, there were those, who in all sincerity believed in their own message, and in their own truth. They too prophesied peace. But Ezekiel does not show them even an iota of mercy, and scathingly denounces these false prophets. For these

...prophets have plastered [their wall] for them with spittle, seeing falsehood and divining lies to them, saying: Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken.

(Ez. 22.28)

But unlike the period of Jeremiah, this time there was not long to wait before one quickly discerned who spoke the truth, and who did not. The blow fell soon enough:

...the wall is no more,
nor they who plastered it.

(Ez. 13.15b)

nor those who preached peace and security, nor those who believed them.

In addition to the professional prophets, and those who were false in spite of their sincerity, black magic flourished among the women.

And you, O son of man, set your face against
the daughters of your people, who prophesy
from their own hearts, and you prophesy against
them

(Ez. 13.17)

saying, (in God's name)

And you have profaned me among my people...

to slay souls who should not die,
and to save souls alive who should not live...

(Ez. 13.19)

The true source of all prophets is mentioned in a passage which is very harsh in tone and theology. It reminds us very much of I Kings, 22.22.

And when the prophet is beguiled and speaks
a word, I the Lord have beguiled that prophet,
and I will stretch my hand upon him and will
destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

(Ez. 14.9)

The prophet of the Lord is but the agent of God, and can do--and will do--only the wish of God. If he lives, he is the mouthpiece of the Lord, and the Lord is the One God. Once chosen, there is no question as to the source of his message.

The symbolic actions of the prophet are, again, not of his own doing, but rather the performance of a higher command. In chapter 3.24-26, he shuts himself up in his house, is bound with bonds, and struck dumb. Such descriptions of his sitting silent and forlorn (Ez. 3.14,15) have caused some (especially Klosterman) to say that such actions prove Ezekiel a sick man subject to cataleptic fits. It is more likely that these passages prove he was a real prophet, and not a false diviner who could throw himself into a frenzy, or receive inspiration when and how he might desire it, at the spur of the moment. However, in chapter 3.26 the prophet is commanded to remain silent. It is not until well near the end of the book that we find an official reference to this imposed silence and a release

from it. This silence is a problem in Ezekiel, especially as to how long it lasts. The problem is often solved by putting 3.26 into chapter 24 after the account of his wife's death. The prophet's period of silence is taken as lasting seven days; namely, from the period of the death of his wife until the fall of Jerusalem. His wife's death is then symbolic of the ensuing tragedy. His refusal and neglect to mourn over the death of a loved one is a symbolic object lesson for the people. They will not witness the prophet mourning the loss of Jerusalem, for such has been his instruction from God. They are to act in a similar manner. Just where Ez. 3.26 fits into this account (Ez. 24.15ff) is in itself a question which we cannot answer. However, we should notice that his wife's death becomes a symbol by order of the Lord. His digging through the wall too (Ez. 6.12), in fact all of these acts have for their basis:

...for I [God] have appointed you for a sign
to the house of Israel,

(Ez. 12.6b)

and the answer:

And I did as I was commanded...

(Ez. 12.7a^Q)

sums up the prophetic attitude, that all they see, all they do, all they love, all they live for, is but to perform their mission. Whatever experience touched them, within it they could read the hand of God. Often they added to their experience, (or it was added to) and the prophet would behold a vision. It could be a vision of a man dressed in linen, going about putting ink-marks upon the foreheads of evil ones chosen to be killed for their sins (Ez. 9.1-7); or even the vision of an angel whose lower limbs are fire and the upper part of his body like bright electrum (Ez. 8.3ff)

who brings him to Jerusalem to entrust to him plans for the "restored" city. The rebirth of the nation is stated in one of Ezekiel's most powerful visions. But the ever present hand of God first rests upon him, and then he finds himself in a broad valley (Ez. 37.2-10) filled with the bleached bones of men--and is given various orders by the Lord. His source is, if anything, too evident, he neither moves nor talks except by God's order.

Ezekiel saw the end of pre-exilic prophesy, and formed the transition to exilic prophesy. Perhaps, not the poet that an Isaiah was, nor the sensitive genius that Jeremiah was, still in his life perhaps, he equalled both. For a hopeless people Ezekiel had found a way of comfort.

We may summarize Ezekiel's conception of his source and authorization as follows:

1. Thought and observation bring an intuitive awakening to Ezekiel, which he interprets as inspired by Yahweh.
2. This inspiration causes him to see an outward manifestation of Yahweh, surrounded by strange colors and creatures. (Ez. 1-3)
3. He hears a voice which sends him upon his mission (Ez. 2.3)
4. He is extended a hand holding a scroll. (Ez. 2.8b)
5. Ezekiel eats the scroll which contains Yahweh's words. (It tastes sweet to him)
6. He becomes the mouthpiece of Yahweh, speaking only His words. (Ez. 2.7)
7. Yahweh's voice speaks within Ezekiel during his life.
8. And it is this "voice" which guides him in all things.

F. Deutero-Isaiah

To those who possess a sincere and consuming love for the prophets, and who, therefore, are desirous of learning all they can of their lives, there exists no greater tragedy than the lack of material concerning their persons. Especially is this true for the prophet we are about to consider. Ignorant of his very name, we are forced to refer to him as Deutero-Isaiah. But even this appellation is in itself ironic. If anything, the term Deutero-Jeremiah would have been far more appropriate. For in every sense of the term, he is a direct spiritual child of Jeremiah. His actual relationship to, and knowledge of Jeremiah is still one of the mysteries¹ so carefully guarded in the vaults of the unknown Past. Yet, the eloquence of his lips tells us much that bursts the bounds of ignorance concerning historical fact.

There can be no doubt that Deutero-Isaiah knew the writings and understood the heart of Jeremiah.¹ Nor is it unlikely that he himself, as a prophet of God, experienced and suffered a fate similar to Jeremiah's. Then, perhaps, came a sudden burst of light from his God. Then, too, perhaps, came the realization and his message that Israel, like the prophet, was the servant of God: the "Eved Yahweh," but in a collective sense. With this intuition the rest followed logically. Just as the prophet suffered for the sake of his people, so Israel suffered for all the nations. Just as the prophet was hounded and beaten only because he spoke the truth of the One God, so, too, was Israel persecuted throughout the years. Just as the prophet, in his misery found consolation in knowing he was performing a divine mission, so too was Israel similarly comforted. Just as the prophet must give up all personal desires and subject them to

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Sheldon Blank for this idea.

the will of God, so too must Israel sacrifice her ease, for hers was the prophetic inheritance, hers was a life devoted and lived only for God.

Remembering with love the life and teachings of Jeremiah, recalling his own personal experiences, Deutero-Isaiah saw the consecration vision, not of an individual but of an entire people. Yet within the impersonal words of a nation's consecration, beats the warm palpitating heart of the "son of Jeremiah." We have no actual inaugural vision for this prophet. We need none. Woven into the nation's inauguration are really three consecrations. Jeremiah's is repeated in retrospect; based upon a similarity of experience is Deutero-Isaiah's, and the obvious one is the consecration of Israel, the people. The prophet is speaking as the mouth-piece of his people, and referring to them always. But within his words he is also symbolizing his life and that of Jeremiah, and exalting the figure of the prophet into a picture representative of the people. The life of the prophet becomes symbolic of the nation. He was not wrong. The picture and the symbol are still too realistically true.

One may find Battenwieser's definition of prophecy ambiguous, and one may take some exception to his views on Ezekiel, but there is no denying the fact that he understood and adored the prophets, and in his way is perhaps a member of their clan. There can be no understanding of the prophets today without hearkening to the words of Battenwieser. In discussing Deutero-Isaiah, he says: "It is interesting to note that the great prophet of the exile, Deutero-Isaiah, who lived amid entirely different conditions, and who, accordingly, preached not retribution and doom, but pardon and redemption, held essentially the same view of inspiration ^s as his great predecessors. The very words with which he opens his

prophecies (Is. 40-55) 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, speaks ever more distinctly your God,' show that he had the same triumphant faith and spiritual vision as they, since in the convulsions of time, which for his contemporaries, were exactly what they seemed, he beheld the manifestation of the divine Spirit--heard the voice of God. Jomar (7741) has not the force of a future tense, but is imperfect of progressive duration, its meaning being that God is speaking through contemporaneous events, viz., through the rise and the growing victories of Cyrus. But this verse 2a, 'Speak ye words of cheer to Jerusalem and proclaim to her,' shows that Deutero-Isaiah regarded God's call as addressed, not to himself, but to all men--all, that is, that had ears to hear. This is shown by the plurals, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye,' and 'Speak ye...and proclaim.' In the following verses 3-8 the basic thought is brought out that back of the visible perishable things of this world, there is an invisible, eternal world, viz., God and His universal plan of salvation. To those, therefore, who have the spiritual capacity to discern the eternal truths clothed in the passing events, to those is God's call in the opening lines addressed. In this way Deutero-Isaiah, although he makes use of different figures, brings out fundamentally the same idea of revelation that Jeremiah expresses in the conclusion of his exposition of revelation.¹ Ezekiel, too, in his concept of the "watchman" expresses a similar idea.

The problem now confronting us is, what is the prophet's conception as to the source and authorization of his mission, that ^{with} which such certainty he can call out:

1. Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 154

Comfort you, comfort you my people
Repeatedly says the Lord your God.
Bid Jerusalem take heart,
And proclaim to her,
That the time of service is accomplished,
That her guilt is paid off;
That she has received of the Lord's hand
Double for all her sins.

(Is. 40.1,2)

We need not wait long for the prophet to express his conception of the source of his mission. True, he speaks of the nation, and not directly of himself. But is it so difficult to apply it to his own experience? Is it not plausible to imagine that he is converting a personal experience into a group experience? All the prophets spoke with certainty of their consecration, and the concept thereof; we find not only the same assuredness of the others, we even find their words.
(God proclaims):

Behold my servant, whom I uphold
My elect in whom my soul delights,
I have put my spirit upon him
He shall make the right to go forth to the nations.

(Is. 42.1)

The spirit of Yahweh, which was such a close and intimate feeling with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is just as close to this prophet. But now comes an idea we first met in Jeremiah:

But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob,

And he that formed you, O Israel:

'Fear not, for I have redeemed you (repeatedly)

I have called you by name, you are mine.'

(Is. 43.1)

And again,

Thus saith the Lord that made you,

And formed you from the womb, who will help you:

'Fear not, O Jacob, my servant...'

(Is. 44.2)

And even more emphatically:

21 Remember these things, O Jacob,

And Israel for you are my servant;

I have formed you, you are my own servant;...

24 Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer

And He that formed you in the womb...

(Is. 44.21,24a)

How like to the above is God's statement to Jeremiah:

Before I formed you in the belly I knew you...

(Jer. 1.4,5)

Both of these men conceived of themselves as having been born only because God willed it so. Both Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah felt that God had selected them to do his bidding even before birth, and from the womb both were chosen by God. Both regarded their lives as being lived only to carry out divine decrees and to act as Yahweh's agent. Theirs was not a sudden appointment, theirs was not a sudden charge given during consecration. Theirs was a life-long task, and their

*He who
is in the perfect*

consecration was but an assurance of what they already knew. Their inaugural vision was but a strengthening of faith in their own mind, and a renewal of courage to continue their divine, but soul-trying labors. Peculiar to Deutero-Isaiah, however, is the statement that a prophet is in reality the Eved Yahweh, the servant of Yahweh. The others clearly imply it, Deutero-Isaiah pronounces it. Herein is expressed a sense of intimate relationship, and a sense of closeness to the Lord. Here is a concept of the prophet's source of his mission; namely, that it is as near as a master and a beloved servant. Here is a concept of the prophet's authorization that is as dear and as intimate as father for a son, for he himself states!

He is near that justifies me;

Who will contend with me?...

Behold the Lord God will help me...

(Is. 50.8,9)

Is this not similar to:

I am a present God, and not a far-off God.

¹
(Jer. 23.23)

Ever present within Deutero-Isaiah, was the feeling that Jeremiah possessed; namely, that God was with him every moment of his life, that God constantly saw him, that God never for a moment deserted him, for God had taken special pains to create him, to give him life so that he, the prophet, could be Yahweh's servant. And as His servant he was zealous to guard and protect him, in order that he could fulfill His mission.

1 As interpreted by Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 146

This prophet, like the others, conceived of himself as the mouthpiece of God, (and also of the nation as God's collective mouthpiece). He was to speak with his lips only that which the Lord implanted therein:

And I have put my words in your mouth,

And have covered you in the shadow of my hand...

(Is. 51.16)

And the prophet himself admits:

The 'Ebed.

The Lord God has given me

the tongue of them that are taught...

(Is. 50.4)

so that there can be no question as to what his duty is. As was true with the others, so here too, the mouth of the prophet has been touched by the Lord, for God in consecrating a prophet divinely inspires his lips.

But now the prophet (and the people) repeats the basic elements of his inauguration and produces his warrant of authority from his Source:

The Lord has called me from the womb,

From the bowels of my mother has He made mention
of my name,

And He has made my mouth like a sharp sword,

In the shadow of His hand has He hid me....

And He said to me: 'You are my servant...

(Is. 49.1-3)

We can only recall Jeremiah's

Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you,
and before you came out of the womb I sanctified
you; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

(Jer. 1.4,5)

and continue to wonder and to marvel at the obvious yet historically ambiguous relationship between these two men.

So the prophet sets out upon his mission, knowing full well what travail and tribulation await him, but finds comfort in his inner assurance that:

Of the travail of his soul, he shall see

Who swore by his knowledge of the Righteous One,

circumlocution?

He will justify my servant to the many,

?

And will ^bhear the burden of their sins. (Put פ'ו after

לֹא יִשָּׁא and the athnach (pause) after it)

(Is. 53.11)

By the labor of his soul he will be satisfied and comforted in knowing himself true.

And now we come to a series of verses in which God Himself produces His warrant of authority; namely, "truth." However, to justify Himself, He depends upon His prophetic servants who proclaimed the wonder and truth of the Lord, and surely such has been the case. In these verses, due to the inspiration of the prophet, God Himself, gives the "prophet's" conception as to the source and authorization of his mission. "The Holy One of Israel" dares any other god to rival Him:

...Do not fear, nor be afraid,

Have I not announced to you of old, and declared it?

And you are my witness.

Is there a God beside me?

Yea, there is no rock; I know not any.

(Is. 44.8)

God continues to prove His validity with:

I have declared the former things from of old;
Yea, they went forth out of my mouth, and I announced them;
Suddenly I did them and they came to pass.

(Is. 48.3)

It is remarkable to note that the prophet, pronouncing God's words, effaces himself entirely and only says, "...they went forth out of 'my' mouth"--God's mouth. But now God becomes a bit more specific:

Behold, the former things are come to pass,
And new things do I declare;
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.

(Is. 42.9)

True, the entire nation is considered as prophets of God, but in the more particular case of the individual prophet, the same is also true. Only the prophet can foretell the future, only the one, the one chosen and singled out; only the one to whom God has commanded:

Come near to me, hear this...

(Is. 48.16)

can speak, or even has authority to speak in the name of the Lord. However, Yahweh has not been negligent in providing one for this purpose, to select a prophet to be His mouthpiece:

I have not spoken in secret,
In a place of the land of darkness,
I have not said: 'Seek me in vain'
To the seed of Jacob.

(Is. 45.19a)

But the way is difficult and the people are trying, and over and over even the agent of the Lord needs a repetition of the assurance which God gave him in his consecration vision, (to both people and prophet):

He shall not grow dim, nor be ~~crused~~ (Emend לֹא יִכָּחַשׁ to לֹא יִכָּחַשׁ)
Till he has set right in the earth;
And the isles await his teaching.

(Is. 42.4)

"And if the people doubt you, refuse to believe you, taunt you, persecute you, tell them:"

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness,
And I have taken hold of your hand,
And I have preserved you,
And I have given you as a universal covenant,
A light to the world. (Put Athnach after אֲנִי ה')

(Is. 42.6)

"And if ever you feel downcast and despair of your lot as my servant, as the prophet of Yahweh, the Eternal One; think to yourself,"

...Is it too light a thing that you should be my servant,,,?
And I will also appoint you as a light for the nations,
That my salvation may be to the ends of the earth.

(Is. 49.6)

What is the prophet's conception as to the source and authorization of his mission? Does not Deutero-Isaiah answer for them all, (in God's name) saying:

You are my witnesses, says the Lord,
And my servant whom I have chosen,

That you may know and believe me and understand
That I am He...

(Is. 43.10)

We summarize:

The premise (p. 62f) should be restated in the summary.

1. Intuition informs Deutero-Isaiah that Yahweh's spirit rests upon him. (Is. 42.1)
2. Yahweh created him. (Is. 43.1)
3. He was called by God. (Is. 43.1)
4. He is Yahweh's servant. (Is. 44.2)
5. Yahweh implanted his words in Deutero-Isaiah's mouth.

(Is. 51.16)

6. He has been sent by Yahweh.
7. Yahweh has spoken to him directly. (Is. 43.1)

(The above applies to the people collectively as servants of Yahweh)

Summary of Chapter I

We may attempt to sum up our conclusions as follows:

1. Though "we cannot be certain, we may somewhat safely assume that the consecration vision of the prophets, bringing with it the clear apprehension on the prophets' part of Yahweh's purpose concerning him,"¹ was the culmination of a period of observation, experience and reflection. The sudden light of intuition and divine inspiration combined the various ideas of the prophets into a connected whole.
2. "The consecration vision is a record of fact; but the fact is a spiritual experience which must be described, though inadequately, by means of material terms and pictures; hence the anthropomorphisms."²
3. It is also possible that even the account of the consecration vision is somewhat colored by the prophet's experience after the day he decided to assume his divinely inspired task. (Since he recorded it later)
4. In the midst of this divinely inspired intuition, God caused Himself to be seen by the prophet.
5. God directly (or indirectly as in the case of Ezekiel) authorized the prophet to serve as His agent.
6. He was the only man chosen by God for His mission.
(The false prophets had not been chosen)
7. God (or in the case of Ezekiel, an angel) touched the mouth of the prophet. By such an action, God:
 - a. Purified and purged the prophet from all his

1 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C., p. 101

2. Ibid.

uncleanliness.

b. God implanted within the mouth and upon the lips of the prophets, His words. From then on the prophet became the mouthpiece of God, speaking only His words. (In Ezekiel, the prophet eats the scroll containing God's words)

8. God speaks to the prophet, and the prophet speaks to God.

9. God instructs the prophet with regard to his message.

10. God anticipates the rejection of his message, but reassures the prophet of His constant help and aid.

11. God sends the prophet on his mission, and there is no refusing the task.

12. The above conception as to his authorization is constantly reiterated by the prophet when in conflict with the false prophets, as a means of verifying his authorization.

13. The voice of God in some cases speaks within the prophet, throughout his life.

Chapter II

Is He Willing to Accept His Mission?

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Is He Willing to Accept His Mission?

A. Amos

The above question never occurred to Amos. To him, there is no alternative but to accept. Already in his visions, concerning which Morgenstern says, "These four visions were the indispensable preparation for Amos' prophetic career. All four must have preceded his setting out for Bethel."¹ he has assumed his role and responsibility. As the prophet of Yahweh, sent to the people, he observes God's preparation of their doom, and pleads,

...O my Lord, Yahweh

Forgive; how can Jacob endure. (Emend 'N to DN)

²
(Amos 7.2)

and in his second vision he intercedes,

...O my Lord, Yahweh

Desist; how can Jacob endure (Emend 'N to DN)

³
(Amos 7.5)

Only the prophet had such intimate access to Yahweh, that he could stand and speak to him "face to face." Here, at the very outset of his ministry he had already shouldered his responsibility.

But,
cf. conclusion
II, p. 76

Perhaps no clearer expression of Amos' attitude toward his mission can be cited, than the following:

The lion has roared,

Who will not fear?

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I., p. 106
2 Ibid., p. 83
3 Ibid., p. 84

13/c

The Lord has spoken (omit אִיִּי)

Who will not prophesy?

(Amos 3.8)

Once selected as a prophet by Yahweh, the question of initiative, volition, or willingness, disappear from the scene. He speaks as a prophet only because Yahweh has spoken to him first. He has no alternative whatever but in turn to speak out as Yahweh's agent. The effect must always flow irresistibly out of the cause. Producing his warrant authority before Amaziah, he states clearly:

I am not a prophet nor one initiated in prophetic technique, but I am a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. But Yahweh took me from following the sheep and he said unto me: Go, prophesy against My people Israel.

1
(Amos 7.14,15)

"Amos is replying here to an urgent command that he desist from prophesying further by the statement that it is impossible for him not to prophesy, even if he should choose to do so, for Yahweh has spoken to him, and it is impossible for one to whom Yahweh has spoken in this manner to resist Yahweh's word. Yahweh is the irresistible cause, and his prophesying is the inevitable effect flowing therefrom. That alone can be the true and full import of his, "Yahweh has spoken, who will not prophesy," i.e., who can refrain, even under the most extreme conditions and in the face of the most imperative prohibition, from prophesying."²

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 47

2 Ibid., p. 33

Even in the face of the command of such a very high earthly official like Amaziah, the High Priest, he must do Yahweh's bidding, he must deliver his message to its very end; he must prophesy and prophesy still further until his mission is completely fulfilled. He is but the mortal agent of God who brooks no interference in His will. And Amos is but fulfilling His will. Amos spoke with the indisputable authority of a personal call directly from Yahweh. He possessed a commission emanating directly from Him. The very words he spoke, were not his, but those of God. His very life had been consecrated to his task. It was God who had "caused me to see." Once chosen, personal desire disappeared. To Amos, once selected for his mission, the question of his personal likes and dislikes faded into nothingness. His will was but a tool for the Lord. It never once occurred to him to question his willingness to accept his role. He could not question. Man cannot resist the will of God. His will had now become God's will, and that was always something to be accepted without question.

We conclude:

1. Amos' love for his people causes him to intercede with God on their behalf (Amos 7.2,5), but
2. He does not conceive of having any alternative but that of fulfilling his mission (Amos 3.8).
3. "Yahweh is the irresistible cause, and his (Amos)¹ prophesying is the inevitable effect..."

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 33

B. Hosea

There is little in Hosea that indicates whether or not the prophet was willing to accept his mission. The only positive evidence we have is that he has left us the prophecies he did preach. But even this is not good evidence, for Jeremiah objected to his role, yet the force of God was, as in Amos, irresistible, and whether he willed it or not, compelled him to prophesy. To those who accept chapters one and three of Hosea as his inauguration to his prophetic role, there is evidence that he obediently, at least, if not willingly, accepted his mission. In response to God's command, Hosea

...went and took Gomer [a harlot]

(Hos. 1.3)

And again in chapter three, when told to take an adulteress, he obeys:

So I bought her...

(Hos. 3.2)

Yet even in these two instances it is a far cry to say he willingly accepted God's command. We are closer to the truth when we say he obeyed without objection.

W. R. Smith is perhaps a little closer to the truth: "It would seem...that Hosea was conscious of his prophetic calling for some years before he appeared as a public preacher; and this fact we can understand in a nature so poetically sensitive, and in connection with the personal circumstances that first made him a prophet. But it was impossible for him to be altogether silent. He felt that he and his family were¹ living lessons of Jehovah to Israel...."

1 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 183

The verses quoted below are by no means to be taken as proof of his attitude or even of pertaining to the subject in a vital sense. Rather they are vague hints, containing, perhaps, inclinations one way or the other. However, their implications may shed the faintest ray of light upon the subject:

Hosea indignantly cries out:

Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel!
For the Lord has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land,
Because there is no truth, nor mercy
Nor knowledge of God in the land.

(Hos. 4.1)

If the Lord does have a dispute with the peoples, he can inform them only through his prophet. The prophet has assumed his job as the spokesman of the Lord. The indignation and wrath expressed by the prophet seem to imply that he seriously objected to this situation and was only too glad to begin his job of denunciation. He reflects upon the situation, and speaking for God, recalls:

The more they were increased, the more they
sinned against me.

(Hos. 4.7)

Their stiff-neckedness and persistent sinning brings to his mind the difficulty of the situation. We can detect a wavering note in his determination, perhaps, when he says:

For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer....

(Hos. 4.16a)

Then there seems to be real despair for the people as well as himself in,
(God speaking through the prophet):

Though I have trained and strengthened their arms,
Yet do they devise evil against me...

(Hos. 7.15)

More than that,

"When they fed, they filled themselves
And their heart was lifted up;
consequently they forgot me."

¹
(Hos. 13.6)

This, then is the prophet's task; namely, to recall God, the source of
all good, to straying children. It is not an easy people to deal with,
nor is it a simple task Hosea has assumed, hence the statement at the
beginning of the book:

And I will not have compassion upon her children;
For they are children of harlotry.

(Hos. 2.6)

So he seems to be willing to assume his mission, and much of it will
be a denunciation of the populace, a scathing denunciation, until they
realize the error of their ways:

"The swift transition, the fragmentary, unbalanced utterance, the
half developed allusions, that make his prophecy so difficult to the
commentator, express the agony of this inward conflict."² More than
this we are not in a position to say. Hosea still remains to both

1 As per I.G.C., p. 398

2 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 157

student and scholar an enigma--but a beautiful one.

Hosea gives little positive indication as to whether or not he is willing to assume his mission. We only assume:

1. That since he did preach, he at least was obedient to his divine call.

2. That he, like Amos, discovered that the word of Yahweh was not to be contained within him, but must be pronounced.

3. Perhaps he assumed his mission after reflecting upon his personal domestic tragedy and intuitively realizing it was a sign from God.

C. Isaiah

After floundering hopelessly in Hosea, it is with a distinct feeling of relief and pleasure that we come to Isaiah. Here we need not seek nor imply. Very clearly, very positively, and very beautifully we discover in the consecration vision:

And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying

Whom shall I send,

And who will go for us?

Then I said: 'Here am I, send me.'

(Is. 6.8)

Isaiah heard God, Himself, consulting the members of his court ^{cf.} (I Kings, 22.19ff) and asking whom He should send as His messenger. Simply, somewhat eagerly, without hesitation (Jer. 1.6) Isaiah offers himself. "The passage is important for the light it throws on the nature of the prophetic consciousness and inspiration. Isaiah becomes a prophet owing to no physical compulsion, but by a perfectly free choice, or at least all that compels him is his sympathy with the purposes of Yahweh; cp. Am. 3⁷."¹

However, the prophet's willingness, and, in fact, eagerness, to accept his divine mission should by no means be interpreted as meaning that he was naive or ignorant of the difficulties that were to confront him. If anything, he was too well informed of his difficulties and of his dour message. (Is. 6.9-12) What is amazing is his lack of hesitation despite his knowledge of what awaited him, for "from his consecration vision, chap. VI, it is clear that at the very outset of his ministry

¹ Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.", p. 109

Isaiah cherished no illusions whatever about the situation. He fully realized the insuperable distance in religious views which separated his countrymen from him, and which made their case so hopeless. He knew that they could not comprehend his words, he knew¹ that they were doomed."

Gray presents an intriguing comment in connection with chapter 8, verse 11. This verse dates from the early part of Isaiah's ministry, from the period of the Syro-Ephraimitic Alliance of 734 B.C.E. The verse reads:

For thus the Lord spoke [said] to me with a strong
hand (Emend 'J29:1 to 'J29:1)
And caused me to turn aside from going in the path
of this people...

(Is. 8.11)

Gray explains that Isaiah, like Jeremiah (15.17-21) may have had an inward conflict, and that the above verse shows that he refrained from following the easier path of acquiescence with the accepted thoughts² of the day. If this is true, then our concept of a perfect acceptance bears investigation. However, in no way does it detract from the stature of the prophet. If anything it adds to his humanness, and enhances our admiration for him. His perfect obedience takes him out of the category of mortal beings. In a mission such as his, with its difficulties and its pronouncement of doom, we can excuse not one deviation in his line of duty, but considering that basically he is still flesh and blood; we could excuse many. If the above is true we are sadly lacking the confessions

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 255

2 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.," p. 151

of an artist, poet, as well as prophet. Such writings would be priceless, since they would reveal the intimate soul of one about whom we know very little as a person. This much, however, must in all due respect be said for the prophet. Outside of this verse with its novel interpretation, never again in the entire book of Isaiah do we find even a vague hint that he so much as shirked his duty even for a second. If anything, he was over-zeal^us in his performance.

We marvel at his obedience to his duty when we read:

And the Lord said: 'As my servant
Isaiah has walked naked and barefooted
for three years to act as a sign and a wonder
against (toward) Egypt and Ethiopia....

(Is. 20.3)

Undoubtedly he bore the abuse and mockery of the populace for his unconventional behavior, yet there is no record of complaint or dissatisfaction on the part of the prophet. This is a symbolic object lesson inspired by God. There is no objection in such circumstances. In his consecration vision Isaiah willingly accepted his mission. He volunteered to perform God's task, and his entire life is a proof of his faithful acceptance and his unflinching loyalty.

We conclude:

1. Isaiah willingly and eagerly accepted his mission (Is. 6.8)
2. There is little indication that his love for his people caused him to hesitate in accepting his message of doom.
3. He offers no indication that he intervened on behalf of his people.

D. Jeremiah

Of all the literary prophets, actually, it is only Jeremiah whom we know both as a man and as a prophet. From the confessions of his lacerated soul we gain an insight into the overwhelming tragedy of a man being driven to fulfill a destiny, for which, ironically enough, he has neither desire nor love. If anything he despises it. Here is the story of a human being who made no pretense of being anything more than flesh and blood. Here was a man who was not made of the "stuff of martyrs," and openly confessed that he had no desire to be one. He desired peace, but found conflict. He desired only solitude, and was caught in the whirlpool of political upheavals. In return for his labors, he was remunerated with persecution, both physically and mentally. He, of all men, is a living proof that "there is a fate that guides our destinies." But to Jeremiah it was not a mysterious unknown fate. It was an ever-present reality. It was God. God it was who had drafted him for his divine mission, and to his God he poured out the pent-up bitterness of his heart. That which he never desired he was forced to do; that which he dreaded most became his lot. The Lord had spoken, and the Lord had forced him to fulfill his mission. His was the greatest tragedy a man can know; namely, to be destined by the Lord for a goal which he dreads, to be forced into suffering, persecution, pain, and finally--immortality. Our own Lincoln is often compared to Moses, but there is a far closer relationship and comparison to Jeremiah. Their lives are, if anything, frighteningly similar. Both were drafted by a power greater than any other in the universe, both were destined for a goal they feared, and the lives of both are but a chronicle of tears, for such is the fate of the servants of God. For,

...it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease,
(Emend 'למח to 'למח)

To see if his soul would offer itself as an offering,...
...that the purpose of the Lord might prosper by
by his hand.

(Is. 53.10)

True, our immediate problem is to discern whether or not Jeremiah is willing to accept his mission. But in seeking our answer we shall be privileged to probe the very heart and soul of a man.

"Throughout the book of Jeremiah there is a strong personal note. At times, in the so-called confessions, e.g., the prophet's innermost soul is revealed to us. We see the man, his struggles, and his sufferings, and we see the very pulse of the man--his unvarying reliance on God's presence with him."¹ There can be no question as to the validity of the above; its truth is only too obvious.

However, let us permit Jeremiah to speak for himself. The voice of God within him says:

...I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

(Jer. 1.5b)

But to this call the prophet answers with reluctance,

...Alas, Lord God! behold I do not know how
to speak; for I am a young man.

(Jer. 1.6)

His objection is not accepted by Yahweh:

But the Lord said to me: Do not say: I am

¹ Buttenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 10

a young man, for wherever I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you--you shall speak.

(Jer. 1.7)

There can be no doubt from the above but that Jeremiah was drafted into the ranks of Hebrew prophecy. A power higher than himself seized him, and "beguiled" him, and forced him into the turmoil of the world to fulfill a mission. Unlike Amos, who never even considered the possibility of hesitation, but presented himself at Bethel and hurled his invectives; unlike Isaiah, who, transported, "leaped to his feet" in the sanctuary with the eager cry, "Here am I; send me," Jeremiah was fearful of the "inner voice."

But even this was not the end of his reluctance. The very fact that God had to emphatically command him:

And you, therefore, gird up your loins, and arise, and speak to them, all that I command you...

(Jer. 1.17)

then, even threaten him:

...do not be dismayed by them lest I dismay you before them,

(Jer. 1.17)

then again reassure him,

And I, behold I make you today a fortified city and a pillar of iron, and a wall of copper in front of the kings of Judah, her princes, her priests, and the people of the land. (Omit עם כל הארץ)

(Jer. 1.18)

shows conclusively that not only did he continue to hesitate, but, for all we know, fought to evade his command. Finally, even God has to resort to threats (1.17b) before Jeremiah submits. Nor is his reluctance something unfathomable. In addition to possessing a humble, retiring character, he naturally would possess a passionate love for peace, but in order to complete his divine order he would have to "see his land soaked with blood; ardently patriotic, he was called upon to counsel his nation to submit to the invader; deeply religious, he spent his life denouncing the established religion of his people as immoral and its priests as flunkies; convinced that a God of justice and loving-kindness directed the destinies of men and nations, he saw, like Job, brutal contradiction of it wherever he turned."¹ Is it any wonder that he needed spiritual sustenance and emphatic promises of the Lord's protection and defense? As for example:

And they will fight against you, but they
shall not prevail over you, for I am with you,
saith the Lord, to sustain you.

(Jer. 1.19)

and the specific assurance,

I have made you a tower among my people (Omit 332N)
That you may know and try their way.

(Jer. 6.27)

But once Jeremiah yielded and accepted God's call, he prosecuted his commission faithfully and devotedly, and has a perfect right to remind

¹ Cohon, B., "The Prophets," p. 113

God:

As for me, I have not shirked my duty as a
shepherd in your service,
And surely I haven't hoped for the woeful
day
You know what has left my lips / is manifest
before you.

(Jer. 17.16)

Faithful has he been, even though he hoped against hope that Yahweh would "repent Him" of the doom he had in store for the people. Still, what sense is there in hoping in one's heart? Nothing is secret or hidden before God. What left the prophet's lips was, in fact, only the words of the Lord, and personal desires never enter into the situation. In fact, once he had accepted the role of prophet, probably overcome with the emotion of his consecration vision, he also joyfully accepted God's words, for Jeremiah recalls the early days of his ministry:

When Your words offered themselves, I devoured them,
Your words have been a joy to me (Omit ^{וְהָיָה} ^{לִי} ^{שִׂמְחָה}, add to v. 17)
For I am dedicated to You, O Lord of Hosts.

(Jer. 15.16)

His love and kinship with God cannot ever be questioned. No, it is not this love for the Lord that weakens, rather it is his message which embitters him. Why, of all people, must he preach a message of doom to the nation? But he must, and once having set out and really seen the rottenness of the social structure, he is entrapped within the webs of his own soul, caught between love and hate for his nation. Seeking to

escape from his dilemma, he voices the following desire:

Would that I were in the desert
In a lodging place of travellers,
That I might abandon my people,
And go from them!
For they are all adulterers,
An assembly of treacherous men.

(Jer. 9.1)

There is no such thing as a personal will or desire for one whose entire life and work has been pre-ordained by God. Jeremiah was not destined to find peace and solitude. He could not run away, even if he so desired, for this was not God's will. Instead, he was to remain and to denounce, and with his denunciations his worst fears were realized. The people saw in him an enemy, a traitor, an irritant to be hounded and persecuted in the cruelest possible manner, until he would disappear from their sight. In his sufferings Jeremiah was not noble and selfless. He was only a man who had been hurt, and with vigorous rage demanded revenge. At heart he was still only a human being, possessing all the virtues, and a few of the faults that go with creatures of that category. He knew God was near him; he knew God had seen what treachery had been wreaked upon him, and he remembered God's promise to protect him. So now he calls on God to fulfill His word:

You, O Lord, know it.

Remember me, and think of me,

Take me not away because of Your long suffering
(Emend $\text{לֹא יִסְּרֶנּוּ} \text{ to } \text{לֹא יִסְּרֶנּוּ}$)

Know that for Your sake
I have suffered taunts.

(Jer. 15.15)

"Why," asks the prophet, "Why have they hurt me? You, O Lord, know":

I haven't kept company with those who make merry
nor rejoiced with a joyful heart. (Add *וְאֵיךְ אֶנְיָהּ* from 15.16)
I sat alone because of Your hand,
For You have filled me with gloom.

(Jer. 15.17)

Simply, yet tearfully, the prophet practically begs mercy of God to save, then perhaps, to leave him alone. His life hasn't been his own, and all this misery should not be his lot. It is bad enough constantly to be haunted by God's ever present message of doom, which in itself drives him mad; why can't he be left alone, is his plaintive wail.

The persecutions, both inner and outer, have become too much for the body of flesh upon which they are being inflicted, and the heart is weak and faint, and above all bitter. So bitter, in fact, that his faith is shaken severely for the moment. In misery, out of the gloomy pits of dejection the soul of a man is being painfully crushed to bits, and he sends forth a cry that pierces heaven:

Why is my pain perpetual
And my wound incurable, so that it refuses to be healed?
Will you indeed be to me as a deceptive stream,
As waters that cannot be relied upon.

(Jer. 15.18)

Surely this anguish did pierce the very heavens, for immediately God spoke within the heart of the prophet, (Jeremiah, inspired by God, in reality answers himself), and causes him to collect his senses. Such an outburst signifies a lack of faith. Such mutterings are to be expected from the people, but not from the agent of the Lord. Surely, the prophet, himself, like the people, has gone astray. Just as God's workings are often hidden, just so expansive is His mercy and forgiveness, for:

Therefore, thus saith the Lord:

If you repent, and I bring you back,

You shall stand before me

If you will pronounce noble things, rather than cheap ones,
then you shall be my mouthpiece.

Let them return to you, but don't you [sink] (return)
to their level.

(Jer. 15.19)

This was God's answer to Jeremiah. The prophet had forgotten his consecration as the mouthpiece of the Lord. The prophet had doubted God, and by this action had sunk to the level of the people. But God had spoken to His agent. God had caused His agent to return to His work, and upon his return, again reassured him:

...I will make you an inaccessible wall of brass
to this people.

True, they shall fight against you,

But they won't prevail against you,

For I am with you, to save you and to deliver you

Saith the Lord.

(Jer. 15.20)

So a faint heart took courage, and once more set forth to accomplish a divine mission.

The life of the prophet, and for Jeremiah especially, was at no time his own. He was but an agent of God. His will belonged to his God. Object and fight as he would against it, it was his inescapable destiny--and doom. Jeremiah never even had the ordinary consolation of a wife or the pleasure of a family. Whether or not he ever desired such is a question upon which he does not comment. We only know that in this too, he followed the command of his God:

And the word of the Lord came to me saying:

You shall not take a wife,

Nor shall you have sons and daughters in this place...

(Jer. 16.12)

Often the above is interpreted as being not only the wish of God (speaking within Jeremiah), but also the desire of the prophet himself. As proof of this assumption, the argument is given that he was convinced that he was on the edge of doom, and, therefore, had no moral right to bring children into a collapsing world. This argument is not too convincing in the light of the following facts. In the forthcoming doom the life of Baruch who is his scribe, but no blood relation, as far as we know, to the prophet, is to be spared (Jer. 45.5). Is it assuming too much to believe that if the life of the prophet's secretary is to be saved, surely that of a wife, and even the lives of his children would be spared also? Further, chapter 16 verse 2 specifies that he is not to

have children "in this place." True, enough, the prophet knows that the children of the people

...shall die (of) grievous deaths....,

(Jer. 16.4a^c)

but this need not necessarily apply to his own children, and more: knowing this is the fate of a particular section, was it not possible that he could have sent his family away from "this place," to one that was more secure (if such existed)? All these, of course, are speculations without proof.

Saved from the pit of despair, the prophet had returned to his work with renewed vigor. But with his return, no doubt, he experienced new outbreaks of persecution. Each case only went to emphasize his frustration. The reassurances of God had not prevented him from suffering reproach and derision as well as renewed attacks upon his own body. Why was he abused? Why should he suffer? The answer was obvious. For that which he never desired in the beginning. It was his destiny to be a prophet, and this was the lot of all the true prophets. In his own heart he was honest, and he dared challenge even God for inflicting upon him a role he never wanted:

You have beguiled me, O Lord, and I was beguiled,

You have overcome me, and You have prevailed;

I have become a constant butt of laughter,

Everyone mocks me.

(Jer. 20.7)

Here is a mortal challenging the Lord with an enraged eloquence. Here is the truth bursting through the heart, and then from the lips of a man who dared face his God. Here was a soul, caught in the web of des-

tiny, realizing he is but a pawn in a Divine game, and making no secret of his displeasure. And what sort of life had he, ironically enough, been chosen for? One filled with abuse and violence:

As often as I speak I have to complain of violence
and abuse.

For the word of the Lord has become a constant reproach
and derision to me.

(Jer. 20.8)

The very words he spoke were not his own. They belonged to God. Yet he must bear the abuse they call forth. However, one courageous enough to accuse God, surely should have strength to refuse to obey an impulse which he doesn't desire to fulfill. Jeremiah did possess that strength, and he did resolve to free himself, for:

...I say I will not make mention of Him,
Nor will I any longer continue to speak in His name...

(Jer. 20.9)

But whenever he so resolved, he soon discovered:

...there is in my heart a raging fire
Shut up in my bones,
And I weary myself striving to restrain it,
But cannot.

(Jer. 20.9)

In a most painful manner, Jeremiah was discovering that which Amos long ago had known and spoken:

...The Lord has spoken,
Who will not prophesy.

(Amos 3.8)

The command of Yahweh cannot be disputed, and His word cannot be resisted. Once selected, the prophet is forced, whether he wills it or not, to realize and to cry out impassionately:

...I am full of the fury of the Lord (Emend $\text{לִי$ to לִי לִי)
I am wearing ~~with~~ containing it. y

(Jer. 6.11)

There is no holding in, there is no containing that which God wants spoken, and objection and refusal--are possible, but useless. Realizing that there is no opposing the will of Him who has implanted His words within one's mouth, and for whom one must act as a mouthpiece, the prophet finally sinks to his knees, weary and tired of his miserable life, which is now almost over, and reflects upon this life he never wanted, and perhaps in a subdued but tearful voice poured out his heart with:

Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me,

A man of strife and contention for the whole earth!

I have not lent, neither have men lent me;

Yet all of them curse me

(Omit לִי after לִי ; add לִי to לִי לִי . Emend לִי לִי to לִי לִי לִי)

(Jer. 15.10)

It is the end of a life which should never have been lived, feels Jeremiah, as he cries with soul-searing sincerity:

Cursed be the day

In which I was born;

The day in which my mother bore me,

Cursed be the man who brought the news

To my father, saying:

'A male child is born to you'
Making him very happy.
And let that man be as the cities,
Which the Lord overthrew mercilessly,
And let him hear a cry in the morning,
And alarm shouts at noontime.
Because ~~He~~ slew me not from the womb;
Thus my mother would have been my grave,
And her womb a perpetual pregnancy.
Why did I even have to emerge from the womb
To see labor and sorrow,
That my days should be used up in shame.

(Jer. 20.14-18)

Dare anyone comment on the above?

As was Jeremiah's, so too, every man's

...heart is intricate beyond any man's comprehension

(Emend $\epsilon' J/\epsilon$ to $\epsilon' J/\mu$)
 $\epsilon' J/\epsilon$ $\epsilon' J/\mu$

Who can fathom it?

(Jer. 17.9)

After the first dark clouds of his sorrow had passed, perhaps he remembered his answer to life which he had conceived during his early years. A man, so permeated with a sense of an intimate communion with God, would not die hating God, in spite of the bitterness called "his life." Knowing the man, knowing what he suffered, in the line of duty, knowing the introspective and finely sensitive personality, we cannot

believe but that even on his death bed he again saw clearly, and again, now perhaps more sure than ever, spoke these words with God:

You are (always) righteous, O Lord,

Even though I venture to dispute with you.

(Jer. 12.1)

And surely he had not feared to argue with God, but now comes the question puzzling the world of men:

Why does the way of the wicked prosper?

Why are all who deal treacherously secure?

Why have You so planted them that they have taken root,

(Why do) they grow, even producing fruit?

(Jer. 12.2)

The answer that Jeremiah gives himself (inspired by God) is as near as any we have evolved, even today:

[Yes, now I see] You are near [only] in their mouth

But distant from the innermost part of their being.

(Jer. 12.3)

In the "innermost part" of Jeremiah's being God was most certainly ever present.

We conclude:

1. Jeremiah was reluctant to accept his mission. (Jer. 1.6)

He was drafted. (Jer. 1.17)

2. Yahweh insists that he assume it (Jer. 1.7) and even threatens him if he fails to fulfill his task. (Jer. 1.17)

3. His love of peace, of his country, and of his people, causes him to hesitate in his work.

4. He finds that even if he so desired, the words of

Yahweh cannot be restrained within him. Almost against his will he is forced to speak. (Jer. 6.11; 20.9)

5. The rebuff and persecutions which he anticipated and to which he is later subjected have a very discouraging effect (Jer. 15.18) upon him, at times even causing him to cry out against the mission imposed upon him. (Jer. 15.10-15; 20.7,8; 14-18)

6. He finds consolation for his trials in his faith that God is near and with him. (Jer. 15.19; 15.20; esp. 12.3)

E. Ezekiel

Ezekiel does not give a clearly-defined answer to our question as to whether or not he is willing to accept his mission. We therefore are dependent upon a group of verses whose implications hint at his attitude. The warning that God gives him, in his consecration vision, is in itself explanatory:

And you, son of man, don't be afraid...of their words, and don't be dismayed by their looks, for they are a rebellious house. And you shall speak my words to them, whether they listen or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious. And you, son of man, hear what I say to you, don't be rebellious like that rebellious house....

(Ez. 2.6,7,8a)

There can be no doubt of the fact that Ezekiel is not optimistic at the beginning of his mission. God's insistence that the prophet be sure to speak His words to the people under all and every circumstance, even outright rejection, sounds very much like a fearful and hesitant personality being bolstered by divine command. The further statement, "don't be rebellious like that rebellious house," seems to indicate very clearly that for a brief moment, the prophet hesitated to fulfill the orders of Yahweh, and God, seeing this, immediately discerned the meaning of his momentary pause, and continued to exhort him to action with a warning that could also be interpreted as a threat.

To the decree,

...Son of man cause your belly to eat, and fill your bowels with this scroll that I give you...

(Ez. 3.3)

the prophet readily and obediently reacts by,

So I ate it (Emend to וְאֵלַם בְּפִי) and it was in my mouth like honey for sweetness.

(Ez. 3.3)

Surely, such a rapid response seems to indicate that the prophet, by this time, was very willing to accept his mission, for eating the scroll containing the words of God was the conclusive act that definitely and specifically ordained a prophet. In connection with this verse (Ez. 3.2,3) Cooke says in thought that such obedience is to be taken as a characteristic self-effacement of Ezekiel who regards himself merely as the organ¹ of divine decrees.

Obedient or not, one thing is certain. Ezekiel did not voluntarily and eagerly offer himself to God as did Isaiah. If he had, there would not have been the ever-repeated warnings that his words would fall upon deaf ears, and therefore not to be disappointed. Nor would there have been a need for an ever-recurrent divine assurance that the prophet would be protected and guarded against the populace, such as we find in, (God speaking)

But the house of Israel won't consent to listen to you, for they are not even willing to listen to me, for the entire house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart. Behold I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. As a diamond harder than flint have I made your forehead; don't be afraid of them, and don't be dismayed by their looks.

(Ez. 3.7-9)

¹ Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." p. 37

Let this, however, be said for Ezekiel; namely, that once he has been consecrated as a prophet, and set forth on his mission he never once objects to even the most rigorous and trying commands of God (as he hears them), and if anything, shoulders far more responsibility than is his task, according to his consecration vision. He loyally executes all commands, and never raises an objection, except in one case--and that is a peculiar one.

Ezekiel is willing to sit in silence for days, he is willing to see his wife die and not mourn, he is willing to lie on his side for a period of time, all as symbolic object lessons to the people. However, when told to eat unclean food, Ezekiel, for the first, last, and only time in all his writings, dares to speak to God and politely and courteously objects to this act, which also was to be symbolic:

Then I said: Alas Lord God! behold, my soul has not been rendered impure; for from my youth up even till now I have not eaten that which dies by itself, or is torn to death by beasts, nor did unclean flesh come into my mouth.

(Ez. 4.14)

This is his only objection to divine decree, and God remedies the situation. It is at that point when he assumes the responsibility to become the Watchman of his people, that we are perfectly justified in saying that Ezekiel willingly accepted his mission. Not only did he willingly accept his role, if anything, he exalted the name of prophet far more than any of the others who bore the title before him. When a man's intuition speaks to him as follows:

...You, son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore when you hear a word from my mouth, warn them from me. When I say to the wicked you (Omit $\gamma e \gamma$) shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

(Ez. 33.7,8)

and he offers no word of objection, then we are more than safe in saying he willingly assumed his mission. In chapter 3 verse 20, he is told that if a righteous man goes astray from the correct path and he dies in his sin, then:

...I will require his blood at your hands.

(Ez. 3.20)

We realize that here is a prophet who regards himself not only as responsible for his own actions, but responsible also to warn others. Assuming such a tremendous burden we find none of the objections of a Jeremiah nor even a feeling that he has been imposed upon. If anything, he is very unassuming about the whole matter, and even asks other men who are worthy and capable (Ez. 33.2), to assume a similar responsibility; namely, that of showing others who have lost their course, the right way--the way of God.

He regards all his symbolic actions as divinely ordered, and fulfills them faithfully. All these object lessons are summed up by the verse:

...for I have appointed you [as] (for) a sign to the house of Israel.

(Ez. 12.6b)

And, so too, is his willingness to act as such, summed up by:

And I did as I was commanded...

(Ez. 12.7a~~κ~~)

Having assumed the responsibility of warning the people, he now had two responsibilities. One to fulfill the word of God, for whom he was an agent, acting as His mouthpiece; and the other duty, which he took just as seriously: that of being the watchman for the people. It is in this latter capacity that he pleads with God:

And it came to pass, while they were smiting, and
I was left, that I fell upon my face and cried and
said: Alas, Lord God, will you destroy all the rem-
nant of Israel when you pour out your fury upon
Jerusalem?

(Ez. 9.8)

Ezekiel like Amos before him (Amos 7.2,5) interceded for the people, whom, despite their persecution of the prophet, was dearly beloved by him. The heart of an Ezekiel was lacerated by the doom in store for his people. So seriously did he take his commission of guarding the people, and so heartbroken did he become when he realized the hopelessness of their plight that God finds it necessary to comfort him and console him. Only the weepings of a somewhat sensitive soul, only the despair of one who loved his people as a father does his very own children, could have called forth the following words of comfort:

And behold, though there be left in it a remnant that
are saved (Emend $\text{וְיִשְׁתָּבֶשׁוּ} \text{ to } \text{וְיִשְׁתָּבֶשׁוּ}$), sons
and daughters, behold when they come out to you, and
you see their way and their doings, then you shall be

comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem (Emend *all* to *its*) concerning all that I have brought upon it. And they shall comfort you when you see their way and their deeds, and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

(Ez. 14.22,23)

The implied responsibility of the prophet for his people, and the comfort that God bestows upon the sorrowing prophet, more than answers our questionings regarding Ezekiel's willingness to assume his mission.

*More might
be said on
this subject.*

We assume:

1. Ezekiel was reluctant to assume his mission at the beginning of his ministry (Ez. 2.6,7,8a) as implied by the constant assurances (Ez. 3.7-9) given him in anticipation of difficulty to be encountered.
2. Later he willingly assumes his mission, as shown by his concept of the prophet being a Watchman (Ez. 33.7,8; 3.20) and by his willingness to perform symbolic acts (Ez. 12.6b; 12.7a)
3. He does intercede on behalf of his people (Ez. 9.8)
4. But this love for his people does not cause him to assume his responsibility unwillingly. Rather, it gives him a more conscientious feeling in regard to his mission toward his people. (Ez. 3.20)

F. Deutero-Isaiah

In regard to Deutero-Isaiah, one dominant fact must be kept in mind constantly; namely, that this prophet is not speaking as an individual or for an individual. He speaks to the people, and for the people, as well as for God. There is no definite statement, therefore, of the prophet's willingness to accept his mission as the mouthpiece of God. However, we have attempted to prove that the prophet used the experiences of a Jeremiah, and undoubtedly those of his own life, which no doubt were similar to those of Jeremiah, and had woven a fabric composed of both strands. Then he had taken this prophetic design of life and exalted it as a prototype for the entire nation. In his works, Israel collectively becomes the prophet of Yahweh, and its sufferings are a duplicate, but in a larger scope, of the persecutions borne by the messengers of the Lord. However, within the fabric of Deutero-Isaiah's words it is possible to discern the individual thoughts of this particular prophet, and more often than not, to realize their similarity to that of Jeremiah. Going upon this assumption, we proceed to seek an answer to our question of Deutero-Isaiah's willingness to assume his mission, by means of implications inherent within the verses spoken for the nation.

Already within his first chapter, we read:

O you announcer of good tidings, Zion
Go up into the high mountain
O Jerusalem, who announces good tidings,
Lift up your voice with strength;
Lift it up, don't be afraid,

Say to the cities of Judah

'Behold your God!'

(Is. 40.9)

The prophet, perhaps speaking directly for himself, informs the city to gladly assume its new message of hope, and proudly to boast of the fact that it is representing none other than God Himself. With nobility and the dignity of his position, the prophet tells the people to proudly point to God who is their helper: "Behold your God!" It is not difficult or illogical to take the next step, and to say this was the sincere feeling of the prophet himself. This was his reaction to serving God. This was an expression of his personal pride in having been chosen the Eved Yahweh, the servant of the Lord. The inspiration and exaltation of his heart causes him to shout with joy to his people, for they are a nation of prophets and within them should burn the same sense of reverence, of love, and of joy in assuming God's work, as is present within Deutero-Isaiah's own heart. Is it not possible that he is speaking from personal experience, when he pleads with the people: (God speaking through the prophet)

Oh that you would hearken to my commandments!

Then would your peace be as a river,

And your righteousness as the waves of the sea,

(Is. 48.18)

and that in his willing acceptance of God's mission, he has found just such a peace within his soul?

Neither is his personal acceptance, or the acceptance he is trying to foster among the people based upon ignorance or naivete in conjunction with

the task assigned. He is only too conscious of the hardships, and soul-trying suffering which the servant of God must endure. Being but a mortal, and his people being but flesh and blood, he knows only too well that the burden is too great to be borne by ordinary men. But those who are singled out for the prophetic role, are not ordinary men, in the sense that they receive divine aid in their mission, and they know that even in the mist of the raging fires of hate that will sear their flesh, God will be ever present in their hearts, ever helping, ever comforting them. If ever once their brain will rebel, and cause them to pause for even a moment because of overwhelming difficulties, they are positive that their heart will call back, and inspire them anew, with:

For the Lord will help me,
Therefore I have not been confounded;
Therefore I have set my face like a flint
And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

(Is. 50.7)

How like is the above to Ezekiel's determination to be strong in the face of all odds,

As a diamond harder than flint have I made your forehead...

(Ez. 3.9)

and how different from the weakness of a Jeremiah, who cried out in objection:

I have become a constant butt of laughter,
Everyone mocks me.
As often as I speak I have to complain of violence
and abuse.

For the word of the Lord has become a constant
reproach and derision to me.

(Jer. 20.7b,8)

Deutero-Isaiah knew that which his "prophetic father" Jeremiah also knew but refused to accept without objection; namely, that the individual, or a people, once chosen by Yahweh to become His agent, loses his identity as regards personal desires, comfort, and peace. There is no fighting the destiny to which one has been assigned. There is no refusing by a mortal that which God has decreed for him. True, one may object, but that only adds to his misery. The more sensible thing is to accept willingly the role, and lose one's self within this accepted role. Deutero-Isaiah no doubt knew of Jeremiah's account of the Potter (Jer. 18.2) And he knew even more than this. He knew that which Jeremiah repeatedly refused to accept. Deutero-Isaiah knew better than to challenge that which is God's will. There can be only acceptance of Him and His ways:

Woe to one who quarrels with his Maker,

Woe to the pot who quarrels with the Fashioner of the earth!

(Emend (כרעס - יצאנה to חרס חרס))

Shall the clay say to him who fashioned it: 'What

are you making?'...

Woe to him that says to his father: 'Why do you

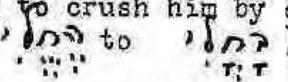
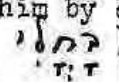
beget?'

Or to a woman: 'Why do you give birth?'

(Is. 45,9,10)

There is no questioning the inevitable, and the pre-ordained. Nor is there a full understanding of it. How can a mortal ever understand, that to assume his mission as an Eved Yahweh--a servant of the Lord--

means constant suffering:

...it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease
(Emend  to )

To see if his soul would offer itself as an offering,
That he might see his seed, prolong his days,
And that the purpose of the Lord might prosper by
his hand.

(Is. 53.10)

Surely, such an act is beyond human comprehension. It is not to be questioned; it is only to be accepted.

God, knowing all things, is conscious of this fact, too, that His people do not understand His ways. How ironic that His very agents, the very servants whom He, Yahweh, had chosen personally, were in reality as blind as the people to whom they were sent. Was not his servant Jeremiah both blind and foolish? Did he not constantly complain and doubt the justice of Him of whom there can be no doubting? And now that He had consecrated an entire nation as His servants, they, too, were as blind and as deaf as His individual prophets who had served Him earlier. Just such words does Deutero-Isaiah, inspired by Yahweh, announce to the people, and yet, within them we may discern an interesting phenomenon. Outwardly the prophet is addressing the nation; inwardly, perhaps, he is condemning his own personal short-sightedness, when he says:

Hear, you deaf ones,

And look, you blind, that you may see.

Who is blind, but my servant?

Or deaf, but my messenger that I send?

Who is blind (but he that is paid off,¹)
And deaf, but the Lord's servant? (Emend ^{וְיָ} to ^{עֲוֹן})
Seeing many things
You don't conceive their import.
Opening the ears, he hears not.

(Is. 42.18-20)

Still again the spiritual deafness of God's servants is referred to,
in:

Indeed, you did not hear;
And you did not know;
Indeed, from of old your ear was not opened;
For I knew that you would deal very treacherously,
And you were called a transgressor from the womb.

(Is. 48.8)

Had not Jeremiah (Jer. 1.5) been sanctified even at the moment he was conceived within the womb? It is not likely that he was conscious of his mission from the very moment he was able to think and to feel rationally. Nor is it unlikely that he objected and fought off his responsibility even ^{at} ~~then~~, at that very early date. Nor is it impossible to believe that perhaps, even Deutero-Isaiah, when first conscious of his mission, also tried, by devious means, to evade it. But after these inward struggles, and after these moments of despair with their adjoining periods of deafness to God's words, there invariably followed a period of intuition and inspiration, the power of whose light pierced even the darkness of the individual soul of Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and the collective soul of the people. And when this beam pointed and lit up the path, that led back to God and His will, the Lord's servant, both individual and national

1 Doubtful if original

knew that:

the Lord God has opened my ear.

(Is. 50.5a)

And, as soon as this miracle took place,

...I was not rebellious

Nor turned away backward.

(Is. 50.5a)

The fear, the dread, the despair, the hate, the objection--to perform God's will, is but the result of a human mind, which is so very small, and so very insignificant in comparison to the mind of God. Only in a moment of darkness could a man be so foolish as to believe:

...Will you indeed be to me as a deceptive stream,

As waters that cannot be relied upon?

(Jer. 15.18b)

In reality it was only the mystery of God's purpose that caused the prophet to sink down into the gloomy depths. If only he would have realized that God was ever present, ever conscious of his excellent work, recalling with divine pride that His servant was noble enough to "intercede for the transgressors," and all the time planning to immortalize the prophet, for it was God's purpose to,

...divide him a portion among the great,

And he shall divide the spoil with the mighty;

(Is. 53.12a)

for, surely, he--the servant of Yahweh--had been a heroic person, and had repeatedly proven his worth to both man and God; wasn't it true that he had

...bared his soul to death,

And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet he bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

(Is. 53.12)

thereby, exhibiting, in addition to a great faith and a devoted loyalty worthy of his mission, a heart that was large enough to contain a love for all his people--and a soul worthy of God? Does the above refer to Jeremiah? To Deutero-Isaiah? To Jesus? Or to the people, Israel, who are still baring their souls to death, while bearing the sins of the many, and for it all, being "numbered with the transgressors?"

It is beyond the capacity and strength of a man or a nation to bear the tribulations of the world, and to suffer the persecutions of the damned, and not, some time or other, relieve an overburdened heart with:

...I have labored in vain,

I have spent my strength for nought and vanity.

(Is. 49.4a)

Yet this very bitterness, once having left the lips of God's servant, bears with it into infinite space the black clouds of his soul. Once relieved of them, there is room again for the light to shine into his heart. And with this light from God, there comes the warmth of assurance,

Yet surely my right is with the Lord

And my recompense with my God.

(Is. 49.4b)

This is the answer that a nation of servants gives to itself, and is similar to the answer the individual servant gave to himself. (Jer. 12.3)

Is Deutero-Isaiah willing to accept his mission? Most certainly he is. And more than that, his is an acceptance based upon reflection. His is an acceptance with full knowledge of the tortures in store for him, but most inspiring is the fact, that his is an acceptance which in its very faith and trust, exalts the mission it assumes.

From implications contained within these verses that so often refer to the people collectively, we deduce:

1. That Deutero-Isaiah willingly assumed his mission. (Is. 40.9)
2. Persecution strengthened his reliance and faith in God.
3. He understood and accepted (perhaps only later) the persecution that became the lot of a prophet. (Is. 53.10)
4. His love for his people caused him to impress upon them, his divine message of comfort and hope.

Summary of Chapter II

In answer to the question, "Is he [the prophet] willing to accept his mission?" we may safely assume that:

1. The prophet feels that once Yahweh has spoken to him, he has no alternative but to obey His commands. (Some prophets, esp. Jeremiah, are reluctant to assume their mission at first because of anticipated fears)

2. Yahweh is the irresistible cause, and prophesying is the inevitable effect. (whether he desires to do so, as did Isaiah, or not, as in the case of Jeremiah) *Style*

3. The prophet's love for his people will often cause him to intercede with God on their behalf, or to lament the severity of his message to them (with the exception of Isaiah), or to bemoan their certain destruction, but at no point, do any of the prophets, with the possible exception of Jeremiah, intimate that because of their love for the people, they are unwilling to accept their missions. Personal desire has no bearing in the matter of fulfilling the task assigned to a prophet by God. (Ezekiel's love for his people tends to cause him to increase the responsibility of his original mission.)

Chapter III

How do His Contemporaries React to His Message,
And How Does He in Turn React to Their
Attitude.

A. Amos

At Bethel, a prophet dared to disobey a priest.

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying: 'Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus says Amos:

Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
And Israel shall surely be led
Away captive out of his land.'

Then Amaziah said to Amos: 'Seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread, and prophesy there. But do not prophesy again at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, (omit *למלך*) and it is a (royal house [J.P.S.]) [or] (national shrine [see Morgenstern reference])

(Amos 7.10-13)

Amaziah, the immaculate aristocratic high-priest looked upon this travel-worn mystic in contempt. He condescended to speak to him in an indulgent tone, but his words betrayed his disdain: 'Seer, flee away to the land of Judah, and there earn thy bread and there practise the profession of prophet; but at Bethel prophesy never again, for it is a royal sanctuary and a national shrine.' Here Amaziah applied to Amos both technical terms for prophet, *נביא* and *ח'ל*; moreover, he showed by his

cynical suggestion that Amos should practise his prophetic profession back in his Judean home, and thus earn his livelihood, that he regarded Amos, as a matter of course, as one of those typical, degenerate professional prophets of the day, whose primary or sole interest in their profession was merely that it was for them a source of livelihood earned by devious and questionable methods. Obviously he anticipated from Amos immediate, unquestioning conformity to his command. Least of all did he expect any reply to his words, any challenge to his authority. To him this was a more or less every day affair, another, ordinary instance of 'bidding a prophet not to prophesy.'¹

But Amos knew that fundamentally he was the very antithesis of the professional prophet. "Therefore he could and must reply to Amaziah's application to him of the titles /קִיָּא and נָבִי in the most absolute and unqualified manner that he was not at all a /קִיָּא or one versed in the technique of prophecy...."² Amos spoke with the authority of a personal call directly from Yahweh and with the authorization that is contained in such a commission. No doubt Amaziah was stunned when Amos dared to answer him, and least of all did he expect:

I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son (Omit 'אִיָּא).

But I am a shepherd, and a dresser of sycamore trees;

(Emend קִיָּא to נֹקֵד)

And the Lord took me from following the flock,

And the Lord said to me, go!

Prophecy against my people Israel. (Emend לִי to לְךָ)

(Amos 7.14,15)

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 46

2 Ibid., p. 54-55

Nor does Amos conclude even with the above, for according to Morgenstern's reconstruction of the text he goes on to show how different is his message from that of the professional prophet, and especially to produce his source and authorization.¹ So Amos continues to speak:

Will two walk together,

Except they have agreed?

Will a lion roar in the forest

When he has no prey?

....

Shall the horn be blown in the gate (Emend >'יך to >יךך)

And the people not tremble?

(Amos 3.3,4,6)

"The argument is, of course, that no effect happens without its cause; or, more specifically, nothing transpires in this life without its initiating cause; therefore, if some event, condition or phenomenon^{on} becomes manifest, it is not that it came about of its own accord, without cause or initiating agent or instrument. In the presence of every such phenomenon then the initiating cause or force must be inquired after. If therefore one, such as he for example, speaks as a prophet; it must not be imagined for one moment that he is speaking only upon his own initiative and volition, but it must be definitely understood that he speaks as a prophet only because Yahweh has spoken first to him, and he has no alternative whatever but in turn to speak out as Yahweh's agent; the effect must always flow irresistibly out of the cause..."²

Then comes the vivid parallelism:

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 64

2 Ibid., p. 32

The lion has roared,
Who will not fear?
The Lord has spoken, (Omit וְיִשְׁמַע)
Who will not prophesy.

(Amos 3.8)

In reply to the urgent command that he desist from prophesying, Amos simply but conclusively states that it is impossible for him to obey this order. Even if he should choose to do so, it is utterly impossible, for one to whom Yahweh has spoken, to resist His word.

"Yahweh is the irresistible cause, and his prophesying is the inevitable effect flowing therefrom. That alone can be the true and full import of his, 'Yahweh has spoken; who will not prophesy;' i.e., who can refrain, even under the most extreme conditions and in the face of the most imperative prohibition from prophesying."¹

Amos 3.8 is, in reality, only a demonstration of the prophet's warrant of divine authority to prophesy. The real word is yet to be spoken. Undoubtedly it applies, both to Amaziah in particular (note the word נָאֵם in this verse 7.16, and the singular suffix in 7.17) and to the people in general.

Now therefore hear the word of the Lord:

You say,

Prophecy not against Israel,

And do not preach against the house of Jacob
(Emend בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל to בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)

Therefore thus says the Lord:

Your wife shall be ravished in the city,

And your children shall fall by the sword (Omit וְיִשְׁמַע)

¹ Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 33

And your land shall be divided by line

And you yourself shall die in an unclean land...

(Amos 7.16,17)

One's first reaction is to be shocked by the severity of the punishment to be inflicted because of an insult. But let us not fall into such ^{naïve} error. Two major facts are to be borne in mind. This message of doom and destruction, though perhaps spoken directly to an individual, in a broader sense was also intended for the nation; and secondly, these words foretelling destruction and annihilation, are far more than personal invective of the prophet--they are the words of Yahweh, Himself, and are being spoken by His mouthpiece. The personal element does not enter into the matter of the message: "Yahweh has spoken, who will not prophesy."

His words obviously reveal the contempt and scorn he possessed both for such a command, ^{and} as well as for its commander. It was not even in his power to obey such an order give by a mortal, even if he had desired to do so. In fact, "Even in the face of the commands of the very highest earthly officials, he must do Yahweh's bidding, must deliver His message unto its very end, must prophesy and prophesy still further until his mission is completely fulfilled."¹

Yet, in spite of the hostile reception given him by his contemporaries, Amos, still loved the people so sincerely; this is evident in his inaugural visions, during which he pleads with the Lord on their behalf. (Amos 7.2,5 (אֲנִי רֹאֶה... אֲנִי בֹרֵךְ)) When we remember that these visions were recorded after his encounter with Amaziah,² we are even more apt to marvel at his devotion to Israel.

1 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 61

2 Ibid., p. 126

We conclude:

1. That Amos' contemporaries regarded him as an ordinary professional prophet, and hence his words were not taken seriously. They did not realize that Amos was a new type of prophet. (Amos 7.10-13)

2. His message was unexpected and contrary to the popular notion. The people refuse to accept it. (Amos 7.10-13)

3. Such a rebuff caused Amos to mention the source and authorization and to prove the validity of his message (Amos 7.14,15) but in no way frightened or discouraged him. (Amos 3.8; 7.16,17)

4. In spite of his rebuff, he possessed a sincere love for his people, which caused him to intercede with Yahweh on their behalf (Visions I and II, 7.2,5)

B. Hosea

It is generally conceded by both student and scholar that Hosea, like all his colleagues, was an "alien" among his own people, an outcast in his native community. He, like the others, was undoubtedly scorned and derided as were other servants of Yahweh. Smith substantiates this idea and bases his conclusions upon "...the swift transition, the fragmentary, unbalanced utterance, the half developed allusions that make his prophecy so difficult to the commentator, express the agony of this inward conflict."¹ Smith's views concerning the mental and physical persecution inflicted upon the prophet are in all probability correct. "Alone in the midst of a nation that knows not Jehovah, without disciple or friend, without the solace of domestic affection--for even his home...., was full of shame and sorrow--yet he clings to Israel with inextinguishable love....The weary years roll on, the signs of Israel's dissolution, and still his words find no audience....Still the prophet stands alone in his recognition of the true cause of the multiplied distresses of his nation, and still it is his task to preach repentance^a to deaf ears, to declare a judgment in which only himself believes."² In this connection; namely, the reaction of Hosea's contemporaries to the prophet's mission, we would have been very appreciative if Smith had proved his statement by direct quotation from the writings of Hosea himself.

Nevertheless, there are some verses that imply the reaction that the message of the prophet called forth from the people:

Plead with your mother, plead;

1 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 157

2 Ibid., p. 158

For she is not my wife, [Israel] neither am
I her husband; [Yahweh]

And let her put away her harlotries from her face...

(Hos. 2.4)

The very fact that the prophet has to "plead" with the people seems clearly to imply that they turn a deaf ear to Yahweh's admonitions as voiced through the mouth of Hosea. So little respect have the people paid to the prophet, that he is forced in despair to resort to threats in order to catch their attention:

...I will not have mercy upon her children;

For they be the children of whoredoms.

(Hos. 2.6)¹

In regard to the above verse, Cheyne comments that, "It appears then that the appeal...was uttered as a forlorn hope."² Here the response of the people to Hosea seems very similar to the negative reaction that met Jeremiah, and forced him despairingly to denounce the

...foolish people, and without understanding

That have eyes, and see not.

That have ears, and hear not.

(Jer. 5.21)

The rebelliousness of Israel, and their refusal to hearken to Yahweh's commands as pronounced by the prophet, is clearly evident in,

For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer...,

(Hos. 4.16a)

and it seems to be apparent that Yahweh's agent has had little success

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¹ As translated by "Cambridge Bible" p. 48-9

² Cheyne, T.K., "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea, p. 48

with them.

Hosea, in his ministry, must have met with, ^{experienced} and the opposition of, the false prophets. He foreshadows the difficulties to be experienced by the later prophets, who were so greatly troubled by the so-called "false" prophets.

Therefore you shall stumble (in the day) [or] (by day)
And the prophet also shall stumble with you...

(Hos. 4.5)

"Hosea," says Cheyne, "of course refers to the lower class of prophets, to whom prophecy was simply a means of livelihood..., and who, like the priests, often came visibly drunk to their most solemn functions... The spiritually-minded prophets of this period do not inveigh against their rivals as false prophets..., but at those who prostitute a sacred calling to selfish purposes." ¹ In regard to the above verse (Hos. 4.5), Harper too, agrees that, "these are the prophets, the word being collective, who prostituted their calling for the sake of support; they were in great numbers at many times,...and made prophecy a means of livelihood. (Mi 3¹ Am. 7¹²) They would perform their functions even while in a drunken condition." ² The fact that the people refused to listen to, or seriously accept the words of a true prophet was in itself cause for despair, but no doubt the situation was aggravated in the eyes of Hosea, by the fact that when they did bestir themselves to take heed, they preferred to listen to the "false" prophets. It is not unlikely that just such a reaction as described above, may have been responsible for the following despondent note:

1 Cheyne, T. K., "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea, p. 64
2 Harper, W. R., "I.C.C." on Amos, p. 253-4

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
Because you have rejected knowledge,
I will also reject you...

(Hos. 4.6)

"...Hosea, no less than Amos, places himself in ~~direction~~ opposition to all the leaders of the religious life of his nation, and like his Judaeen compeer he had doubtless to reckon with their hostility. 'As for the prophet,' he complains, 'a fowler's snare is in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God' (ix.8). To discharge his ministry year after year amidst such opposition was a far harder task than was appointed to Amos."

Yahweh now speaks, through His mouthpiece, the prophet:

What can I make of you, O Ephraim,
...Since your love is like the morning cloud
Yea, like the dew which early goes away.

²
(Hos. 6.4)

Speaking for God, the prophet is in reality expressing a reaction that was fermenting within him. Their love, their piety, was temporary and transient like the swiftly fleeing morning cloud, or fast disappearing dew. So, when Hosea says,

Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets;
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,

(Hos. 6.5)

he is expressing his own reaction to the people. Israel is a people whose fitful and irresponsible conduct has caused Yahweh to chastise them

1 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 156-7)
2 according to the I.C.C. translation, p. 284-5

through his prophets. This is the reason Yahweh has hewn them with His prophets in the past, and is continuing the process in the present--through Hosea. Because of their attitude Israel is compared with stone or wood, which is being shaped; the hewing is the punishment intended as a necessary discipline for their refusal to obey. The threat of "I have slain...",¹ merely repeats and explains the preceding line, the pronoun referring to the people. Nor can we blame Hosea for such a reaction.

In chapter 9 verse 7 we acquire an insight into the people's feelings toward Hosea and his message, and in turn, Hosea's reaction to their attitude. The prophet threatens,

The days of visitation will come,
The days of recompense will come,
Israel shall know it.

(Hos. 9.7)²

The people, sneeringly and contemptuously answer,

The prophet is a fool, the man of the
spirit is mad.

(Hos. 9.7)

But Hosea, with a patience that is born of divine knowledge and inspiration, no doubt thought to himself, "Yes, you are right, I seem mad in your eyes, but nevertheless, all which I have pronounced shall be proven true:

Because of the greatness of your iniquity
and the greatness of your sin. (Emend $\alpha\eta\epsilon\eta\eta$ to $\alpha\eta\epsilon\eta$)³

(Hos. 9.7)

1 Harper, W. R., "I.C.C." to Hosea, p. 285
2 Ibid., p. 331. The perfects are prophetic
3 According to Ibid.

"...the terms 'fool,' 'madman,' are not likely to have been used by the people of false prophets...."¹ For, "It is Israel's iniquity and sin...that have driven mad the inspired messengers of Yahweh."² And in connection with this very idea comes the words,

...[But] the prophet is a snare of a fowler
in all his ways...

³
(Hos. 9.8)

In reference to this verse, Cheyne remarks, "the prophet meant is a true not a false prophet..., for though the false prophets might be likened to a fowler's snare, their conduct could not be spoken of as 'envious' or 'persecuting' towards Ephraim. [see first line of Hos. 9.8] It is rather the Ephraimites who are always laying snares...for their troublesome 'watchman.'"⁴ (Cheyne's last remarks refer to: "The watchman of Ephraim [was] my God... [Hos. 9.8])"⁵

There is little doubt that "...Hosea was a stranger among his own people, oppressed by continual contact with their sin, lacerated at heart by the bitterness of their enmity, till his reason seemed ready to give way under the trial. 'The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come, Israel shall know it; the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad for the multitude of thine iniquity and the great hatred' (ix.7)"⁶

Yet, in his heart, Hosea was not a sadist. He took no pleasure

1 Harper, W. R., "I.C.C." on Hosea, p. 331

2 Ibid., p. 332

3 According to Cheyne, T. K., "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea, p. 97

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. p. 96

6 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 157

in scathing denunciations and condemnations. More in keeping with his character is a deep and sincere love for his people, and an overpowering wish to see them repent and thus avoid catastrophe. "The prophet enters into the feelings of the only too quickly repentant Israelites, and imagines them encouraging each other to return to Jehovah."¹

Come and let us return to the Lord;
For He has torn, and He will heal us,
He has smitten, and He will bind us up,
After two days will he revive us;
In the third day he will raise us up,
And we shall live in His sight.
Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord:
His going forth is prepared as the morning,
And He shall come unto us as the rain,
As the latter and the former rain unto the earth.
²
(Hos. 6.1,2,3)

Hosea's life is the tragedy of a prophet trying to impress upon a deaf people Yahweh's message that He

desired mercy, and not sacrifice....,

(Hos. 6.6)

and a life of frustration and despair, resulting from the fact that the people refused even to listen to, let alone obey--Yahweh's desire.

1 Cheyne, T. K., "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea, p. 77

2 According to "Cambridge Bible" p. 77-8

We assume:

1. That Hosea's message was rejected by the people.

(Hos. 2.4)

2. His message was contrary to popular belief, hence both he and his message were unpopular.

3. At times such disbelief discouraged the prophet.

4. Such rejection of his word he interprets as stubborn disobedience toward Yahweh. (Hos. 4.16a; 4.6)

5. We suspect that, in spite of the reaction Hosea received from the people, he nevertheless loved them deeply and sincerely.

(Hos. 6.1,2,3)

C. Isaiah

With Isaiah we encounter the strange but interesting case of a man who set forth upon a mission convinced, perhaps, that his contemporaries would disregard his message, but who, nevertheless, faithfully and diligently fulfilled the task assigned him by God. His consecration vision reveals that the prophet was far from ignorant of the fact that the people would not listen to him. And more than this, strange as it seems, he himself is to aid in rendering them insensitive to his message. Yahweh inspired the prophet to hear these words in His name:

And He said: 'Go, and tell this people:
Hear (you) indeed, but understand not:
See (you) indeed, but perceive not.
Make the heart of this people fat,
And make their ears heavy,
Glue together their eyes,
Lest they, seeing with their eyes,
And hearing with their ears,
And understanding with their heart,
Repent, and be healed.'

(Is. 6.9,10)

To begin one's career with such a charge is plainly to anticipate antagonism. Isaiah had not long to wait, nor was he disappointed with the reaction of the people to his words.

"The real relation of the prophet to the people and the government, and vice versa, as revealed in his prophecies, is briefly this:

--on the one hand there was the prophet viewing every contingency from his lofty, ideal pedestal, warning the people in all critical situations not to rely on human precautions or material defense, but to seek safety by resting their case with God; and, on the other hand, there were the king and the people, heedless of the prophet's words, incapable of grasping their significance, laughing at the strange visionary who proposed in all seriousness that they abandon their efforts at self-defense, and so meet their fate, as it seemed to them, with folded arms. We cannot wonder at this attitude of his contemporaries, for to enter into Isaiah's proposals, to submit to his guidance, would have meant for the people to rise to the spiritual heights attained by the prophet, and this would have been nothing short of the realization of God's dominion then and there. Isaiah himself understood this perfectly, and so he never failed to make it clear that it was to the future that he looked for the recognition of the truth which he was preaching; as to the people of his own age, he knew that for them his words were bound to be fruitless....And we can easily understand that they heaped derision and invective on the prophet who importuned them with the 'Holy One of Israel,' and His requirements of man...." And it was just such derision by the populace, that called forth from Isaiah:

Woe to them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, (or כִּלְכִּל)

And sin as the cords of the wagon, (Emend כִּלְכִּיל to כִּלְכִּל ;
some read כִּלְכִּיל instead of כִּלְכִּיל)

That say: Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work,

That we may see it;

And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh

and come,

That we may know it!

(Is. 5.18,19)

The people are here mocking Isaiah with scorn and contempt. Yet within their derisive laughter is a serious note. They are asking Isaiah to prove his words by causing that of which he is speaking to actually take place. It recalls to our minds the so-called proof of a prophet as presented in Deuteronomy 18.15-22. And this similarity to the Deuteronomic proof recalls Battenwieser's words to the effect that this law (Deut. 18.15-22) was not made for the benefit of the literary prophets who were not accepted by the official authorities, but rather was created for the sake of the false prophets who were recognized by the royal and religious officials, for they were regarded as the true prophets.¹

How did Isaiah regard such taunts? He knew only too well that when "the counsel of the Holy One of Israel," drew nigh and came about, it would be too late for them to say, "Now we do know it is true."

In an address to the people about the year 734 B. C. E., Isaiah clearly and pointedly presents to us his innermost reaction to the populace. His is a point of view entirely different, and at opposite poles from theirs:

Do not [call] (say) Holy, toward all which this people
[call] (say) Holy, and do not be afraid of the object
of [their] (his) fear, and do not account it dreadful.
(Emend $\text{לֹא יִרְאוּ} \text{ to } \text{לֹא יִחַדּוּ}$)² (Is. 8.12)

Herein we see the prophet's basic disagreement with the people, and his revaluation of values, especially as regards the matter of the Holy. Only to the true conception of the Deity as he conceived it does he give the

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," pp. 29-30

2 As translated and explained by Blank, S. H., "Class Notes of Bible 2"

name--"the Holy One of Israel." He does not regard as holy the concept of Yahweh that exists in the mind of the populace. His God does not ask for sacrifices on "high mountains" or under "leafy trees." His God is the Yahweh whose "delight is in justice and mercy and true faith, more than in sacrifice." Only to such a God does he give the name "the Holy One of Israel," for his God, whose agent and mouthpiece he was, had Himself commanded Isaiah, "Do not call Holy, all which this people call Holy."

In an epilogue to this same address, Isaiah realizes, beyond all shadow of doubt, that his message is for the future; the present generation is deaf, and therefore--dead spiritually.

Behold there remains nothing but to bind up the testimony

And to seal the instructions

Among my disciples.

And I will wait for the Lord,

that hides His face from the house of Jacob, and

I will look for Him. Behold, I and the children whom

the Lord has given to me, are [or shall be] for signs

and wonders in Israel (from the Lord of Hosts).

(*אנכי וילדי אשר נתן לי ה' לסימנים ומוֹפְתִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל* may be an addition; but
is an addition)

ה' נתן לי ילדים

(Is. 8.16-18)

These verses are definitely an autobiographical memoir. The prophet, to the best of his ability, has tried to convey his message to the king and the people, but to no avail. Hence, he entrusts it to his disciples. His children, by their names, will bear testimony to his message. One of his children has a hopeful name, and the other bears a name foretelling

disaster. Both he and his children are signs and portents of Yahweh. With verse 17, the prophet entrusts his cause to God and the future. There is no hope of catching the ear of this generation. The words received of Yahweh at the time of his call have come true. The people have not listened, and Yahweh is alienated from them.¹

Isaiah must have suffered severely for his pacifism, during the Syro-Ephraimitic alliance of 734 B. C. E. The outer hurt has left its scars. But perhaps he tried to ease his inner pain by recording the mockery he was subjected to at the hands of drunkards. (Is. 28.7) So he relates to us the taunt:

28.9 To whom can he impart any knowledge?

And whom shall he cause to understand the message?

Them that are weaned from the milk,

Them that are drawn from the breasts.

10 For it is precept by precept, precept by precept,

Line by line, line by line;

A little here, a little there.

(Is. 28.9,10)

Although the above is the usually accepted translation for verse 9, in reality, what Isaiah is perhaps trying to convey, is a group of non-sense syllables and irrational sounds such as might be produced by a drunken man. The mockery continues:

Yes, with gibberish speech and in an incomprehensible tongue

Does he speak to this people.

(Is. 28.11)²

1 The ideas of this interpretation are taken from Dr. S. H. Blank's "Class Notes of Bible 2"
2 Class translation of Bible 2

What tragic irony is expressed by the prophet, who almost seems to derive a sadistic pleasure from the very pain he inflicts upon himself; for both in the above and in what follows he is, to some degree, practically mocking himself:

12 He who says to them: this is the rest,
Give rest to the weary;
And this is the refreshing place--
Yet they would not hear.

(Is. 28.9-12)

Is there any greater reproach that a man like Isaiah could have suffered than to be told, and by drunkards at that, that he is fit only to teach children?

So he reviews the people's reaction to him, with:

13 And so the word of the Lord [comes] to them,
Precept by precept, precept by precept,
Line by line, line by line;
A little here, a little there;
That they may go and fall backwards, and be broken,
And snared and taken.

(Is. 28.13)

Now comes the reaction of the prophet to all of this:

14 Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers,
The ballad mongers of this people which is in Jerusalem.
15 Because you have said: 'We have made a covenant with
death
And with the nether world are we (at) [in] agreement;

When the overwhelming scourge shall pass through,
It shall not come to us;
For we have made lies our refuge,
And in falsehood have we hid ourselves.'

(Is. 28.14-15)

With the above we see that the time has arrived for Isaiah to mock.
And after reflecting upon the entire situation, the never failing
inspiration of God consoles him, comforts him, and above all reassures
him with:

Behold, I lay in Zion a stone (Emend 30' to 30'')
A stone which has been tried,
A cornerstone of value of foundation (omit one 30'N)
The one who believes will not make haste.

(Is. 28.16)

Again, is repeated the promise for the immortality and preservation
of his message for the future through means of a "cornerstone of value"--
laid in Zion--his disciples. And once more the essence of his
message is emphasized; namely, that protection lies in God and not in
arms. "The one who believes will not make haste"--the one who truly
believes in the righteousness and protection of Yahweh, will take the
advice:

... In sitting still and rest you shall be saved,
In quietness and confidence shall be your strength...

(Is. 30.15)

No statement sums up Isaiah's philosophy and thought more succinctly
and more completely than the above verse; now he, in turn, denounces
the scoffers:

And I will make justice the line,
 And righteousness the plummet;
 And hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,
 And the waters shall overflow the hiding place.
 And your covenant with death shall be broken (Emend נכנס to נכנס!!)
 And your agreement with the nether world will not stand;
 When the overwhelming scourge shall pass through,
 You shall be that which is trampled upon by it.

(Is. 28.17,18)

Nor is this the prophet's only reaction to the people's spurning him
 and his words. He fulfills his consecration mission; namely, to be
 instrumental in preventing the people from understanding the word of
 the Divine:

Be stupefied and stare,
 Blind yourselves and be blind,
 Get drunk, but not with wine,
 Stagger, but not with strong drink. (Emend first three
 words to וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם ; and
 וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם to וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם ; and וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם to וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם)

(Is. 29.9)

"And you shall do all this, for,
 ...the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep,
 And He has closed your eyes,
 And He has covered your heads, (Omit וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם ;
 and also omit וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם)

(Is. 29.10)

because of your actions, and your rejection of His word as delivered to

you by His mouthpiece, the prophet." These latter reactions of the prophet recall to our minds Gray's comment, "It may be then that the terms of the divine commission...reflect the discouraging effect on Isaiah of years of fruitless warning."¹ This reflection should not be passed over too lightly. Let us not permit our religious and poetic sense to exalt us to such an extent that we lose the touch of reality. The stature of the prophet does not suffer one iota whether his consecration vision is a spontaneous event, or a spiritual experience based upon a culmination of events. If we are not agreed, let us at least strive to be tolerant to other opinions, but above all, to recognize that a problem exists.

Thus far, only general reactions have been dealt with. However, from this same period (734 B.C.E.) we possess a record of an interview between Isaiah and King Ahaz (Is. 7.3ff; in verse 10, Emend יד' to יד'ע'). Isaiah had gone forth to meet the king and to present him with two messages, one symbolic and one verbal. With the prophet had come his son Shear-jashub. Gray comments that "...Isaiah takes his son, whose name was a sign (8.18) because he knows that King Ahaz when he sees the boy will recall his name and its significance." The boy's name is at once "a warning and a promise: a large part of the whole will perish and not return, but the remnant will return and be saved...the northern kingdom, will certainly perish; but the remnant, Judah, may return to Yahweh and be saved (cp. vv. 14-16)"² The verbal message is:

...Keep calm and be quiet; fear not, neither let your heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands...

(Is. 7.4)

¹Gray, G. B., "I.C.C." p. 101

²Ibid. p. 116-117

And the above calm, quiet, faith in God, is the very essence of Isaiah's message. The prophet continues:

And Isaiah (Emend וְיִדְּוֹ to וְיִדְּעֵי) again spoke to Ahaz saying: Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God, let your request be as deep as Sheol or as high as the heavens. But Ahaz said: I will not ask, neither will I try the Lord. Then he said: Hear now O House of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that you will weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, behold (the) young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

(Is. 7.10-14)

Within a few years, Isaiah insists, women will be naming their children after the great deliverance that God shall bring to Judah. This is the meaning, and the only meaning of the much discussed Immanuel sign in Isaiah. Even Christian scholars, such as S. R. Driver in the Cambridge Bible Series, and G. B. Gray, in the International Critical Commentary on Isaiah, in referring to this verse (Is. 7.14) are in agreement with the above interpretation. To support this interpretation, verse 16 continues: (verse 15 is secondary to 16)

Indeed, before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land, because of whose two kings you feel a loathing dread, shall be forsaken.

¹
(Is. 7.16)

The deliverance shall come long before the child is able to think for itself,

1 I am indebted for the translation of this verse, as well as the interpretation of the Immanuel sign, to Dr. S. H. Blank, "Class Notes of Bible 2"

yes even before it is old enough to walk, perhaps. (The fact that this deliverance does not take place immediately; for only after three years did Damascus actually fall, and not until thirteen years later did Samaria fall, is a matter which will be discussed in chapter four of this essay.)

So positive was Isaiah of his divine warrant that he insists upon the king's asking for a sign. To ask for a sign from Yahweh was in reality asking for an alteration in the natural order of things. Nevertheless, it does reveal the genuine faith of the prophet. Ahaz, of course, refused to ask for a sign from Yahweh, as Isaiah demanded. The king, no doubt, had a conscience, and feared to test it with the people. Ahaz was frightened that the sign might actually come to pass, then he would have to follow where Isaiah led. The refusal of Ahaz to try Yahweh, by asking for a sign from Him, at no time deceived the prophet. He realized only too well that this show of false piety was intended to conceal a fear and unwillingness to accept the guidance of Yahweh, as revealed through his prophet. In spite of this, Isaiah states that he is going to give him a sign. In fact, it will be something which will prove the veracity of the prophet's predictions. Mothers will name their sons Immanuel because things will have changed so,--¹ that people will say, "We are safe, God is with us." But King Ahaz rejected Isaiah's advice and invited Assyrian help. Tiglath-pileser accepted only too gladly; invaded Damascus and conquered it, slew the king of Syria, and carried off part of the population. This invitation was, perhaps, the welcome excuse he had sought for the invasion and conquest of this section of the then known globe.

¹ This entire explanation is presented by Dr. S. H. Blank in his "Class Notes to Bible 2"

It was another political crisis in the year 701 B. C. E., that forced Isaiah to emerge from his solitude, and once more assume the task of being the mouthpiece of Yahweh, an agent of God. Another king was once more becoming entangled in the webs of foreign alliances. Haze-kiah was contemplating joining with Egypt in an alliance against Assyria. The rather trite but ever recurrent story of a "Frankenstein" that turned on its master, was repeating itself. Isaiah again, advised against "entangling alliances," not because of his knowledge of world politics, but because of his deep religious insight, which drove him to denounce,

those that [make a treaty] (take counsel) but not of me [God],
that form leagues, but not of my spirit,
that they may add sin to sin (Emend *niāo* to *naof*)
that go down to Egypt,
And have not asked at my mouth.

(Is. 30.1,2a)

These people had not only refused to listen to Isaiah, but by such a rejection were actually refusing advice from the mouth of God--for had not God implanted His words upon the lips of His agent, Isaiah? The prophet gives us a more detailed picture of the people's refusal to hearken to him, in:

30.9 For it is a rebellious people

Lying children

Children that refuse to hear the teaching of the Lord;

10 That say to the seers: 'See not,' and to the

prophets: 'Prophecy not to us right things,

Speak to us smooth things, prophecy delusions;

11 Get out of the way,

Turn aside out of the path
Cause the Holy One of Israel
To cease from before us.

(Is. 30.9-11)

Thus far we have heard the people's reaction. Now comes that of the prophet:

...Because you despise this word,
And trust in oppression and perverseness,
And support yourselves upon it;
Therefore this iniquity shall be to you
As a breach ready to fall, laid open in a high wall
whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant.

(Is. 30.12,13)

If we learn anything specific at all from the above verses, it is the fact that the prophet was not persecuted because he was a prophet per se. Prophets and prophesying were accepted phenomena of the age. In fact the people welcomed them just so long as they would speak "smooth things" and "prophecy delusions." The opposition to Isaiah is based primarily on the fact that he spoke "right things," and refused to "cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before" them. The conflict, the bitterness, the opposition, the rejection of one and all was directed primarily against the message, and only secondarily against the man. Battenwieser's conclusions concerning the prophetic formula of Deut. 18.15-22, gives¹ added weight to this deduction.

Isaiah pronounces the essence of his message:

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

... In sitting still and rest you shall be saved,
In quietness and confidence shall be your strength,

(Is. 30.15)

"but, you would not listen. Instead you said,"

'No, for we will flee upon horses;'

Therefore you shall flee;

'And we will ride upon the swift;'

Therefor , they that pursue you shall be swift.

(Is. 30.16)

The prophet's pleas that the people be calm in the face of danger and place their trust in their real strength--God, have, with the rest of his message, gone unheard. Instead the people have raced madly to secure help from Egypt. (The statement "to flee upon horses" is a definite reference to Egypt, which seems to have been the horse market of the world at this period (I Kings 10.28)) They have placed their faith and future in mortal strength, and refused to trust in the Lord.

In connection with the above thoughts, Battenwieser's question is most pertinent, "Is it likely that Isaiah would have viewed his life-work in such a light (Is. 30.8-11; 29.11-12) if, during the twenty years of his activity previous to this, he had been steadily gaining in influence, if he had reached the point where his counsel was eagerly sought by king and people, and his words carried the weight of conviction to his hearers? It is very clear the prophet's thoughts were not bent on effecting the conversion of his contemporaries, and still less were they set on influencing the direction of the affairs of state. Isaiah simply preached the word of God, as it was revealed to him, to a people who would not listen--to a deaf and faithless people.

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 267

Chapter 22 relates another prophecy of the period centering about 701 B.C.E. As described in II Kings 19.35ff, the Assyrian army had lifted the siege and temporarily withdrawn. Isaiah, however, realizes the transitory nature of this relief, and is convinced that the Assyrians would return and again besiege the city. The prophet denounces the people for their lack of insight in not realizing that the true author of their coming disaster is none other than God Himself. Even in the midst of their terror they had not turned to God as their guide and protection, but had relied upon the material--arms and walls. Now they make use of this temporary breathing space, with this philosophy in mind:

Eat and drink, tomorrow we may die.

(Is. 22.13b)

Despite their feelings of anxiety, and a vague premonition of the return of the invader, still they refuse to turn to God. Isaiah didn't believe in the past, and doesn't believe, now in the present, that the people will take heed of his message. Nor do they, as proved by the description of their festivities in:

...And behold joy and gladness,
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,
Eating flesh and drinking wine...

(Is. 22.13a)

So at the end of his life, he still believed as he had at the beginning; namely, that his was a mission to a people who would not listen, and hence, their doom was inevitable.

Buttenwieser doubts, and rightly so, the authenticity of the story

related in Is. 39.8ff. He insists in no uncertain terms that, "...the ...view that Isaiah succeeded in acquiring great political influence and a commanding position in the state under Hezekiah...has no basis in Isaiah's prophecies; it rests altogether on the presentation given in II Kings 19-20 (Is. 37-39) of Isaiah's relation to Hezekiah and of the role which the prophet played in the events of the year 701, and this presentation, as the majority of modern scholars agree...is purely legendary. It has its origin solely in the fictitious picture formed by later age of the prophet and his ministry, and has no more in common with the real Isaiah and the facts of the case than the picture Of Jeremiah in the legendary record of Zedekiah's interview with Jeremiah..."¹

We conclude:

1. Isaiah's words were not comprehended by the populace.
2. They refused to accept his message (Is. 28.14-15)
just as he had anticipated. (Is. 6.9,10)
3. He may have been discouraged by the people's refusal to listen and to obey him, and this may have colored his recording of his consecration vision.
4. Since his prophecies did not come to pass immediately, the people doubted his veracity. (Is. 5.18,19)
5. His values and point of view were far different from those of the people. (Is. 8.12)
6. He regards the present generation as being spiritually defunct (Is. 28.17,18; 29.9-10), hence he places his hope in the future.
7. His message is to be conveyed to future generations through his disciples and his children, who are a small but spiritually alive remnant; also by his writings. (Is. 8.16-18; 28.16)

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 295)

8. He was not persecuted because he was a prophet,
but because of his message. (Is. 30.12,13)

D. Jeremiah

Within the consecration vision of the prophet there are very definite forebodings of the reaction with which the people will meet his message. The voice of God within the heart of Jeremiah warns:

...do not be dismayed by them lest I dismay you before them,

(Jer. 1.17b)

and then reassures him with:

And I, behold I make you today a fortified city and an iron pillar, and a wall of copper in front of the kings of Judah, her princes, her priests, and the people of the land. (omit *וְהָיוּ*) And they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you, saith the Lord, to sustain you.

(Jer. 1.18,19)

Nor was Jeremiah to wait very long, before he encountered a stubborn wall of resistance on the part of his audience. Some commentators hold that chapter 5 verse 21 is a gloss by an editor familiar with Isaiah. Still, there is good reason to believe that, facing a situation similar¹ to that of Isaiah, Jeremiah recalled his predecessor's words.

Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding,
That have eyes and see not,
That have ears and hear not.

(Jer. 5.21)

Such experiences only confirmed Yahweh's warning:

¹ Blank, S. H., "Class Notes of Bible 2"

...You shall speak all these words to them, but they won't listen to you, and you shall call to them, but they won't answer you.

(Jer. 7.27)

Jeremiah's reaction,

Behold the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them,
They have no delight in it,

(Jer. 6.10)

tells us all that we need know.

Ironically enough, the rare and almost unique example of an attentive attitude on the people's part toward the prophet's message, has to do with a prophetic threat, which as far as we know, never came to pass, or at least not with the severity anticipated by the prophet. Jeremiah recounts that God will bring a merciless invader from the North to chastise the nation. The people react as follows:

We have heard of its reputation,
Our hands wax feeble,
Anguish has taken hold of us,
And pain, as of a woman in travail.

(Jer. 6.24)

Did Jeremiah have reference to a Scythian invasion? Was it ever more than the invasion of the coastal plain of Judah? These join company with the other innumerable questions so jealously guarded in the archives of the Past.

To be subjected to the stubborn resistance and inhuman persecution which falls to the lot of every true prophet, is in itself, sufficient

cause for despair. But to have one's own family join the unbelievers in plotting one's downfall, is to add wormwood to an already brimming cup of bitterness:

For even your brothers and the house of your father,
Even they have dealt treacherously with you, all of them
(Emend *לעין* to *פס*)
Don't believe them, even though they speak good words
to you.

(Jer. 12.6)

The drama is made even more poignant by the credulous prophet's naivete:

And I, **[I]** was like a docile lamb being led to the
slaughter;

For I didn't know they had devised schemes against me,

(Jer. 11. 19a)

"with this intent,"

Let us destroy the tree and its twigs (Emend *in its sap* *in its sap* to *in its sap*) X

And let us cut him off from the land of the living,

So that his name will no longer be remembered.

(Jer. 11.19b)

There is no need to apologize for the prophet's reaction. (here insert 12.3a)

...You O Lord, know me, You have seen me, and have
tested my heart as regards You X

(now 11.20b) Let me see Your vengeance on them,

For I have turned over my case to you. (Emend *in its sap* to *in its sap*) X

(Jer. 11.20b)

His closest friends also turn against him:

For I have heard the whispering of many,

...(Omit 2'PON 2'EN)

'Tell, and let us tell on him;'

Even all my bosom friends,

are Them that watch for my downfall:

'Perhaps he will be enticed, then we shall prevail
against him,

Then we shall take our revenge on him.'

(Jer. 20.10)

Yet in the midst of this unfaithfulness, he takes comfort in his trust
in God:

But the Lord is with me as a mighty warrior:

Therefore my persecutors shall stumble and they shall
not prevail,

They shall be greatly ashamed because they have not
prospered,

Even with an everlasting confusion which shall never
be forgotten.

(Jer. 20.11)

The people showed no mercy. They scorned, they reproached, they
persecuted Jeremiah unmercifully. But at least from this quarter it
was not unexpected. The taunt that was hurled at an Isaiah (5.19) was
again used as a prod to challenge Jeremiah:

Behold, they say to me:

'Where is the word of the Lord?

Let it come now.¹

(Jer. 17.15)

Such derisive words constantly recall, and conclusively convince us that Battenwieser's comment on Deut. 18.15-22 is correct. His statement that the Deuteronomic formula was conceived as a means of verification for the false prophets and not for the literary prophets, is supported by the fact that in the above verse, the people seem definitely to be employing just that test of validity.¹ Jeremiah's reaction is a human response, and certainly understandable:

Let them be ashamed that persecute me, but let me not
be ashamed;

Let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed;

Bring upon them the day of evil,

And destroy them with double destruction.

(Jer. 17.18)

About 609 B.C.E., Jeremiah preached his famous "Temple Sermon" which is recorded in chapter 7 of the book bearing his name. He had no sooner finished speaking, than

...the priests, and the prophets, and all the
people, took hold of him saying: 'You shall
surely die. Why have you prophesied in the name
of the Lord saying: This house shall be like
Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without
an inhabitant?'

(Jer. 26.8,9)

The nobles come running from the royal palace and join the gathering

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

mob which has scented blood. But let us take special note of those who assume the role of prosecutors:

Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and to all the people saying: 'This man is worthy of the death penalty because he has prophesied against this city, as you heard with your ears.

(Jer. 26.11)

His own life suspended by the merest thread, yet does Jeremiah remain adamant in his faith and in his God.

The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city, all the words which you have heard.

...But as for me, behold I am in your hand; do with me as is good and right in your eyes.

(Jer. 26.12,14)

Contrary to popular belief, he did not regard the sanctuary as inviolate. He continues to speak, and warns them that his death will mean the spilling of innocent blood upon the city. (26.15) (For the sake of logic and sense insert v. 16 after v. 19) This statement recalls to the minds of some of the elders a similar experience concerning a prophet called Micah the Morashite, who prophesied similar words and was permitted to live. (26.18) Yet, in opposition to this precedent is the account of the prophet Uriah (26.20) who was killed because of his message. The latter account is given only when the princes plead for Jeremiah's life:

...This man is not worthy of death for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.

(Jer. 26.16)

The nobles seem to be assuming the role of defenders of Jeremiah against the priests and prophets. It is, therefore, not difficult to imagine which group quoted the latter precedent favoring the prophet's death. We know little more of the arguments pro and con, except that the life of Jeremiah is really saved by Ahikam ben Shaphan. It is this man who seems to have supported and defended him, and finally the one who saved him from the lynch-mob. (26.24) At best it was a very narrow escape for Jeremiah.

Again, in the year 605 B.C.E., Jeremiah's life was seriously endangered. Baruch had recorded the prophet's words, and then had read them in the Temple. The nobles were informed of this fact, and immediately sent to Baruch, the following order:

Take the scroll which you have read in the presence of the people, and come!

(Jer. 36.14)

Baruch obeys, comes to the palace, and reads the message of Jeremiah to the nobles. (Jer. 36.15) It seems that the nobles are stunned by the message, and determine to inform the king of their import (Jer. 36.16), but not until they have interrogated Baruch as to how he came to record the prophet's words. The nobles arouse the curiosity of the king; he orders the scroll brought and read to him. The reader had scarcely finished reading three or four columns of the scroll, when the king, in a fit of anger:

...Cut it with a penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier until all the scroll was consumed in the fire...

(Jer. 36.23)

This much should be said for the princes: two of them, Elnathan and Delaiah begged the king not to burn it (the LXX says just the opposite) but he refused to listen.¹ In fact he issued a royal decree to seize Baruch and Jeremiah on sight, but both of them had already fled to hiding, and thus, safety from the royal fury. Battenwieser doubts verse 25 which tells of some nobles begging the king not to burn the scroll.² In this connection he also doubts that the nobles defended Jeremiah in the least. However, he is thoroughly convinced that, "the death sentence would long since have been executed against Jeremiah had his hiding-place been known..."³

Chapter 32, verses 6 to 9, relates how Jeremiah happened to buy a section of land from his family. The Chaldeans had temporarily withdrawn from before Jerusalem; Jeremiah believes because of "...fear of Pharaoh's army." (Jer. 37.11--Emend יִיָּא to יִיָּא) During this period of relief from danger, Jeremiah sets out to claim his land. (Jer. 37.12) However, so misunderstood was Jeremiah, and so constantly under suspicion, that a captain of the guard named Irijah, stops him and accuses him of ...deserting to the Chaldeans.

(Jer. 37.13)

Jeremiah's protests of innocence go unheeded; he is brought to the nobles, first they strike him (Jer. 37.15), then imprison him in the house of Jonathan the scribe. While he was in prison, the Chaldeans returned and renewed the siege of Jerusalem. It is because of this fact that he is summoned by Zedekiah for a secret interview.⁴ In spite of all his past experiences, Jeremiah did not remain silent. He repeated

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 42

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 41ff

4 Ibid., p. 53,55

his message of doom and destruction. What should intrigue us, in all this, is that Zedekiah does seek the advice of the prophet. He does possess a conscience, perhaps, that informs him that Jeremiah speaks words of truth. Nor is Jeremiah hesitant to taunt the king with:

...Where now are your prophets that prophesied to you saying: 'The King of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?'

(Jer. 37.18)

Such actions and words do not help bring about Jeremiah's release from prison. Yet, there is an indefinable something within the heart of the king which warns him to respect the prophet. After this interview he has Jeremiah transferred to a better prison, the court of the guard, and decrees that he be given a loaf of bread every day. (As long as there would be bread in the city, at least.)

The princes hearing the words of Jeremiah, spoke to the king, suspecting him of treason:

Let this man, we pray you, be put to death, for he weakens the hands of the warriors that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words to them, for this man seeks not the welfare of this people, but its harm.

(Jer. 38.4)

Was ever a man and his message more misunderstood? Worry and despondency have weakened the morale of the king. He doesn't know whom to believe. In his weakness he no longer objects to the nobles. After receiving permission from Zedekiah, the nobles decided to rid themselves of Jere-

miah by throwing him into a miry cistern that is in the fortress. Such an environment should have caused his death in a short time, but for the Ethiopian eunuch Eved-Melech, who obtained permission of Zedekiah (interestingly enough) to go to Jeremiah's rescue, and who with difficulty had him extracted from the cistern. Jeremiah was thus saved from what had seemed certain death, but he was not set at liberty. He remained imprisoned in the court of the guard until the fall of Jerusalem. In return for his deliverance, Jeremiah gives Eved-Melech God's promise that when the city falls, his life will be spared. The very fact that it was a foreign eunuch who came to Jeremiah's rescue, seems to Battenwieser, "...as indicative of his countrymen's feelings toward him, and in fact characteristic of the situation in general. How bitterly his rescue was resented may be seen from the fact that Eved-Melech's own life was not safe after his interference in Jeremiah's behalf (see XXXIX,17)"¹ [The interview of Jer. 38.14-17 is but another version of Jer. 37.17-21]²

The above experiences are examples of reactions of the aristocracy to the words of Jeremiah. But what of his conflicts with the false prophets? In chapter 20, verses 1 to 6, we learn that Pashhur, a priest in the Temple, becomes enraged with Jeremiah and his preachments. He struck the prophet, then put him in the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin. The following day Jeremiah is released. Jeremiah is not always hesitant to hurl curse and invective upon his enemies, and this case proves no exception. What is interesting is that after forecasting exile and death to Pashhur, he adds,

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 86

2 Ibid., p. 55

...and there you shall be buried, you
and your friends to whom you have prophesied
falsely.

(Jer. 20.6)

To "prophecy falsely" was the irritant responsible for many of Jeremiah's denunciations. Over and over again does Jeremiah plead with the people not to believe the false prophets who tell them that the vessels of the Temple will be returned shortly. This notion was false, and more than that, the exile would last for a very long time, so why not:

...serve the king of Babylon and live; why should
this city become desolate?

(Jer. 27.17)

In fact, says Jeremiah of the false prophets:

...if they are prophets, and if the word of the
Lord is with them, let them now intercede with the Lord
of Hosts, that the vessels which are left in the
house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of
Judah, and at Jerusalem shall not go to Babylon.

(Emend וְהָאֵלֹהִים to וְהָאֵלֹהִים)

(Jer. 27.18)

Jeremiah goes on to tell that they cannot prevent the above, the city will fall, and the holy vessels be taken into exile, and to remain there until God is ready to return the "exile" to the land. This fact--the length of the exile--becomes a major point of conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah ben Azzur. In the Temple before all the people (Jer. 28.1-5) Hananiah predicts the fall of the Babylonian king in "two full years."

To emphasize this point he breaks the wooden yoke which Jeremiah is wearing as a symbolic object lesson for the people. Then, perhaps with sarcasm, Jeremiah replies:

...Amen! The Lord do so...

(Jer. 28.6)

and adds that many prophets before Hananiah prophesied the downfall of kings and countries (prophecies that never came about). However, he, Jeremiah, will rest his case on whether or not his prophecy is fulfilled. (We have already discussed this passage in Chapter one of this essay, and its relation to Deut. 18) Jeremiah soon returns wearing a yoke of iron, symbolizing the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar. In addition, Jeremiah does something very unusual, in that he predicts a specific time for an event, saying Hananiah shall die "this year." To indicate a specific time is usually regarded as a clue to a false prophet. In this case, one might assume both men are guilty of the same fault. (Whether or not the literary prophets attach significance to the fulfillment of their words is the subject to be discussed in our next chapter.)

Before we leave this very dramatic incident, this writer begs to recall that he is not at all convinced that Hananiah was not as earnest and as serious as Jeremiah. He sincerely believes that one man was short-sighted in his sincerity, while Jeremiah was far-sighted in his truth.

Jeremiah's famous "letter to the captives," condemns Shemiah the Nehelamite as a false prophet. (Jer. 29.30) Shemiah, in turn (v. 25 emend *וְכָל* to *יְהוֹנָדָה* --translation as per Dr. Blank's notes and emendations) suggests to Zephaniah the priest, that he

...should put in stocks and the collar, every man

who is mad and makes himself a prophet. Now therefore, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah...

(Jer. 29.26,27)

For Jeremiah to suggest that the captivity shall continue, and therefore the people should

...build houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them...

(Jer. 29.28)

seems like rank treason to his contemporaries. Whether the prophet be a sincere but short-sighted nationalist, or whether he be a professional dervish, we can appreciate his reaction to a message predicting a future in captivity. Only the broad scope of a Jeremiah's intellect could see the "moving hand of God" behind it all.

In connection with the false prophets, it is well to recall "...that in all such cases it was not the prophesying per se which constituted the real offense, but the propheying in the name of Yahweh." ¹ Throughout his life, the ever constant and the ever unheeded cry of Jeremiah was:

...do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you saying: 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon,' for they prophesy a lie to you.

(Jer. 27.14)

"If not constantly persecuted, as was Jeremiah, or forbidden speech and expelled from the country, as was Amos, the literary prophets were invariably met with scorn and derision, often with hostility. On the other

Buttenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

hand their opponents, whom they denounced as false prophets, were regarded by their contemporaries as the true mouthpieces of YHWH, the authoritative interpreters.¹"

What greater irony could occur in a man's life, especially to one who loved his people so passionately that he wept aloud,

Because of the hurt of the daughter ~~(of)~~ my people,

I am seized with anguish;

I am black, appalment has taken hold of me,

(Jer. 8.21)

than to have the invader mistake him, because of his prophecies of destruction and exile, for a friend and a sympathizer. And yet, it was the mistaken notion of Nebuchadnezzar, that Jeremiah was pro-Babylonian, that no doubt caused him to issue an order saying:

Take him, and look after him well, and don't

do him any harm, but whatever he shall speak

to you, thus shall you do for him.

(Jer. 39.12)

Of all the ironic experiences in the life of Jeremiah, none perhaps, was greater than this.

But what was the people's reaction to this pronouncer of doom, after his words had been only too realistically fulfilled? Those who remained after the fall of the city, came to him to seek his advice, but with the same half-doubting, half-believing attitude that they had possessed in previous days. He spoke to them with sympathy. One half of his message had been fulfilled. Now he preached the second portion, mentioned in his consecration vision:

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," pp. 29-30

If you will remain in this land, then I (God) will build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up...(Emend *π/ε* to *π/ε'*)

(Jer. 42.10)

and above all,

...Do not go to Egypt!

(Jer. 42.19)

And yet the people do not listen. First, it is contrary to what they desire, and more, it seems contrary to their reason. The usual refusal is not long in coming:

...you speak falsely; the Lord our God has not sent you to say: 'You shall not go to Egypt to sojourn there,' but Baruch the son of Neriah sets you against us, to deliver us into the hands of the Chaldeans, that they may put us to death, and carry us away captive to Babylon.

(Jer. 43.2,3)

So the people set out for Egypt, and as if Jeremiah had not suffered sufficiently in his life, they add the final thrust by taking both Jeremiah and Baruch with them.

In Egypt, the people seem to have quickly forgotten their previous experience, and threw themselves heart and soul into idolatry. Hence, the prophet of God could not remain silent. He rebuked them. The Jews refused absolutely to pay heed to Jeremiah, except to taunt him with:

...we will certainly perform every word that is gone out
of your mouth to offer to the queen of heaven...

(Emend נָּסַףְנָּסַףְ to נָּסַףְנָּסַףְ)

(Jer. 44.16)

Of what avail was his warning that the very evil that happened to
them earlier was due to a similar disobedience to God?

Near the end of the book of Jeremiah, we make our first intimate
acquaintance with Baruch, his scribe. Baruch was his one true friend
who had stood by him staunchly, throughout all the cruel years. It
was Baruch who suffered with him, and who also helped make him immortal.
Now finally, the way has become too trying, the load has forced him
to his knees. And the bitterness of his heart is expressed in these
words:

Woe is me now!

For the Lord has added sorrow to my pain

I am weary with my moaning

And I find no rest.

(Jer. 45.3)

Somehow, the answer Jeremiah gives to him seems to this writer curt and
cruel. Was it possible that a man who had plumbed the depths of des-
pair, who knew the agony of frustration, who had borne such severe
mental and physical pain, would reply:

And do you seek great things for yourself?

Seek them not. [I will smite, [add אֶפְרָיִם]

saith the Lord, but your life I will give to you

as a booty in all places where you go.

(Jer. 45.5)

*add אֶפְרָיִם for אֶפְרָיִם
at end of v. 4*

omission

Is it possible that Jeremiah could have been so heartless? Surely, not by any stretch of the imagination, could the above lines be conceived of as consoling. At best it was cold comfort to have life, filled with so much misery, and yet lacking the spiritual retreat possessed by the prophet. This is the interpretation of this writer. His sincere desire is to be shown the fallacy of his argument.

What was Jeremiah's reaction to the stolid stubbornness of the people as shown by their rejection of his message? His own words speak for him:

And the Lord said to me, do not pray
on behalf of this people for their good.

(Jer. 14.11)

His love never diminished. If anything, he toiled to intercede for them, often. But "the flesh is weak," and lacerated by persecution, he cried:

You, O Lord, know it.
Remember me and think of me,
And avenge me of my persecutors;
Take me not away because of your long
suffering (Emend יָדָעְתָּ to יָדָעְתָּ)
Know that for your sake I have suffered taunts.

(Jer. 15.15)

Even in his pain there is a nobility of honesty, and a weakness so characteristic of mortal men, that our hearts go out to him. He recalls:

Remember how I stood before You,

To speak good for them

To turn away your wrath from them.

also 15.10 f
17.16

(Jer. 18.20)

Yet, in return for this intercession on their behalf, these very people caused this man such misery and despair, that at the end of his life, the bitterness of his heart rose to his lips and he cried:

Why did I even have to emerge from the womb

To see labor and sorrow,

That my days should be used up in shame.

(Jer. 20.18)

The reason for this sorrow was the pain inflicted upon a man, by the very people he was trying to help. His life is practically synonymous with the term tragedy.

I have become a constant butt of laughter,

Everyone mocks me.

....

For the word of the Lord has become a constant reproach and derision to me.

(Jer. 20.7b; 8b)

We conclude that:

1. Jeremiah expected at least some, if not all, the opposition he encountered. (Jer. 1.18,19)
2. He was persecuted because of his message (Jer. 26.8,9) and not because he was a prophet.
3. Because his prophecies do not come to pass at once, his veracity is questioned. (Jer. 17.15)

authority

X

4. At various times he does seek vengeance against his persecutors.

5. He objects strongly to false prophets and especially to their claim that they prophesy in the name of Yahweh.

6. Even after the city has fallen, and his prophecies proven true, those who remain do not believe his words.

7. In spite of the persecution inflicted upon him, he possessed a great love for his people. (Jer. 14.11; 18.20)

8. His persecutions strengthen his reliance on God.
(Jer. 15.15; 20.11)

E. Ezekiel

In Ezekiel's consecration vision there are present numerous statements which may serve as an anticipation of the reaction that the prophet and his message are to receive from the people. For example: (God speaks)

...don't be afraid of their words, and don't be dismayed by their looks, for they are a rebellious house. And you shall speak my words to them, whether they listen or whether they refuse...

(Ez. 2.6b,7)

and especially,

...the house of Israel won't consent to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me, for the entire house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart. Behold I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. As a diamond harder than flint have I made your forehead; don't be afraid of them, and don't be dismayed by their looks.

(Ez. 3.7-9)

In connection with this anticipated reaction from the people, Cooke states that, "Neither his fellow-exiles, nor his countrymen left behind in the land of Israel, would listen to him, or if they listened would not take him seriously....It was always a prophet's lot to be in opposition, and to deliver a message which his people did not want to expect...."¹ Cooke's thought is supported by the following verse:

¹ Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." to Ez., p. 34

Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, that have eyes to see, and see not, that have ears to hear, and hear not...

(Ez. 12.2)

Are these not practically the identical words of Isaiah (6.9) and Jeremiah (5.21)? No doubt Ezekiel, like the others, met his initial rebuffs very early in his ministry. His earlier reaction to such opposition, perhaps, caused him to exclaim as follows: (in God's name)

...clap with your hands, and stamp with your feet, ^(symbols of rejoicing) and say: Alas! because of all the evil abominations ^{* Rk. 14.22 - an expression of pleasure} of the house of Israel, ^x therefore they shall fall by ^x the sword, by famine and by plague. ^{* nek = "who"}

(Ez. 6.11)

"Unlike Hosea and Jeremiah, Ezekiel betrays little pity for his countrymen; he is wholly on Jahveh's side." ¹ However/ poor the above theology may seem, let us remember that it was probably said in a moment of heat and fury. That the love of Ezekiel for his people is equal to the love of either Hosea or Jeremiah, is proven by his concept of the prophet as "Watchman" over Israel, and as such, directly responsible for each individual. To assume such a task and responsibility, undoubtedly displays a positive love for one's people. The very fact that we soon read:

And it came to pass..., as I sat in my house,
and the elders of Judah sat before me...

(Ez. 8.1)

shows that Ezekiel was interested enough, even at such an early stage

¹ Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." on Ez., p. 71

of his ministry to have in his home the elders of the people; and by his very presence, willing to meet with them. Whether or not they took heed of his words, or followed his instructions, remains a question, but one thing is certain: such action as the above demonstrates a positive respect on the part of the elders for the prophet. Dr. Blank's suggestion that perhaps the above verse, and similar ones, indicates a beginning of the Synagogue, is quite plausible. However, not all such visits on the part of "the elders," were for the sincere purpose of learning God's word, as proved by the following:

It is a common view.

And certain men came to me from among the elders of Israel, and they came (Emend ^{say} ~~to~~ ^{1/12/11} to 1/12/11) before me. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying:

Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their mind, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face, should I be inquired of at all by them? (Emend ~~ענין~~ ^{ענין} to ^{ענין} ~~ענין~~)

(Ez. 14.1-3)

Why would such insincere men seek out the prophet? Was it curiosity and wishful thinking that perhaps he would prophesy to them that which they desired? Or was it merely pity for one whom they regarded as "different"? We cannot be sure. However, of Ezekiel's reaction to such persons, we can be more positive. Such a person, (God says), who

...comes to the prophet that he [Ezekiel] inquire for him of me--I the Lord will answer him by myself, and I will set my face against that man, and I will make

him for a proverb and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, then they shall know that I am (Emend ^{ענין} ~~ענין~~ to ^{ענין} ~~ענין~~)

the Lord.

(Ez. 14.7b,8)

For such hypocrisy, Ezekiel feels absolutely no sympathy, either here or in a similar case mentioned in chapter 20, verses 1 to 5.

Such insincere but courteous rejection of his message, was not the only reaction to the prophet's words. Soon enough, he, like his predecessors, was subjected to the taunts of the people, who reproached him with the proverb:

...The days are prolonged and every vision fails.

(Ez. 12.22b)

and with this derisive cry,

...The vision that he sees is for many days to come,
and he prophesies for times that are far off.

(Ez. 12.27b)

However, this time, the people had spoken a bit too hastily. The day of downfall was drawing near. This time, a true prophet, was able to employ, as proof of his validity, the very formula (Deut 18.15-22)¹ invented for the use of the false prophets. In response to the disbelief of his hearers, Ezekiel reacted as follows: first, in regard to their proverb:

...I [God] will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no longer use it as a proverb in Israel, but say to them: The days are at hand, and the object of every vision is drawing near,

(Ez. 12.23)

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

and in regard to their belief that he spoke of events in a distant future,

Therefore say to them: thus saith the Lord God:

All my words shall no longer be delayed--which I speak, speaking and doing, (Emend אני יאמר to

אני אומר) saith the Lord God.

(Ez. 12.28)

The popular idea was that because the prophecies were not fulfilled, they could be ignored for the present. They used as a test for prophetic validity, the immediate fulfillment of a prophet's words (Deut. 18.15ff) As far as they were concerned, Ezekiel had failed to pass this examination. "There was an element of truth in the popular saying [s], and Ezekiel seems to admit it in his reply: there has been a delay, but the fulfillment of the prophecies is close at hand." ¹ And of this latter fact Ezekiel is sure.

No doubt, the following incident took place after the year 597 B.C.E. ² The people are probably very angry with Ezekiel, and have accused him of representing an unjust God, as he himself tells us:

And you say God's way is not just. Listen [to me] O house of Israel, is it my [God's] way which is not just? Is it not [rather] your ways that are not just?

(Ez. 18.25)

Then comes, perhaps, one of the greatest statements in the history of human morality. It is the statement of individual responsibility:

1 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." p. 136
2 Blank, S. H., "Class Notes" to Bible 3

586.
all of Ezekiel's prophecies are after 597

clearly defined in chapter 18, verses 1 to 24. Each man is to reap only that which he himself sows, but under no circumstance is he to be weighted down by "the sins of the fathers" or of the group. He alone shall be judged as an individual. Within one stroke Ezekiel cut the cord that tied the burden of the past to the shoulders of the present. He had, for all time (as far as it is possible) lifted the overwhelming aggregate burden of the fathers from the backs of the children; with: (omit as gloss v. 26-29)

Therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel, everyone according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn from (Emend ל'ענין to ל'ענין!) all your transgressions...in which you have transgressed, and make a new heart for yourselves, and a new spirit, why should you die, O house of Israel. For I take no pleasure in the death of him who dies, saith the Lord God.

Repent! [Return] and live. (Emend ל'ענין to ל'ענין!)

(Ez. 18.30-32)

Much of Ezekiel's ministry consisted of symbolic actions for the purpose of demonstrating object lessons to the people, and to indicate to them the trend of future events. After he has performed the action of digging through a wall, and carrying a burden upon his back to indicate the approaching exile (12.1-7), we are informed that the people asked him: "What are you doing?" (Ez. 8.9b) And he in turn (inspired by God) gives the following answer:

(Omit ל'ענין) This prophecy (in) [is for] Jerusalem

and all the house of Israel who are in her midst.

(Emend ל'ענין to ל'ענין)

Say: I am your sign: Just as I have done
so it shall be done to them--they shall go into
exile, into captivity.

(Ez. 12.10,11)

In chapter 21, verses 1 through 4, it is related that God is to enkindle a fire which will consume the South. In verse 5, Ezekiel is asked to explain the symbolism of his prophecy; namely, the fire in the forests of the South. The explanation reveals that this fire is symbolic of God's sword which He will draw against the sanctuary at Jerusalem and against Israel. Such an idea is contrary to the basic thought of the populace; namely, that the sanctuary is inviolate. So they turn from Ezekiel, and mock him, the prophet tells us, with these words:

...Is he not a maker of parables?

(Ez. 21.5b)

Ezekiel reacts, first by repeating the prophecy and reiterating that the fire is God's sword, and then by another bit of symbolism. By divine decree he is told to "sigh...with bitterness..." in the sight of the people. When they inquire,

...Why do you sigh?

(Ez. 21.12a)

Ezekiel responds with,

Because of the tidings, for it comes; and every heart
shall melt, and all hands shall be slack, and every
spirit shall be faint, and all knees shall drip; be-
hold it comes, and it shall be done, saith the Lord.

(Ez. 21.12)

The doom is at hand. To emphasize this fact, so as to eliminate all possibility of doubt in the popular mind, Ezekiel is told (24.15-24) that at the time of his wife's death, he is not to mourn. When the people inquire as to the reason, he refrains from giving vent to his feelings, he is to answer that his wife's death symbolizes the near fall of Jerusalem, and they are to act in a similar manner; namely, they are not to mourn the fall of the city. These companions of Ezekiel in Babylonia are not to mourn when Jerusalem falls. No wailing or weeping will aid the situation. It is the will of God--and as such, is to be accepted.¹ (The above illustrates how in their every experience, the prophets beheld the hand of God.)

*What is
the relevance
of this page?*

In conjunction with the above account, we face a textual difficulty in the writings proper, already mentioned in chapter I of this essay. Verses 22 through 27 of chapter 3 tell how God will open the then-closed mouth of the prophet. However, not until chapter 33 is mention made that Ezekiel speaks again. Surely he has not been dumb all this time. The solution offered is that Ez. 3.26-27 belongs in Chapter 24, perhaps after verse 17. However to place Ez. 3.26-27 after Ez. 24.17 also creates difficulties. Nevertheless, according to the above solution Ezekiel's period of silence lasts from the death of his wife until the fall of Jerusalem, which is announced to him by the *C&O* in Ez. 33.21-4)²

The fall of Jerusalem, and the symbolic action signifying such, is now a thing of the past. His symbolism is for the future and its new hope. Hence, in chapter 37-15-22, Ezekiel takes two sticks, inscribes the name Judah upon one, and Joseph upon the other, then puts both together. When asked what such action indicates, he responds with the

1 Blank, S. H., "Class Notes" of Bible 3"
2 Ibid.

explanation that God will bring back scattered Israel to its own land. Thus his symbolic acts signified not only denunciation, but also contained lessons of hope and faith.

Like the other prophets, Ezekiel too, came into conflict with the false prophets. In chapter 13, verses 1 to 16, Ezekiel accuses them of speaking only that which is in their own hearts. (In Ez. 13.2 amend-
~~וְהָיוּ לָהֶם~~ to ~~וְהָיוּ לָהֶם~~, then place ~~וְהָיוּ לָהֶם~~ after ~~וְהָיוּ לָהֶם~~; amend ~~וְהָיוּ לָהֶם~~ to ~~וְהָיוּ לָהֶם~~). They have misled the people (Ez. 13.6,7f), proclaiming peace when Yahweh meant the opposite. They professed to speak in Yahweh's name, but they spoke only that which they people desired to hear, or that which they conceived in ^{their} own minds as true. Cooke considers this chapter as, in reality, dealing with two groups of "false" prophets. The first includes Ez. 13.2,7,8,10,12-16; and are addressed in the second person imperative, mas. plural. They seem to belong to the Jewish colony in Babylonia, where, as we learn ^{from} Jer. 29.8f, 21-23; such mischief makers were busy. Their delusions of peace show that the final destruction of Jerusalem had not yet taken place. Using a simile, Ezekiel compares these prophets to men who daub a wall with spittle, and then the storm comes which causes the wall to collapse upon those who daub
¹ it.

The second group referred to by Cooke, is mentioned in Ez. 13.3,5,6, 9. "The catastrophe is over; those in Jerusalem who should have met the crisis failed in their duty (Ez. 13.5,6); their prophecies have been proven false (Ez. 13.6); they themselves are gone into captivity like

1 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." p. 138

the rest, and their punishment will be exclusion from the Israel of the future. (Ez. 13.9)¹

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah (7.18;44.17,19) denounces the black magic practised by some of the women. Both in Babylonia among the exiles, and in Judah there were such "false" prophetesses. For playing upon the credulity of the people (Ez. 13.17-24), Ezekiel threatens them with death. The conflict of true and false prophets is not a new one to us in our study. Let us recall that just as the other literary prophets condemned these people without the least show of mercy, so too does Ezekiel, and to our mind, due to the crisis of the period, rightly so.

With the fall of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. E., the warnings of the prophets were vividly recalled to the minds of the people. Naturally enough, with this remembrance, and the ruins that stared at them serving as a verification of the prophetic words, the people, no doubt, were cast into the deepest gloom and despair. And this hopeless outlook might have taken root and flourished, but for the words of Ezekiel. It was he who insisted that all this was the work of Yahweh. All this was His will. It was ^{his} punishment. He it was who had exiled, and He it would be who would return the people to their land. And just as important, was Ezekiel's concept of individual responsibility. He proclaimed the individual soul as the important thing, and in addition, lifted from it the weight of the masses. Those who had not sinned had no need to worry. Those who had sinned, only need turn and repent of their evil way, and they would be saved, for God had no delight in the death of the sinner, but preferred that he repent and live. God Himself chided the

¹ Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." on Ez., p. 138

people for despairing and saying:

Indeed our transgressions and our sins are upon us,
and we are wasting away in them; how then can we
live?

(Ez. 33.10b)

With Ezekiel's answer, the prophet reaches exalted heights that place
him in as high a category as any who have gone before him:

As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure
in the death of the wicked, but that wicked turn from
his way and live; turn, turn, you from your evil
ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel.

(Ez. 33.11)

Since his prophecies had been fulfilled, the exiles had changed their
attitude and become eager to listen. But did the change go below
the surface? True, they are saying:

...Come, and hear what is the word of the Lord, that
comes from the Lord.

(Ez. 33.30b)

But the people learned so very slowly, for

...they come to you...and sit before you as my
people, and hear your words, but--do them not, for
with their mouth they show much love, but their
heart goes after their covetousness. And you are
to them as a love song of one who has a pleasant
voice, and can play well on an instrument,--so
they hear your words but they do not do them.

(Ez. 33.31,32)

Was this an early Synagogue? Perhaps so. But the main concern of the prophet was the sincere return of a people to its God. However, he was not and could not deceive himself. This generation would never be worthy of the restored nation (Ez. 37.11ff). They did not know how to return. Restoration must wait for another, a more worthy generation.

Whatever their faults, whatever their failings, whatever their rejections, he loved his people with a passionate devotion, which is best expressed by his pleading intercession on their behalf:

Alas! Lord God, will you destroy all the remnant of Israel when you pour out your fury upon Jerusalem?

(Ez. 9.8)

We conclude that:

1. Ezekiel anticipated a negative reaction to his message on the part of the people. (Ez. 2.6,7; 3.7-9)
2. People did not accept his message in a serious vein, (Ez. 14.1-3; 20.1-5) because
3. His message was opposed to popular notions; hence they taunt him. (Ez. 12.22,27)
4. Even after the words of his prophecy were fulfilled, the people did not obey him whole-heartedly. (Ez. 33.1,31,32)
5. He realizes that the present generation is spiritually dead, hence restoration belongs to the future generations. (Ez. 37.11ff)
6. He is greatly irritated by the false prophets. (Ez. 13.1-16)
7. In spite of their negative reaction to his message, he possessed a profound love for his people. (Ez. 9.8; 18.30-32; 3.20)

*Not sufficiently
founded*

*You have not made
Ezekiel's reaction to
the popular incredulity
very clear.*

F. Deutero-Isaiah

The writings of Deutero-Isaiah leave us with the definite impression that a prophet is speaking not only about the people, but also about his personal experiences. The implications seem quite clearly to indicate ^{that} he is having, or has had a difficult time. Yet the feeling that God is ever with him, is a certainty in his heart.

The best solution for the interpretation of this material is to suppose that the servant spoken of, is the people Israel. The writer is using one of his figures of speech. Israel is comparable to the prophet with a mission, and naturally enough experiences vicissitudes as does a true prophet. Hence we find a composite picture of the prophet, and this in turn serves as a picture of Israel as an agent of God. Deutero-Isaiah drew upon the experiences of Isaiah, and especially Jeremiah. He no doubt made use of their writings, as well as of his first hand knowledge and experience. In addition, he may have used also, the unrecorded experiences of the other prophets.

In any event his records do throw an interesting light upon prophetic experience, as well as upon the reaction, received in turn, from the people. This prophet was faced not only with his people's rebuff, but also with their gloom. At this time (about 538 B. C. E.) those ¹ living in Palestine were desperate.

The prophet determines to impress the people with the idea that Yahweh is the God who shapes and determines history. Whether the events be to their good or to their hurt, in any event they have been brought about by His will. Even their present plight is God's doing, and, al-

¹ All the above ideas are presented by Dr. Blank, in "Class Notes" for Bible 3"

though God has a reason for punishing them, it is also within His power to redeem them. In fact it is,:

Because I [God] knew that you are obstinate
And your neck is an iron sinew,
And your brow brass;
Therefore I have declared it to you from of old;
Before it came to pass, I announced it to you,
Lest you should say: My idol has done them,
And my graven image, and my molten image, has commanded
them.

(Is. 48.4,5)

And similar to Isaiah and Jeremiah is:

Indeed, you did not hear;
And you did not know;
Indeed, from of old your ear was not opened,
For I knew that you would deal very treacherously,
And you were called a transgressor from the womb.

(Is. 48.8)

What is the prophet's reaction to the people? He answers this question for us with:

Hear, you deaf ones,
And look, you blind, that you may see.
Who is blind but my servant?
Or deaf, but my messenger whom I send?¹
Who is blind (but he that is paid off)
And deaf but the Lord's servant? (Emend נִיחַ to עִוֵּר)

¹ Very doubtful, if original

Seeing many things,
You don't conceive their import,
Opening the ears, he hears not.

(Is. 42.18-20)

In the Eved-Yahweh songs there is presented to us a most realistic picture of the life of a messenger of God. Surely it applies to the people, but as we have mentioned before, it also applies to the individual prophet. Undoubtedly Deutero-Isaiah has taken the experiences of the other prophets, especially Jeremiah, probably combined them with some of his own, and then exalted them into a prototype for an entire nation. What the prophet says here applied to the nation on a large scale, but was just as true for Jeremiah and probably himself, on a smaller scale. Persecution seems to be an integral part of the lives of the literary prophets.

I gave my back to the smiters,
And my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair;
I hid ^{not} my face from shame and spitting.

(Is. 50.6)

Yet, such persecution only strengthened the prophet's faith,

For the Lord will help me,
Therefore I have not been confounded;
Therefore I have set my face like a flint
And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

(Is. 50.7)

Brilliantly and cleverly does the poet-prophet develop the picture of the

peoples of the earth giving forth their reaction to the suffering servant--Israel. Certainly it is not impossible to assume that contained within the larger canvas delineating Israel, is a smaller portrait depicting the suffering of the individual prophet himself; perhaps Jeremiah, perhaps Deutero-Isaiah, perhaps both.

He was despised, and forsaken of men,
A man of pains, and acquainted with disease,
And as one from whom men hide their face:
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely our diseases he did bear, and our pains he carried,
While we considered him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

...All we like sheep did go astray,
We turned every one to his own way;
And the Lord meted out to him the iniquity of all of us.
He was oppressed, though he humbled himself
And did not open his mouth

As a lamb that is led to slaughter,...
By oppression and judgment he was taken away,
And with his generation who did reason

For their transgression he was afflicted to death
(Emend ^{IND TET INT TSEN} to

And they made his grave with the wicked,

And with evil doers, his tomb, (Emend ^{וְעִם רְשָׁעִים} to ^{וְעִם רְשָׁעִים})
and ^{וְעִם רְשָׁעִים} to ^{וְעִם רְשָׁעִים}

a correct translation?

1 See Jeremiah 11.19)

Although he did no violence

Neither was any deceit in his mouth.

(Is. 53.3,4,6-9)

Surely the above is a vivid description of Israel's suffering, but just as certain are we, that it is also a very true picture of an individual prophet's experiences. How do the prophet's contemporaries react to him and to his message? The above description more than answers our question:

Yet why should a man (or a people) be chained to such a destiny by God? For this, too, there is an answer. The reason being, that

...it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease,

(Emend 'למַדּוּל to 'למַדּוּל)

To see if his soul would offer itself as an offering,

That he might see his seed, prolong his days,

And that the purposes of the Lord might prosper by his hand.

(Is. 53.10)

In all truth, Deutero-Isaiah could sympathize with the people, as well as with the individual prophet, with these words:

O you afflicted, tossed with tempest,

And not comforted...

(Is. 54.11a)

Still, the above statement is not entirely correct. There exists one respect in which the servant of the Lord is comforted; namely,

He is near that justifies me,...

Behold the Lord God will help me,...

(Is. 50.8a,9a)

To suffer persecution, and to find refuge and renewal of strength in God, was but part of Deutero-Isaiah's experience. He had still another problem to deal with. The people were sunk and bogged down in the morass of appalling gloom and despair. To them their plight seemed hopeless, and they call upon the prophet to speak to them.

Hark! One says: 'Proclaim!' (Emend וְהִלֵּל to וְהִנֵּחַ)
(Is. 40.6a^d)

Helpless, the prophet asks God:

What shall I proclaim?

(Is. 40.6a^f)

God gives this message to the prophet, for the people:

All flesh is grass,

And all its wealth as the bud of the field; (Emend וְכָל to וְכָל)

The grass withers, the flower fades,

When the breath of the Lord blows upon it (Omit as gloss וְכָל)

The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of the Lord abides forever.

(Is. 40.6b,7,8)

However, a deeply entrenched despair is not so easily dislodged. Still again the prophet upbraids the people for gloomily saying:

My case passes by God unseen,

And my right is passed over by my God.

(Is. 40.27b)

The prophet retorts with:

Haven't you known? haven't you heard

That the everlasting God, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Doesn't faint, nor is he weary?
And there is no searching out the limits of his knowledge.

(Is. 40.28)

Such was the hope that one who had been persecuted, gave to his persecutors.
And when they persisted in their dejection, with

The Lord has forsaken me,
And the Lord has forgotten me,

the prophet brushed away the tears of his despondent people, and gave
them courage with these tender, yet irrefutable words:

Can a woman forget her child,
That she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?
Indeed, these may forget,
Yet I [God] will not forget you.
Behold I have graven you upon the palms of my hands;
Your walls are continually before me.

(Is. 49.15,16)

There was no good reason to cause one to lose hope. The prophet, speaking
for God, asks:

Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?

(Is. 50.2)

The answer should be obvious. He who had punished, also possessed the
power to redeem. Deutero-Isaiah now gave voice to a thought that per-
haps had given him the strength to continue, during trying moments. He
offers it to the people now, perhaps, with the hope that it will encourage

them as it once did an individual servant of Yahweh:

Listen to me, you who know righteousness,
The people in whose heart is my [God's] law;
Fear not the taunt of men,
Neither be dismayed at their revilings.

(Is. 51.7)

Forgetting the abuse that they probably had heaped upon him earlier, forgetting the pain they had inflicted upon his body and soul, the prophet rose above mortal desire for vengeance, and saw only a down-trodden people, whose spirit had to be lifted up and encouraged. This was Deutero-Isaiah's reaction to his contemporaries, and this very reaction was his message:

But now thus saith the Lord that created you, O Jacob,
And he that formed you, O Israel;
Fear not for I have redeemed you [repeatedly],
I have called you by name, you are mine.
Do not be afraid, for I am with you;
I will bring your seed from the east,
And gather you from the west.

(Is. 43.1,5)

We conclude:

1. The people rejected Deutero-Isaiah's message. (Is. 42.18-20)
2. He was subjected to persecution because of his words.

(Is. 50.6; 53.3-9)

3. Persecution caused him to rely upon and be strengthened by his faith in God. (Is. 40.28; 50.7,8; 53.10)

4. In spite of his having been persecuted by the people, his love for them causes the prophet to offer them consolation and hope. (Is. 40.28; 50.7,8; 53.10)

Summary of Chapter III

In answer to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, we may conclude that:

1. The prophet's contemporaries react to his message with stubborn doubt, rejection, and outright physical violence and persecution.
2. In many cases the people's taunting questions signify that they regarded these prophets as false.
3. When the truth of the prophets' words had been verified by historical events, still the people doubted their veracity (Jer. 43.2,3) and refused whole-heartedly to take heed of their advice. (Ez. 33.31,32) Hence the prophets look to future generations to comprehend and adopt their message, except Deutero-Isaiah.
4. In most cases the prophet was seriously discouraged by such reactions, however; such experiences intensified the reliance upon Yahweh and the prophet felt a sense of ~~of~~heaviness to, and faith in God, which gave him courage to continue to fulfill his mission.
5. Despite the persecution suffered at the hands of their contemporaries, the prophets possessed a sincere love for their people, and constantly interceded with God on their behalf. And in the cases of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, even strove to lift them from desperation, and to give them hope for a restoration and a new life. Isaiah, however, proves the exception, and remains adamant in his attitude of denunciation of the people, and gives us no clue of compassionate emotion toward them.

6. The prophet was persecuted only because his message was contrary to popular thought and belief. He was not persecuted because he was a prophet. Prophecy was an accepted phenomenon at that time.

7. The literary prophet shows no tolerance for "false" prophets, and uses every opportunity to denounce them for daring to prophesy in Yahweh's name.

Chapter IV

What Significance Does the Prophet
Attach to the Fulfillment or
the Non-fulfillment of
His Words?

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A. Amos

The text of Amos (as reconstructed by Morgenstern) does not present an answer to the above question. However, the very fact that the prophecies have been recorded and preserved does indicate a great deal to us. The term "Literary Prophets," is by no means a misleading appellation, but in fact a rather appropriate one, and signifies a positive "solicitude for the preservation of their prophecies." This concern for their writings seems to be an essential point of difference between the older prophets, and the new type marked by the appearance of Amos. The earlier "prophets were concerned about the present" and the immediate events of the hour as they affected their own nation. "The newer prophets beheld a scheme reaching into the far future; they were more vitally concerned about the ultimate working out of this scheme than about the affairs of their own day; their message was not for their compatriots or contemporaries alone, but for all men in the days to come...." ¹ Harper, too, is in perfect accord with this idea, as shown by his statement, "...the prophetic utterance was no longer a temporary matter, uttered for a special time or set of circumstances, it had become something of eternal value... his position...bears upon human affairs in general, and not merely the affairs of a single nation, nor of a certain time." ² Since their prophecies were directed toward days to come, they found it necessary to preserve in writing their visions and their hopes for the sake of that ideal future generation which would some day cause their words of justice and righteousness to be fulfilled.

¹ Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 175

² Harper, Wm. R., "I.C.C." to Amos, p.CXXV

Amos, undoubtedly, was the first among the prophets to entertain such an idea. "Although he probably expected the end of Israel to come within his own generation, he saw the advantage of giving his thought a definite place. He may also have had in mind the possibility of transmitting it thus through disciples."¹ But Morgenstern presents a far more cogent reason for the written record. "...In the face of the growing tide of disbelief and of feeling that the danger was past [due to the earthquake]...Amos may well have felt an irresistible impulse, which not improbably he may have attributed to divine urge, to write down,... a permanent record of his message as he had delivered it at Bethel two years before, so that it might serve as an enduring testimony and warning to the people..."² Morgenstern now offers support to one of the ideas mentioned in chapter I of this paper. There we accepted the possibility that in some cases the account of the consecration vision may have been colored by the prophet's experience after he assumes his mission. "But merely to record the spoken address itself was not enough, not nearly enough. The present popular thought and conviction had grown out of the interpretation put upon the devastating effects of the earthquake, and particularly as they had affected the national sanctuary at Bethel, and perhaps even the priest Amaziah. All this had double significance in the light of his personal encounter with Amaziah--and his pronouncement of the latter's dire fate. Therefore it was absolutely necessary to recount that incident as it had actually transpired, that its true and full import might be made clear. And inasmuch as Amaziah had

1 Harper, W. R., "I.C.C.C." p. CXXVII
2 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 126

challenged his authority as a prophet and had failed completely, as obviously the vast majority of the general audience had failed likewise, to comprehend the true nature of his prophetic call, authority, and message, it became imperative that this be now presented as fully, clearly, and convincingly as possible. ... Amos anticipated in his written record of his prophetic ministry the challenge of Amaziah to him by the account of the four preparatory visions which brought to him, and the narrating of which must now bring to the people, the knowledge and conviction that he was indeed a prophet of Yahweh...he wrote down the record of his four preparatory visions at the end of the record of his spoken words and the indispensable introduction to the narrative account of his contest with Amaziah.¹

Equally, if not more significant is the fact that the prophets preserved unchanged even those prophecies which contained erroneous forecasts. By this is meant prophecies which had been disproved by the actual outcome of historical events. As we shall discover, the various details of time, place, and circumstance possessed little importance for them. Specifications such as these, they regarded as the result of rational human reasoning, and as such--unimportant. If their reason erred in these matters, if their judgment failed to estimate the political situation correctly, this in no manner or means invalidated the basic truths or principles of which they were cognizant through their divine inspiration. These noble truths and principles were the real essence of their prophecies. In fact, "If the prophet's status should be determined by the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of his prophecy, a result

Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 127

which could be ascertained only after the lapse of time, perhaps of years, such a command [Deut. 18.22] would be meaningless. Conviction at the time the prophecy was delivered would be impossible.¹

Returning, more specifically, to Amos, we find Morgenstern of the opinion that, "No second hand, no recorder nor biographer, could have composed these stirring, self-revealing poems (first four visions), but only the prophet himself, only he who had himself experienced these visions."² On the above basis we may assume that, first, Amos himself recorded his own words, after his short ministry, and second, he did so in order that his book might remain as a lasting monument, *testifying* that he had fulfilled the mission assigned him by God, and third, that these recorded words might serve as a "haunting conscience" to the people, reminding them of their faithlessness and guilt. "Until the doom should... come, this written record of his complete message and ministry would stand as a living witness against them...to testify to the world of Yahweh's justice..."³ and of the justice which He hoped ultimately would reign in and over all nations.

We conclude:

1. That Amos recorded his visions and prophecies so that they would serve as an enduring testimony and warning to the people, that the punishment was yet to come.

2. Amos does not specify exactly when the doom will fall, but nevertheless is positive it will come.

3. He may or may not have expected the day of reckoning to take place during his life time, but in any case,

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 30; also see p. 29
2 Morgenstern, J., "Amos Studies," Vol. I, p. 84
3 Ibid. p. 129

4. The underlying principles that he preached as well as the threat of punishment were the main thoughts. Exactly when the punishment will be meted out does not concern him. His ideas of God and justice, he no doubt regarded as something which would always be true.

5. In all probability Amos never expected his generation to fulfill his ords or to obey his message.

B. Hosea

No matter how authoritatively either Amos or Hosea may have declared that the judgment was near at hand, they made no pretense of knowing the exact time or circumstances surrounding the catastrophe. After the death of Jeroboam II, civil war threatened Israel. The two contending factions into which the country was divided, appealed to Assyria and Egypt, respectively, for help. Hosea predicted that this foolish policy would prove the means by which God would work their certain ruin:

Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without heart;
They call [to] Egypt, they go to Assyria.
When they shall go, I [God] will spread my net
upon them.

¹
(Hos. 7.11,12a)

But Hosea does not specify whether it will be through Assyria or through Egypt that their downfall would be brought about.

They shall not dwell in the Lord's land,
But Ephraim shall return [to] Egypt,
And they shall eat unclean [things] in Assyria (also see Hos. 11.5)
²
(Hos. 9.3)

The fact that the prophet erred in the matter of details seems altogether irrelevant to him. His conviction remained unaltered, and his assurance of his truth and authorization was as firm as ever.

In Hosea 1.4, we read:

...I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the
house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of
Israel to cease.

(Hos. 1.4)

1 as per "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea
2 as per "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea

It is quite probable that Hosea expected the end of Jehu's dynasty and the end of the kingdom to come at the same time. As a matter of fact about twenty-one years (743-722 B. C. E.) passed before the kingdom ceased to exist, and during this period a half-dozen kings sat upon the throne. This is all the more interesting in view of the fact that the prophet himself lived for some time after the death of Zachariah, and might easily have changed this definite expression which was not fulfilled to one more nearly in accord with the facts. But he did not. This "...goes to show that neither the prophet nor his contemporaries were accustomed to place emphasis upon the letter of prophetic speech. While on the other hand, it is clear from history that the fall of Jehu's dynasty, the end in the larger sense had begun to show itself."¹

The above-mentioned similarity to Amos is not the only point in common between the two prophets. Hosea, like Amos, committed his addresses to writing, and thus secured their preservation for the same reasons as did Amos. Harper is of the opinion that Hosea himself prepared the collection of prophecies bearing his name. In regard to the introduction, which is supposed to explain his call to preach, it is placed at the beginning of the book either because "...it was only a part of the book and had never been preached or made public, or because it was thought necessary to a proper understanding of what followed."² Cheyne's comment concerning Hosea's written words is most interesting

¹ Harper, W. R., "I.C.C." on Hosea, p. 212

² Ibid., p. CLXII

and certainly deserves our attention. "Yet we cannot suppose that Hosea delivered any part of this 'book' in its present form; it can only be a reproduction by the prophet himself on the main points of his discourse, partly imaginative, partly on the basis of notes."¹ In view of the terse statements and half finished ^{or} illusions found in the book, and especially in view of the lack of agreement among commentators concerning this work, we are apt to agree with Cheyne.

Recording his words in writing was not Hosea's only method of preserving his message for the future. He symbolized his thoughts by the names he bestowed upon his children. In this regard he set the prophetic style of giving children symbolic names, which Isaiah was to follow at a later date. To each name was attached a brief prophetic lesson. Thus his children became walking sermons, reminding constantly those who saw them of the approaching disaster caused by the people's guilt.

Jezreel (Hos. 1.4) implied that the blood of Jezreel would be visited upon the dynasty of Jehu, who had spilled it. Further, Jezreel was the battleground of ancient Israel (Ahab was murdered there) and there Israel would meet its fate again, as it did in the days of Ahab. Lo-ruhamah (Hos. 1.6) meaning, "She who-is-unpitied," signifies that the people have not obtained compassion from God. Lo-Ammi (Hos. 1.9) meaning, "Not-my-people," dramatized the impending doom hanging over the nation; inevitable judgment, final alienation--for by the name of his child, Hosea implied that Yahweh had completely rejected his people. Thus Hosea was able to employ more than one means to preserve his words. His children would carry them into the immediate future; his written record into the distant future.

¹ Cheyne, T. K., "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea, p. 19

We conclude:

1. Hosea does not mention specific time as regards the coming of the threatened doom. That it would happen he is sure. (Hos. 7.11,12a) Exactly when it would happen doesn't concern him.
2. Nor does he state specifically who shall be used as the instrument of destruction by Yahweh. (Hos. 9.13)
3. Even in those prophecies in which he erred as regards the time element, he does not bother to correct. He regards^a time period as an unimportant detail.
4. He preserved his message for the next generation by giving his children symbolic names.
5. He preserved his message for a testimony and law of conduct for those in the future who would comprehend, believe, and obey it.
6. Very probably he never expected his generation to fulfill his words.

C. Isaiah

The fact that Isaiah's contemporaries pointed tauntingly to his^u unfulfilled prophecies and made light of his prophetic ability,

...Let him make speed, let him hasten his work,

That we may see it;

And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh
and come,

That we may know it!

(Is. 5.19)

was of little concern to the prophet. He felt a serene assurance that the basic truths of his prophecies were secure and unassailable. Whether destruction came from one nation or another, whether it came sooner or later, were very minor considerations to Isaiah. This vagueness in no way affected the vital fundamental truths about God and His requirements of men, that were contained in his prophecies. The nation had utterly failed in these respects, and hence, was doomed to destruction. Yet this very destruction was in itself simply God's way of effecting the moral and spiritual regeneration of the people, and of establishing his own dominion throughout the world. So, Isaiah never failed to make clear that it was to the future that he looked for the recognition and appreciation of the truth which he was preaching. As for the people of his own age, he did not deceive himself; he knew that for them his words¹ were absolutely fruitless.

Like Hosea (1.4,6,9), Isaiah too gave his children sermonic names, that revealed his beliefs. Isaiah saw the "hand" of God shaping the destiny of the world. Judah would not escape His wrath, nor was Jeru-

¹ based upon Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 153

salem inviolate, but nevertheless, as is indicated by his oldest son's name, "Shear-jashub"--a remnant would return, and be restored. Thus one boy bore a name that pointed to the distant future. But the younger son's name, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (the spoil will speed, plunder will hasten) was significant for the more immediate future. In chapter 7 verse 3 we learn that God commanded Isaiah to go out and meet King Ahaz, and the prophet is to take Shear-jashub with him. "...Isaiah takes his son¹⁸ whose name was a sign (8), because he knows that King Ahaz when he sees the boy will recall his name and its significance....Isaiah may at different times have explained the whole and the remnant differently; but on this occasion he would explain it as meaning that the larger part of 'the whole house of Israel,' the northern kingdom, will certainly perish; but the remnant, Judah, may return to Yahweh and be saved (cp. vv 14-16)¹..." Both signs signifying deliverance; namely, the name Immanuel (7.14) which mothers' give their children, and the name given the prophet's younger son--Maher-shalal-hash-baz, clearly indicate that the prophet means to say that the two kings, who are the enemies of Ahaz, shall fall before either the children, or his own child, shows signs of an awakening intellect. However, it is three years before Damascus falls, and thirteen years before Samaria is conquered. But it must be "understood that the prophets speak in broad poetically effective images, the essential justice of which is not affected by the consideration that they are not exactly reproduced in the future, so long as they embody true principles and indicate right points of view for the direction of conduct."²

1 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C.," on Is. p. 117, 116-117
2 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 268

And the direction of conduct that Isaiah was trying to impress upon Ahaz was:

...Keep calm and be quiet; fear not, neither let your heart be faint...

(Is. 7.3)

for to Isaiah's mind only God was the true source of protection and refuge.
(Is. 30.17)

In regard to chapter 71 verses 8 and 9, we must conclude that verses 8a and 9a belong together. Verses 8b which attempts to give an exact date; namely, that in sixty-five years Ephraim will no longer be a people, seems too far fetched. It is very likely that some redactor or editor looking back sixty-five years later, inserted 8b. There is no doubt that 8b is a gloss post-eventum. Let us repeat that we assume that the prophets are not in the habit of giving exact dates. It was merely incidental whether or not an event took place at the exact time the prophet predicted. The verities of life that he preached were the important items. Not only the fall of Samaria alone, but the conflict of Assyria and Egypt was also deferred, and when it actually took place, "the field of battle was in the extreme South of Palestine and more in Philistine than in Judeean territory."

In an epilogue after an address to the people in 734 B. C. E., Isaiah is convinced that his message will have no effect upon his contemporaries,

1 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C." on Is. p. 119
2 Blank, S. H., "Class Notes to Bible 2"
3 Smith W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 268

and by his own words shows us that he intends to preserve it for a future generation who will listen and understand.

Behold there remains nothing but to bind up the testimony and to seal (Emend קְּבַעַת to קְּבַעַת) the instructions among my disciples.

¹
(Is. 8.16)

He emphasizes his hope in the future, both for his message and for the remnant, in,

And I will wait for the Lord, that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given to me, are for signs and wonders in Israel... ($\text{אֲנִי וְיִלְדֵי אֲשֶׁר יָתַן לִּי יְהוָה}$) may be a gloss, but $\text{אֲנִי וְיִלְדֵי אֲשֶׁר יָתַן לִּי יְהוָה}$ is a gloss definitely)

(Is. 8.17-18)

In commenting upon the above verses, (16,17,18) Gray states, "True, too, has proved the conviction that led him to name his child 'a remnant shall return': he has not indeed led Judah to repentance; but he has made disciples. If the doubtful and ambiguous v. 16 will bear the weight of the conclusion, those are not wrong who see here an important epoch in the history of religion--the emergence of a spiritual, as distinct from a national, religious society; Isaiah, unlike Amos and Hosea, is not a voice crying unheeded; his distinction lies less in a doctrine of the remnant than in the practical step of creating the remnant in which he believed."² Smith, too, in this respect, agrees with Gray, and says, "the work of a prophet was the vocation of his life, to which every energy

? End quote

¹ According to class translation of Bible 2

was devoted; even his wife is called the prophetess (viii.3); his sons have prophetic names...The truths which he proclaimed he sought to make immediately practical in the circle of the disciples whom he gathered around him (viii.16)¹...."

That Isaiah had no hope of seeing his, hence Yahweh's words bear fruit in the present, but rather looked to the future, is again illustrated by:

And the Lord said to me, take a large tablet and write upon it in simple script [not cuneiform or any fancy script]; spoil will speed, plunder will hasten.

And I called (Emend נָתַתִּי לְךָ to נָתַתִּי לְךָ) to me [as] faithful witnesses Uriah the priest, and Zachariah...

(Is. 8.1,2)

Isaiah engraved the above slogan "in the presence of witnesses, on a tablet, in order that, when his forecast would be proved true by events,² there should be documentary evidence of his prediction to that effect." Perhaps no verse denotes more clearly the reason for the prophetic writings, and explains why they were preserved, than does the following:

There remains nothing but to bind up the testimony, and to seal the instruction among my disciples.

(Is. 8.16)³

1 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 207
2 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 174
3 According to class translation of Bible 2

Why repeated?
of P. 199.

How about
30.8?

The exact details of just how Isaiah recorded his prophecies presents still another problem. Gray is of the very definite opinion that, "At times rather than continuously between the years c. 740 to 701 B. C., and perhaps somewhat later, Isaiah was a public teacher in Judah; he gradually gathered around him disciples. Some years after he had been teaching he wrote some memoirs recording the experience which made him a prophet and the way in which he had in the earlier years (735-732) of the reign of Ahaz delivered his prophetic message....The memoirs and prophetic poems of Isaiah forming small booklets, became the treasures of his disciples and their successors; it is probable enough that early owners of these booklets made annotations in them..."¹ Here too, Smith agrees with Gray that, "Presumably Isaiah himself issued no collected edition of all his prophecies, but only put forth from time to time individual oracles or minor collections, which were gathered together at a later date, and on no plan which we can follow."² Battenwieser completely disagrees with the above-mentioned ideas, as regards just how Isaiah's prophecies were originally recorded. "...Equally untenable is another very common view of the prophet writings, viz., that the prophets started by putting into writing certain single detached utterances, or, it may be, complete separate sermons, as an effective means of supplementing their oral preaching."³ Thus we find ourselves confronted by two directly opposed points of view. In the case of Amos, Isaiah and the others we are apt to agree with

1 Gray, G. B., "I.C.C." to Is. p. LV

2 Smith, W. R., "Prophets of Israel," p. 210

3 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 170ff

Buttenwieser that the prophets did not record their prophecies as individual sermons. His reasoning is certainly logical and realistic. As a contradiction to those who believe that the writings were originally in the form of single, unit, recorded, utterances, he asserts:

"...[the above] view of the origin of the prophetic writings presupposes that the people manifested a general interest in the preaching of the prophets, while every utterance of the prophets is evidence that the very opposite was the case."¹

There can be no disagreeing with the above statement by Buttenwieser. However, the one example that prevents our accepting whole-heartedly his theory is the case of Hosea. In regard to Hosea we are more apt to favor Cheyne's view as against that of Buttenwieser. True, Cheyne's theory that "...we cannot suppose that Hosea delivered any part of this 'book' in its present form, it can only be a reproduction by the prophet himself on the main points of his discourse..."² does not dispute Buttenwieser's essential objection that the prophecies were not written out in the form of single sermons, nevertheless it does differ from Buttenwieser in so far as it does suggest that Hosea recorded chiefly only the ideas of his sermons. The incomplete prophecies and interrupted records of personal actions present in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel seem to support Cheyne. When Buttenwieser writes, "...Is. xxx,8 states that at the behest of God, Isaiah put down in writing the prophecies which he had spoken at the time of the alliance of Judah with Egypt (705-701)'in order that it might serve as a lasting testimony (Emend וְיִסְּדֵם to וְיִסְּדֵם) in the days to come,"³ he seems to imply that

1 Buttenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 174
2 Cheyne, T. K., "Cambridge Bible" on Hosea, p. 19
3 Buttenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 169

Isaiah recorded it exactly as he delivered it. This we hesitate to accept without qualifications. Having heard both sides of this dispute let us attempt to summarize our conclusions. It is quite likely that:

1. Isaiah did record his own prophecies.
2. He did not record all of them at one time, but perhaps at the end of various stages and focal points in his ministry.
3. He did not under any circumstance originally publish his prophecies as individual sermons on individual sheets.
4. He, like Hosea and those who came after him, sometimes recorded only the chief ideas that he preached, or only the central idea of his experiences.
5. In other instances he perhaps recorded the entire prophecy in the exact words with which he originally preached it.

Let us above all take cognizance that a problem does exist, and men of learning are defending opposite points of view. However, on some essentials they do agree.

Before the year 711 B. C. E., Egypt and Ethiopia were united. A revolt against Assyria was hatched by Judah in conjunction with Ashdod (and other coastal cities) and this combination of a state along with individual city states sought aid, in their attempt to remove the Assyrian yoke, from Egypt. Isaiah unalterably opposed such a measure, both the revolt and the foreign alliances it entailed. To illustrate the consequences of such a step, he goes about "naked and barefoot" for three years. Symbolically he was illustrating the lesson that in like manner

would the inhabitants of Egypt and Ethiopia be led (Is. 20.3,4) away captive by the victorious Assyria. Hence, the implication being that Judah is to desist from such action, for Egypt would be of no assistance to her; she too was doomed. The "hand" of God was shaping history with his tool--Assyria. However, it was not until thirty years later that Assyria defeated Egypt. But this made very little difference to the prophet, for the underlying principle of faith in God alone, and God as the designer of history were true essentials, even if the prophecy was not fulfilled immediately.

As early as 754 B. C. E., Isaiah had already declared:

Therefore thus saith the Lord God:

Behold I lay in Zion a stone,

(Emend 30, to 30,1) (Omit first 30,1)

A stone which has been tried,

A cornerstone of value of foundation,

The one who believes will not make haste.

(Is. 28.16)

"He had reference [in the above verse] to the spiritual community of the faithful, the circle of disciples gathered around him, and of which he said, in viii,16-18, that in them all his hope concerning the coming of God's future dominion was centered. [For]...only by faith in God can man's life be placed on a firm foundation."

And as late as 701 B. C. E., which was very near the end of his ministry (and also of his life) he repeated the same idea, but in these words:

Buddenwieser, "Prophets of Israel," p. 294, footnote 2

Now go write it down (before them on a tablet)

And inscribe it in a book

That it may serve as a lasting testimony (Emend $\frac{37}{7}$ to $\frac{37}{7}$)

In the days to come.

(Is. 30.8)

Even as he had at the beginning, so he insists at the end of his work, that his words have been ineffectual for his own age; they must be saved for a future time. Hereby he is implying a more discerning generation, and by this time the proof of the truth of his words will be only too obvious.

In regard to certain of Isaiah's prophecies, we are safe in saying that it was the prophet himself who took care that his prophecies should be preserved. He, like some of the other prophets, was convinced that the fruit of his labor belonged to the future. His burning words fell on the deaf ears of his contemporaries. Yet, he seems never to doubt the ultimate efficacy of his labors, and certainly never wavered in his hope for the future. That which he had tried to impress upon the king and the people in 734 B. C. E.:

For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:

In sitting still and rest shall you be saved,

In quietness and confidence shall be your strength...

(Is. 30.15)

was the same message he was still trying to impress in 701 B. C. E. But whether they listened or not, in any case he had recorded it and immortalized it for the future.

We conclude:

1. The fact that his prophecies do not come to pass immediately was of little concern to Isaiah.
2. His underlying principles were true. He did not regard it as his mission to predict particular events at particular times.
3. He gives symbolic names to his children (7.3ff;8.18), and these along with his disciples are the remnant who shall be saved, and they are to transmit his words to a comprehending future.
5. He probably recorded his own words.
6. He doesn't expect the people of his generation to obey and to fulfill his words.

D. Jeremiah

We have already mentioned in Chapter III that very early in his ministry, Jeremiah prophesied an invasion from the North (Jer. 5.15; 6.22, 23). Whether Jeremiah expected the Scythians to sweep down upon Judah is a question which cannot be answered with certainty. Perhaps a few furtive raids by the Scythians in the coastal plain of Judah caused Jeremiah to imagine for the moment, that this was the nation whom Yahweh had chosen as His tool for the purpose of inflicting punishment upon a disobedient people. However, this too, is a thought which cannot be supported by proof. In any case, let us recall that his threat (Jer. 6.22) has the desired effect, and for the moment at least, the people are filled with terror (Jer. 6.24), and perhaps determined to "repent and to turn from " their "evil ways," and above all to listen more carefully to the word of Yahweh as spoken by his servant. (Of course this is only an assumption based upon Jer. 6.24) The threat of such an invasion seems to have disappeared rather soon. The people probably forgot their fear and their subsequent resolutions to reform, and returned to their old way of life. Thus, early in his ministry Jeremiah seems to have predicted an event which never took place. Perhaps the people recalled this fact, and in addition to this, as yet they saw no evidence of the punishment and doom of which he had spoken. No doubt they regarded Jeremiah¹ as a false prophet, since his words had not been fulfilled. Therefore, they mocked him with:

...Where is the word of the Lord?

Let it come now.

(Jer. 17.15)

1 see Deut. 18.22, and Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 29

But taunts were not the only thing hurled at Jeremiah. Since he preached a message contrary to popular belief and desire, he was severely persecuted. Yet, it is significant that even in his confessions and lamentations Jeremiah does not accuse Yahweh of having implanted untrue words in his mouth, but rather asks that the "day of evil" be hastened, so that his persecutors will be punished. (Jer. 17.18) The outstanding fact is that the prophet attaches absolutely no significance to the fact that his prophesy has not yet been fulfilled. He is positive beyond doubt that it will come true. When he seeks vengeance upon his persecutors, he does not implore Yahweh to bring a "woeful day," he asks Him only to destroy them with "double destruction," when the doom falls.

Jeremiah, like Isaiah before him, felt certain beyond doubt that Yahweh ordained destruction for the people, but it is only when justice and morality are involved that he speaks with certainty. The time element is of little concern to him as well as to those who went before him, and to those who follow. When, and it occurs only rarely, the prophet does venture to mention a specific time, it is based only upon his rational powers, and subject to the errors of human reasoning. Such exact statements are in no way part of, or connected with, the divine intuition that originally inspired him with his message, or with the inner vision and "inner voice" that so often spoke to him. Therefore, if his rational calculation went astray, he seems to disregard it completely and to relegate it to the unimportant. His basic thoughts and underlying principles were divinely inspired verities, true for all time. In connection with the destruction of the nation, this too was

a truth of which he was certain. Whether it occurred "sooner or later" was not of prime importance.¹ "And so, too, it came that when Jeremiah, after twenty-three years of activity, committed his prophecies to writing, he included without alteration or adaptation his prophecies of the time of the Scythian invasion, although his forecast of events in these had in no wise been verified."²

In the light of the above, we can more easily understand the incident with Hananiah. (Jer. 28.14-17) Jeremiah predicts for Hananiah, because he has prophesied falsely, that God

...will send you away from off the face of the earth;
this year you shall die...

(Jer. 28.16)

Verse 17 of chapter 28 relates that Hananiah died in the seventh month of that year. (probably 594 B. C. E.) Whether or not this actually happened, or whether Hananiah died and Jeremiah interpreted it as being due to a fulfillment of his prophesy, is not of major importance. The fact that Hananiah's prophecies were untrue is of importance. Even if Hananiah had not died, Jeremiah would not have wavered in his belief that the destruction and the exile were near. He does not predict that Jerusalem will fall in 586, this does not concern him. What does concern him is the foolish belief that the sanctuary was inviolate, no matter how great the sin of the people. History became his vindicator.

In chapter 32, verses 6 to 9, we are given an insight into the prophet's mind. He, no doubt, felt an urge within him (that which he

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 152

2 Ibid.

interpreted as divine) to buy a parcel of land in Anathoth. He firmly believed that after destruction would come the replanting and rebuilding. (Jer. 1.10) (It would be most interesting to know what the people thought of a man who had threatened the downfall of the state continually and even now was urging surrender to Babylon, yet at this crucial hour for Jerusalem, bought land to symbolize his faith that the land and the people would be restored and rehabilitated.)

The word of the Lord came to me saying:

Behold Hanamel, the son of Shallum your uncle
shall come to you saying: Buy my field that
is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is yours
to buy it.

(Jer. 32.6,7)

The very intuition that he expressed in words, in the above verse, came true in every particular. And this fulfillment signifies the following to him:

...Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

(Jer. 32.9)

No doubt this was written after the event, and Jeremiah colored it with a stronger prophetic tone. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the prophet does take assurance from the actual fulfillment of his words, although at no time, fulfilled or not, does he doubt his inner word. The act itself is also of significance. By such he emphasized his message, especially the latter half dealing with restoration and took special pains to preserve the deed for many years to come. (Jer. 32.¹⁴-15)

It would signify what confidence he has in the restoration. Still, for a moment (Jer. 32.16-25) Jeremiah seems to waver as to the truth of his prophecy of restoration. The destruction is far too severe and annihilating. But the inner voice assures him, that after this devastation takes place,

17-23
probably
secondary

...I will bring them back to this place and I will cause them to dwell safely...

¹
(Jer. 32.37)

Jerusalem fell, and his prophecy was proven true. But to Jeremiah there was no joy in seeing his words fulfilled. He loved his people and his country (as the above incident reveals) deeply. Despite the fact that they had persecuted him, their hurt became his pain. The fall signified to him, beyond all doubt, the veracity of his own message. But it also implied a deeper significance. The first half of his message--destruction--was fulfilled; now it was time for the second part--restoration.

Those who remained seem to be stricken with fear that the Babylonians would destroy them completely. (This was probably due to the murder of Gedalia and the fear of reprisal) They come to Jeremiah seeking the word of the Lord, and His advice as to where they should go. Jeremiah, after ten days (42.7) answers them:

(Emend *21e* to *21e₁*) If you will [remain] (dwell) in this land, then I [God] will build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up... Do not go to Egypt!

(Jer. 42.10,19)

1 The above is based, to some degree, on Cohon, B., "The Prophets," p. 136-7

Perhaps at no time in his life was he more positive of the truth of his message than he was at this moment. Perhaps at no other time had he been so eager to speak forth his prophetic message. Now he could help those whom he loved so dearly, with words of comfort and hope. But this was not to be granted to him, for both he and Baruch were forcibly taken to Egypt.

In Egypt (Jer. 44.29) Jeremiah is forced to repeat his distasteful denunciatory threats. For their idolatry here in Egypt, the Judeans would be punished, for this nation too was to be given over to its enemies, and its king would be dethroned even as was Zedekiah. And this prophecy, too, came true. Pharaoh Hophra was dethroned. Perhaps with his intuitive foresight, Jeremiah realized he would never be given the opportunity to fulfill the constructive part of his mission. Perhaps this feeling plus a determination that his message of hope should not die, but should serve future generations who would comprehend his words and obey his message, caused him to record his prophecies. For within him an inspired voice told him:

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, saying: Write all the words that I have spoken to you in a book. For, lo, the days come...that I will turn the captivity of my people...and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers...

(Jer. 30.2,3)

To the fulfillment of the above words he attached tremendous significance. This was the message that was to be a source of comfort to a ravished people. He never doubted the truth of the prophecy, whether or not it

came to pass in his life-time. The present generation would not fulfill his words, but the future would--and for them he preserved his message.

About the year 605 B. C. E., Jeremiah heard the "inner voice" from ...the Lord, saying: Take a scroll [book] and write in it all the words which I have spoken to you...from the day I spoke to you...even to this day.

(Jer. 36.1,2)

Immediately Jeremiah obeyed this command, called Baruch, and dictated all his prophecies to his secretary, and Baruch recorded them in a scroll. (Jer. 36.4) After he had recorded them, Baruch read Jeremiah's words in the Temple (Jer. 36.10), which in turn, resulted in the nobles sending for Baruch (Jer. 36.14) so that he could inform them of his message, and later the princes had the scroll read to the king. (Jer. 36.23) In a fit of anger the king destroyed this record of Jeremiah's message. (Jer. 36.23) However,

...the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after the king had burned the scroll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah saying: 'Take again, another scroll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned...

(Jer. 36.27,28)

So once more Jeremiah dictated his words, and once more Baruch recorded them. The message was not to be destroyed--it was for the future.

Commenting upon the above verses, Battenwieser states: "As soon

as it is granted that Jeremiah spoke altogether by word of mouth, the question naturally arises as to how his prophecies came to be written down and preserved; and to this question chap. XXXVI gives the answer. We learn that in the first place it was owing to the prophet's own solicitude that his prophecies were preserved, and we learn also to what end he wished them to be preserved.

Verses 27 to 32 tell us not only that Jeremiah himself arranged for the second collection of his prophecies after the first had been burned by Jehoyakim, but also that he enlarged this second collection¹ by adding to it his later prophecies."

If anything, Jer. 36.27,28 certainly substantiate² Battenwieser's conviction that the prophetic writings did not start by means of single, detached sermons being written out and distributed for the purpose of² supplanting the oral preaching of the prophets.

Battenwieser suggests an interesting idea; namely, that Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch because he himself was unable to³ write. Whether or not this theory is valid remains a question, which Battenwieser may or may not have answered to the satisfaction of everyone. In any case it deserves thought.

However, there can be no question but that Jeremiah, when he became cognizant of the fate his scroll had met with at the hands of the king, was convinced that his prophecies were ineffectual for the present. "But the prophet foresaw other ages, when justice would triumph and the truth have recognition, and to these future and more discerning

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 167

2 Ibid., p. 170

3 Ibid. p. 133

ages, he was determined that his words should be handed down. Again and again he declared that it was to the future that he looked for the realization of his hopes, and through all the vicissitudes of his career he never failed to assert his conviction that some day some good was bound to come (Jer. 30.2ff) from his prophetic calling.¹

Jeremiah's hope and fondest wish was that these words of God would not remain only written in a scroll, but that they would be read, comprehended, and above all fulfilled, in the following manner:

...this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart—I will write; and I will be their God and they shall be my people...

(Jer. 31.33)

We conclude:

1. In the main, Jeremiah attached little importance to the immediate fulfillment or non-fulfillment of his words.
2. When his words of doom are fulfilled, it signifies to him that the process of restoration must soon begin.
3. He realizes that his words were for the future and not for the present generation. (Jer. 36ff)
4. He is strengthened in his faith by the fulfillment of his words he does witness. (Jer. 32.6-9)

E. Ezekiel

Within the consecration vision of Ezekiel we find the following verse:

And they, whether they will listen or whether they will refuse [to listen], for they are a rebellious people, yet they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

(Ez. 2.5)

Cooke, in explaining the above verse, says that the idea implied the words "...they shall know that a prophet has been among them", is "they shall know by the fulfillment of his predictions that a prophet has been among them": Ez.'s version of the test proposed in Deut. 18^{21f.}, ...Neither his fellow-exiles, nor his countrymen left behind in the land of Israel would listen to him, or if they listened would not take him seriously...It was always a prophet's lot to be in opposition, and to deliver a message which his people did not want or expect (cp. Is. 6¹⁰, Jer. 1.^{17ff.}) But here Ez. is comforted with the assurance, repeated at the beginning of his second period (33³³), that the truth which he utters will in the end be recognized...¹ This negative response is again mentioned when God says:

Son of man, you dwell in the midst of the rebellious house, that have ears to hear, and hear not...

(Ez. 12.2)

Such was the reaction that both Isaiah and Jeremiah expected and received. (Is. 6.9; Jer. 5.21) Knowing this, Ezekiel certainly could not have

expected that the present generation would fulfill the commands he gave them. He never doubted that the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand, and knew beyond doubt that what he spoke was the truth, in spite of the mocking taunts hurled at him, such as:

...The days are prolonged and every vision fails.

(Ez. 12.22b)

And,

...The vision that he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies for times that are far off

(Ez. 12.27b)

In response to both of these Ezekiel feels sure that,

The days are at hand and the object of every vision is drawing near.

(Ez. 12.23b)

And also that,

All my [God's] words shall no longer be delayed--

which I speak, speaking and doing. (Emend

נאמתי ונעשה to נאמתי ונעשה)

(Ez. 12.28b)

In Ezekiel there was a feeling of certainty, which did not permit of even a fleeting question of doubt. "Now" or "later" were words that were lacking in his vocabulary. He knew only that "it was God's will, and as such was sure to come to pass." The "inner voice" had informed Ezekiel:

I wonder if this is correct.

I the Lord have spoken a word (Emend נאמתי to נאמתי)

(it shall come to pass) and I will do it...

(Ez. 24.14a)

() = נאמתי which you emend to נאמתי

And Ezekiel, never for a moment doubted the word of his God. So too when Ezekiel tells of the terrible destruction in store for the people, he concludes with:

And they shall know that I am the Lord, I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them.

(Ez. 6.10)

He knew, even before the fulfillment of his prophecy, just what would transpire. He did not need the fulfillment to assure him of the validity of God's word. In chapter 7 verse 27 he also describes the fateful day and the plight of the people. However, some scholars may object to our notion that he could foresee all this, and merely recorded events post eventum, and clothed his words in the dress of prophecy.

continued (?)
that he

This may or may not be so, but in any case we should notice that Ezekiel felt that the doom was, above all, God's work:

I will do to them according to their way (Emend לדרכם to כדרכם)
and according to their deserts will I judge them;

And they shall know that I am the Lord.

(Ez. 7.27b)

It is very doubtful whether a man, even if he were writing post eventum would include all the symbolic actions which are recorded in the book of Ezekiel. His carrying a pack (Ez. 12.6), and his symbolism at the death of his wife, demonstrate a certainty of destruction which has no need of fulfillment merely for the sake of reassurance.

The day did come. The prophecies of those before him, as well as his own, were fulfilled. True, Yahweh had punished Israel, lest they should imagine that He overlooked their sin. But Yahweh was a "jealous"

God, and this very destruction would also lead to the people's restoration, lest the heathen should imagine that He lacked the power. The nation would be restored, not because they deserved it, but because "I have wrought with you for my name's sake..." (Ez. 20.44)

But within the fulfillment of his words, and the subsequent destruction, Ezekiel intuitively realized a deeper significance. Good and bad alike had suffered from the disaster. Men were asking: "If God were just, would he have permitted such indiscriminate hardship? Religion, as understood at the time seemed unable to cope with the problem, when Ezekiel took it up. He insisted upon two things: first, a new appreciation of the truth that God desires not the death but the repentance of the wicked; and secondly, the freedom and responsibility of the individual....Each man is free from bondage either to his own past career, or to his people's guilt; each man is responsible for his own conduct, and must decide for himself whether he will 'live' or 'die.' Jeremiah had attempted to face the question (31²⁹), but Ezekiel deals with it much more fully, not indeed in all its various issues, yet in such a manner as the needs of the hour require....

When his earlier prophecies had been fulfilled by the overthrow of Jerusalem, Ezekiel felt able to enlarge upon the other aspects of the truth. Jahveh, holy and righteous, could now reveal Himself as the Shepherd of His people, who would gather the dispersed...He was prepared to regenerate the nation inwardly and outwardly...; notwithstanding Israel's breach of faith, the relation between Jahveh and His people was indestructible, and would be secured by an everlasting covenant...¹

1 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." to Ez. p. XXX

The function of the prophets, and certainly of Ezekiel, was to interpret history in the light of God's purpose for His people. However, insensible and shallow the present generation, a new generation will carry out God's purpose in the age which is about to dawn. This is the ideal imbedded within the vision of "The Valley of Dry Bones." (Ez. 37) Israel's restoration is to be accomplished by God's power, and so too Israel's life in the coming age. "The vision was intended to combat the despair which had settled upon the exiles v. 11, 33^{10ff.}; Israel must learn that the present state is not the final one; life, not death, is God's will for His people." ¹ The above is but one example of many. Ezekiel always kept the future in view. This was the significance he attached to the fulfillment of his words. Just as he had been positive of the destruction, just so certain was he of the future. "Ezekiel himself committed to writing a measured plan for a new temple, together with regulations for its ministry. And he was not alone in this effort of reconstruction; theoretical as it had to be; for the analysis of chs. 40-48 reveals a process of experiment and discussion going on in priestly circles, and carrying further the task which he had begun. These labors in the course of several generations ripened into official recognition as the Priestly Code." ² But if Ezekiel thought the destruction was the signal of a "new dawn," and that restoration spiritually would begin at once, he was very soon disappointed. In chapter 33, verses 30 to 33, even after the fall, the people come to him to inquire of God's will, but did not take his advice to heart; "for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. And you (Ez.) are to them as a love song..." (Ez. 30; 31b, 32a) Soon enough he realized,

¹ Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." to Ez., p. 397

² Ibid., p. xxxix

that a restoration most certainly would come, but not with the present generation.

Thus far we have spoken of the significance that Ezekiel attached to the destruction, a prophecy that took place. What of his prophecies that didn't occur at the time or in the manner which he anticipated? Speaking of Ez. 29.17-21, Cooke says: "These vv. were added as an appendix to the prophecies in ch. 29-32; such at least is the inference to be drawn from the date given here, New Year's Day (Apr) 571 B. C., the latest date in the Book. Ezekiel's confident expectation of the fall of Tyre (26³⁻¹⁸ 27²⁶⁻³⁶ 28^{18f}) had not been fulfilled; he admits as much in v. 18; but he allowed his words to stand, because at this later date he looked for a further development. Though the Babylonians had earned no wages in Jahveh's service against Tyre, they will be fully compensated by the spoils of Egypt, vv 19.20. The present section belongs to the period between 573, when the siege of Tyre was raised, and 567-8, when Nebuchadrezzar set out to invade Egypt. How far he succeeded we cannot tell...; but there is no evidence that the Babylonians inflicted the complete disaster which Ez. had foretold, and again his prophecy was not fulfilled, at any rate not in the way expected." ¹ It may be, as Cooke believes, that the editor of this section desired to "preserve every scrap of Ezekiel's utterance." However, we venture to state, that even if Ezekiel himself fully realized that some of his utterances had not been fulfilled, he still would not have removed them. Minor details of time and place were not of a major concern to the prophet. The underlying principles of right and justice were the main points of consideration.

1 Cooke, G. A., "I.C.C." to Ez. p. 329

An unfulfilled prophecy in no manner or means detracted one iota from his message. He would attach very little significance to it. The fall of Jerusalem had merely been a signal to him to begin the work of "re-planting and renewing" the people. He did not take joy or pride in knowing that the "woeful day" he predicted had come about, and thus had verified his words. He had no need of verification.

"Unlike his colleagues, Ezekiel was a literary man. The call to prophecy, as we have seen it, was a call to swallow a book, and he did it, he tells us. 'He exalted the book phase of religion as no other prophet had done.' He wrote his prophecies; then collected and edited them."¹ Battenwieser, too, holds that in the case of Ezekiel prophecies, "their earliest formulation was in writing."² These writings were to comfort the present, and to bring about the spiritual as well as national return of the combined nation. There can be no doubt but that Ezekiel like the other prophets before him, looked to a future generation to be worthy of the "return" he so often mentions, and so firmly believes in.

We conclude:

1. Ezekiel, like the other prophets, attached no significance whatsoever to the unfulfilled details of his prophecies. He was interested in the basic principles.

2. Like the others, he too, was not concerned with a specific time element.

3. The fulfillment of his prophecy concerning the fall of Jerusalem was regarded as a signal to begin the work of redemption and restoration! (In no wise did he take it, or was it needed, as a

1 Cohon, B., "The Prophets," p. 157
2 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 174

verification of his inspired words. He never doubted the truth of his prophecies.

4. He recorded his prophecies so that a more worthy future generation could read, understand, and obey them. These writings would serve that generation as a guide. For the immediate present, his words served as a source of comfort and consolation. However, he realized they were not a generation worthy of complete redemption and restoration.

F. Deutero-Isaiah

Because chapters 40-55 hail the advent of Cyrus, extol his victories over many nations and anticipate his conquest of Babylon, scholars, in the main, "place them between the years 546 B. C., when Cyrus scored his great victory over Lydia and captivated the imaginations of men as a world conqueror, and 538 B. C., when Babylon finally surrendered to him." ¹ In these victories of Cyrus, Deutero-Isaiah beheld Yahweh, the God who shapes history, bringing a deliverer for the desperate and dispersed nation. His prophecies of hope are based upon the rise of this new world ruler, and to it he attributes tremendous significance. Yet, it was not only to the fulfillment of his own words that he attributed great significance, but the fulfillment of previous prophecies seems just as significant to him. All that the former prophets had spoken had come to pass. Just as their words of denunciation were true, so too were his words of hope to be realized.

Behold the former things are come to pass
And new things do I declare;
Before they spring forth
I tell you of them.

(Is. 42.9)

Had they not been forewarned of destruction? Just as that had been announced, so too was Deutero-Isaiah announcing, in advance to them, the message of their new life and restoration. The prophet was the mouthpiece of God. What he had spoken was in truth God's words. God does not declare a thing through his prophets unless he has determined

1 Cohon, B., "The Prophets," p. 179

to perform that action:

I have declared the former things from of old;
From my [God's] mouth they went forth and I announced
them [through the prophets]

Suddenly I did them and they came to pass.

(Is. 48.3)

So, too, in Is. 55.11,12a God emphasizes the fact that His words never return to him empty, but always accomplish their purpose. The above verses demonstrate conclusively that,

1. Deutero-Isaiah regarded the prophets as announcers of God's will before the event took place.

2. Historical events verified the words spoken by the prophets.

3. He, Deutero-Isaiah, was a prophet, who had been inspired with a message of hope and restoration.

4. Just as the words of the other prophets had been proven true, so too, would the validity of his message be verified. Attaching great significance to the fulfillment of the previous prophecies, he therefore is assured that his too, is correct...Seeing Cyrus on the horizon, he feels that God has spoken:

Comfort you, comfort you my people...her time of service is accomplished,...her guilt is paid off.

(Is. 40.1a,2a)

The time has come now, and

He [God] shall feed his flock like a shepherd,

He shall gather the lambs in His arms.

(Is. 40.11a)

With the victories of the new conqueror, the "inner voice" tells him:

Fear not for I am with you;

I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you
from the west;

I will say to the north: 'Give up,'

And to the south: 'Keep not back,

Bring my sons from far,

And my daughters from the end of the earth.

(Is. 43.5,6)

Then,

...the ransomed of the Lord shall return,

And come with singing to Zion,

And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

They shall obtain gladness and joy,

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

(Is. 51.11)

The prophet is assured of all of the above, in fact he believes God

...will...divide him a ^{the} [people] portion among the
great,

And he shall divide the spoil with the mighty,

(Is. 53.12a)

Did Deutero-Isaiah live to see any of his prophecies fulfilled? We do not know. He undoubtedly saw Cyrus become ruler of a mighty empire, and in each victory he saw the fulfillment of his own words. The time had come for his people to be comforted and hopeful. More than that,

God had provided an instrument of restoration. He but sang divinely inspired words.

"In the case of Deutero-Isaiah there can hardly be any doubt that his writings, Is. XL-LV, had book form from the very first. They are not a series of separate detached sermons or messages, like the writings of pre-exilic prophets, but form one continuous discourse. Regarding the manner of their circulation, they offer no clue as to whether they were sent broadcast among the Jewish captivity, or whether their author delivered them personally before a large assembly of exiles; but from what we know in general about the conditions and customs of those times, the latter would seem to be the more likely theory."¹

We conclude:

1. Basing himself upon the verification of previous prophetic utterances, Deutero-Isaiah felt that his words of hope would come true as had the others.

2. Cyrus' victories seemed to be the fulfillment of his words, and he does attach significance to them. Cyrus is God's instrument to be used for the redemption of Israel.

3. His prophecies were for the present generation as well as for the future.

4. Fulfillment of his words will mean a new life for a desperate people.

1 Battenwieser, M., "Prophets of Israel," p. 174

Summary of Chapter IV

1. The prophets did not bother to mention a specific time for the events they spoke of. Setting time limits was a rational act subject to human error, and as such not to be regarded as important.

2. Whether or not the people believed that the events which they spoke of were near at hand was of little importance to them. They felt that they spoke truth that would be verified--perhaps in the present, in the future for sure.

3. They spoke with certainty only in matters of religion and morality, and made no pretense of being political experts.

4. Even those prophecies which never were fulfilled they did not remove from their writings,

a. because the underlying principles were eternally true.

b. The time element did not concern them ever.

5. Realizing that their generation did not comprehend their message, they recorded their words so that they might serve as a testimony of their ministry, and a guide to future generations who would fulfill them. (Their immediate generation would not listen or obey.)

6. Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah spoke words of comfort for their generation as well as for future generations. These two prophets, also, in all probability, wrote out their prophecies before they delivered them.

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