

"EVOLUTION of the GOD IDEA in LITERARY PROPHECY"

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1729

To the most inspiring teacher of my  
college days, Dr. Moses Bittenwieser,  
this thesis is respectfully dedicated.

## FOREWARD

The writer does not pretend that the following pages represent a complete treatment of the thesis "Evolution of the God Idea in Literary Prophecy." To treat the subject with any degree of thoroughness would have required far more time and information than the writer had at his disposal. It was planned originally to devote a chapter to the writings of Deutero-Isaiah but lack of time prevented the carrying out of this intention.

Whenever possible the translations of Battenwieser have been used and when these were not available the writer followed as closely as possible the translations of the Revised Version.

# B I B L I O G R A P H Y

SMITH, HENRY P.	OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY
BUDDE	RELIGION OF ISRAEL
DAVIDSON	THE THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
DAVIDSON	OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY
JOYCE	THE INSPIRATION OF PROPHECY
CHEYNE	PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH
SMITH, G.A.	THE BOOK OF ISAIAH
SMITH, G.A.	THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE PROPHETS
FARNELL	THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD
SMITH, W.R.	THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE JEWISH CHURCH
SMITH, W.R.	THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL
KITTEL	THE RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL
BEWER	LITERATURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
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SKINNER	THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH
SKINNER	PROPHECY AND RELIGION
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## CHAPTER I

### AMOS

"It was a great day for religion when at a harvest feast in Beth El about 750 B.C. Amos chanted before a vast assemblage the funeral song of Israel."

"Fallen is the virgin Israel, powerless to rise again; prostrated to the earth, without anyone to raise her up." (Amos 5:2)

With these words Beyer begins his survey of the life and work of Amos, the first of the great literary prophets. And though certain scholars may disagree with Beyer as to the date of Amos' appearance, they are in accord with the sentiment he expresses.

"It was a great day for religion" although it is unlikely that anyone, who heard the words of Amos, was cognizant of the fact. Those who had gathered at Beth El, the foremost sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom, on this particular day were probably left speechless with consternation and amazement at the words of this bold shepherd. Nothing could have been more startling, more blasphemous than the announcement that Yahweh would deal destruction to His people, Israel. This was madness. How could Yahweh give His people over to the enemy? The destiny of Israel was so completely bound up with that of its God that the destruction of Israel would mean His own destruction for He would no longer be known and worshipped. Yet Amos declared, with great certainty, that Israel was doomed. Nor did he reserve judgment for Israel alone, but he scored Judah as well as other nations, whose conduct was below the high standard demanded by Yahweh.

How did Amos arrive at these conclusions? He was not a professional prophet but he describes himself as a plain shepherd and

a dresser of sycamore trees. His home was in the village of Tekoah, in the land of Judah. "He was nurtured in austere simplicity and it was in the vast solitudes, where he followed his flock, that Jehovah said to him, "Go prophesy to My people, Israel." It was a strange errand for the unknown shepherd to undertake: for the prophet was not a preacher in the modern sense, whose words are addressed to the heart of the individual, and who discharge his function wherever he can find an audience willing to hear a gospel that speaks to the poor as well as to the great. Jehovah's word was a message to the nation, and above all, to the grandees and princes, who were directly responsible for the welfare and good estate of Israel. But the summons of Amos left no room for hesitation..... Surely the Lord Jehovah will not do anything, but He revealeth His secret to His servants, the prophets.

"The lion hath roared, who will not fear?  
The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy? (Amos 1:2, 3:6-8)

The call of Amos lay in the consciousness that he had heard the voice of Jehovah thundering forth judgment while all around were deaf to the sound. In this voice he had learned Jehovah's secret -- not some abstract theological truth, but the secret of His dealings with Israel and the surrounding nations. Such a secret could not remain locked up within his breast -- "The Lord Jehovah has spoken, who can but prophesy? And so the prophet left his flock in the wilderness, and, armed with no other credentials than the word that burned within him, stood forth in the midst of the brilliant crowd that thronged the royal sanctuary at Beth El, to proclaim what Jehovah had spoken against the children of Israel."(3:1)<sup>1</sup>

The people were blind to the signs of the time. The military

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1 Robertson Smith "Prophets of Israel" p. 122

successes of Jereboam II dazzled them. They looked upon these victories as proof positive that Jahweh was on their side. Furthermore, they imagined that His divine favor was definitely secured by the sacrifices and offerings which were brought to the sanctuaries. "For Amos' Israelitish contemporaries, Jahweh was Israel's God and Israel was Jahweh's people. Yahweh, Himself, they believed, had created this relationship by delivering them out of the land of Egypt..... only in Israel was He worshipped, only there did He have His dwelling and His shrines. This popular view of the reciprocal relationship between Israel and Yahweh is reflected through the literature prior to Amos' appearance. Thus e.g., in the song of Deborah, which celebrates Deborah's victory over Sisera, we read: "Curse Meroz, saith the Angel of Yahweh, curse her inhabitants bitterly, because they came not to the aid of Yahweh, to the aid of Yahweh among the heroes." (Judg. 5:23) And in the Elisha-story, a story dating from Amos' own times, where it is related how Elisha, on his death bed, prophesied to Joash that he would vanquish Aram. Elisha calls Joash's prospective victory over Aram, or as he puts it, "Joash's victorious arrow against Aram," "an arrow of victory for Yahweh."<sup>1</sup> (2K 13:14-19)

It was this erroneous conception of the true nature of Yahweh that made Israel insensible to the danger looming on the horizon. "The explanation is very clearly given by the prophet himself. The source of the judicial blindness of his nation was want of knowledge of the true character of Jehovah, encouraging a false estimate of their own might."<sup>2</sup> This lack of understanding on the part of the people accounts for the arrogance of their behavior, the corruption of their social life, the laxity and immorality that characterized their religious rites in con-

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1 Battenweiser "Prophets of Israel" p. 305 ff.

2 Robertson Smith "Prophets of Israel" p. 131



nection with the worship of Yahweh at the various sanctuaries, the general lawlessness, the riotous revelry of the rich and the crushing oppression of the poor.

The prophets, on the other hand, know Yahweh, and knowing Him, they cannot but condemn the popular practices so thoroughly out of harmony with His demands. "The general presuppositions on which the prophets take their stand are these three: first, the idea of the covenant between Israel and Jehovah, whereby Jehovah had taken Israel out from among the nations, by election, to be His people, and had on the other side, become their God. This is the fundamental idea. But such an idea is a very fertile one, and has many results. There follows from it the unity of the worship. Any service of any other God was a breach of the fundamental fact between the two. But, further, Jehovah was not a Deity without attributes. On the contrary His attributes are very distinct and pronounced. "The righteous Jehovah loveth righteousness." The covenant had conditions. It was to be maintained only by the observance of these..... Assuredly there is no idea more fundamental in prophecy than this of the covenant relation of Jehovah and Israel..... But this leads to the second idea, namely, that this covenant relation between Jehovah and Israel had a purpose in view, a goal set before it. This was, no doubt, contained in the very idea of the covenant; but it was not yet realized. That purpose was the reaching of a perfect kingdom of God on earth." I

In the course of his prophecy, Amos demonstrates conclusively that Yahweh is the Omnipotent, the All-Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. He is the creation.

"Verily, He that hath formed the mountains, and created the winds, who tells man what he thinks, Who turns the morning into darkness, Who holds dominion over mountainous regions of the earth, the Lord is His name" (Amos 4:13)

He withholds rain, sends locusts, mildew, pestilence and overthrow.  
(Amos 4:6-11)

"He puts forth His power equally in the rule of the nations, moving them upon the face of the earth according to His will, like fawns upon a board, bringing Israel from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, the Arameans from Kir. (Amos 9:7) And as He brought the Syrians from Kir. He sends them back whence they came.

"I shall break the bar of Damascus, and I shall destroy the inhabitants of Bikath-aven, and him that wields a sceptre in Beth-Eden, and the people of Aram shall be exiled unto Kir, saith the Lord." (Amos 1:5)

And Israel He causes to go unto captivity beyond Damascus.

"And I shall exile you beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, the God Sabaoth is His name. (Amos 5:27) It is at His command that the Assyrian comes up and overflows the land like a river: it is He that breaks up for him the bar of Damascus (Amos 1:5), and launches him upon the sinful kingdom of Samaria, causing him to afflict it from the far north to the wady of the Arabah, the border of Edom (Amos 6:14) And the omnipresence of His power is expressed in chapters I-2, where He smites one nation after another."1

While his contemporaries think of Yahweh as the God of Israel, Who has no purpose or interest beyond the borders of Israel, for Amos, Yahweh is the God of the whole world, the majestic ruler of the universe. This is clearly demonstrated by such utterances as 3:1-2 and 9:7 and 3:13.

"Hear this word which the Lord God hath decreed against you, O. Israelites; against the whole race I have brought out of Egypt, saying:

"Verily I have cared for you more than for all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you all your sins. (Amos 3:1-2)

Here Amos presents the deliverance from Egypt in a new light. The people had always looked upon the deliverance as a sign of God's favor, as the mighty act of grace by which Israel became God's treasure people. They thought they possessed an exclusive monopoly on God's favor. In 9:7, however, Amos tries to dispel this notion.

"Are ye Israelites any better to me than the Cushites, verily I brought the Israelites from Egypt, but even so, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir. (Amos 9:7)

In this verse he points out that Yahweh did, in reality, deliver Israel from the land of Egypt, but this was not the first or the only instance in which Yahweh had shown Himself to be a savior and a helper. Other people, besides the Israelites, had been the recipients of Yahweh's favor. His dominion was not confined to one little nation. It embraced the whole world. Wherever and whenever tyranny and oppression crushed a people to the earth, Yahweh came to their rescue and released them. Yahweh, ruler of the world, intervened on their behalf. The two illustrations given are particularly appropriate since the Philistines and Arameans had been for many generations bitter enemies of the Israelites.

Chapter 3:2 "Verily I have cared for you more than for all the families of the earth, therefore, I must visit upon you all your sins" must be interpreted in a new light. "The verse sounds like a paradox when taken by itself but in the light of chapters 1:2-2 the prophet's meaning is plain. Amos means to tell the Israelites they have indeed experienced Yahweh's providence in an especial degree; but, in the very beginning of their history, by leading them out of Egypt Yahweh revealed Himself to them as a God of justice, and now since they have persistently scorned His laws of justice and trampled on humanity, He, as a God of justice, is bound to visit all their sins upon them."<sup>1</sup>

Jehovah makes no exception in Israel's favor because of its special



relationship to Himself; on the contrary, He judges it, if possible, the more promptly and severely. Israel is bound by exactly the same principles of common morality which are binding upon other nations; and Jehovah will be Israel's God only in so far as that same morality is practiced in its midst. The elementary duties of honesty, justice, integrity, purity, and humanity are what He demands. The observances of religion, when offered in their stead, He indignantly rejects (Amos 5:21-24). And in the practice of these elementary duties of morality, Israel is sadly deficient. Amos' entire book may be described as an indictment of the nation for their persistent disregard of the moral law: its motto, as Wellhausen has truly remarked, might well be the verse just quoted (3:2). And so Jehovah will not stand by Israel to defend it, as the common people, and even their leaders, fondly supposed; His "Day" when it appears, will be darkness, and not light, even very dark, and no brightness in it (5:20)"<sup>1</sup>

In 3:13 "Hear this (people of Egypt and Ashdod) and bear witness against the house of Jacob says the Lord God Sabaoth" Amos brings out by implication that God has revealed His moral laws to other nations through man's moral consciousness. It is evident from passages of this nature that Amos conceives of God as immanent, indwelling in man.

The idea of God that dominates Amos' mind, is clear and unmistakable. Yahweh is the righteous ruler of the universe and He judges the world by the standard of His own character. The elaborate acts of worship that go on at the sanctuaries are a mockery to Him. The only offering acceptable to Yahweh is morality. The relationship of Israel to Yahweh is not physical as the people seem to believe, but moral, altogether. This was demonstrated by the very act of their deliverance from Egypt. Yahweh, on this occasion, had shown Himself to be

the God of justice and righteousness. This view is held, not by Amos alone, but by all the great prophets who followed him. Some of them mention it, others accept it tacitly. It appears, for example, in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and in its most highly developed form in the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah who states that God chose Israel for no other purpose than to spread truth to all the world-- to be a light to the nations -- and to bring them to God.

We see from chapters one and two that all men are held accountable for infractions of the moral law. Surely the sins, for which Damascus, Ammon, Moab and the rest are judged, cannot be offences against Yahweh as the national God of Israel. Amos holds that the heathen nations are to be punished, not because they do not worship Yahweh, the God of Israel, but because they have broken the universal law of morality. "As Amos teaches, Jehovah's wrath falls on the heathen nations, not because they are heathen and do not worship Him, but because they have broken the universal laws of fidelity, kinship and humanity."<sup>1</sup> Not Israel, alone, but all the nations are required to observe the fundamental laws of social justice and humanity.

The rapid summary of the nations in chapters one and two, the enumeration of their sins, and the foretelling of the fate which awaits them bring out, in a vivid manner, the idea that Yahweh is the righteous ruler of the Universe. One nation after another is weighed in the balance and found wanting. One has committed atrocities; another has sold conquered communities into slavery; a third has practiced defamation of the dead. All of them have in some way or other violated the laws of humanity, the universal laws of justice and righteousness. So Yahweh, sitting in judgment over the nations, condemns them impartially, Israel and Judah along with the rest.



It is evident from all this that Amos thinks of God in terms of universality. He makes it clear that the popular idea of Yahwe as the tribal God of Israel is erroneous and illusory. He shows that Yahwe's interest extends to the whole world. He holds all men accountable. He demands absolute obedience to His moral law, and He will not withhold punishment from those who disregard it. Of course, Amos ran counter to the cherished belief of the masses. He was well aware of it. His God conception was too advanced for the common people to grasp. His preaching fell on deaf ears. The gap between his own exalted idea of the Deity and the crude idea of the superstitious populace was too wide to be bridged.

Especially did he come into conflict with popular notions on the subject of what constitutes the proper worship of Yahweh. The priests and the people believed that Yahwe's only requirement was the cult. They were firmly convinced that Yahweh was pleased with them when they discharged the prescribed ceremonial functions of offering sacrifices at the shrines and sanctuaries. The worship of God, as expressed by the people, was identical with ritual and sacrifice.

Great care was exercised in making sacrifices in those days. The priests were scrupulous in regard to the minutest details. The reasons for their extraordinary precautions were as follows: Sacrifice was looked upon as a supreme mystery by means of which man could bend the divine will to his own. If the sacrifice was offered in the prescribed manner it was thought that God's favor could be secured for the one who offered it. The result would be, increased crops, longer life, military victory or whatever the worshipper desired most. Again, sacrifice was looked upon as the direct means of communication with God. By means of sacrifice, the people imagined that they might have commerce with God. This idea was in harmony with their conception of the Deity as a transcendent God -- far removed from man -- enthroned in the high heavens

and working on the world from without.

Whenever misfortune befell them (and this happened not infrequently) they took it as a sign that God was displeased with them. Then they would become more zealous in bringing Him sacrifices, thinking thereby to placate His anger. Not for a moment did they doubt the efficacy of the cult; their only concern was that the sacrifices should be numerous enough to satisfy Yahwe and offered in such a manner as to be acceptable to Him.

Amos, with all the power at his command, attacks and condemns this whole system of worship.

"Go to Beth-El and sin, to Gilgal and sin more, in that you bring the following morning (after arrival) your sacrifices and the third day your tithes. And inasmuch as you sacrifice offerings by thanksgiving, of leavened bread and invite ostentatiously to free will offerings, for so do ye love to do, O Israelites, saith the Lord God." (Amos 4:4-5)

This is the sin of the people, that they visit the sanctuaries and make sacrifices there to Yahweh. These sacrifices have not gained God's favor as the following verses (4:6 ff.) show. No! They are an abomination to Yahweh and time after time He has evinced His displeasure. He has sent famine and drought; He has smitten with mildew and blast; He has brought disastrous war upon them. Yet they have continued to make sacrifices.

"I have wrought destruction on you as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah, so that you were like a brand snatched from the fire, still ye have not returned to Me, saith the Lord." (Amos 4:11)

Again in chapter five, Amos denounces in the most withering terms the whole sacrificial system.

"I loathe your festivals, I cannot endure your holy assemblies. Yea, if you offer unto me holocaust and sacrifices I do not care for them and at the peace offerings of your fatted calves I do not look. Begone from Me with the noise of your hymns; to the melodies of your harps I will no longer listen." (Amos 5:21-23)

And in another verse he states,

"Did you, Israel, bring up to Me sacrifices and gifts during the forty years of the wilderness."  
(Amos 5:25 )

The question is, of course, purely rhetorical and the answer expected is "No." Never in Israel's past had Yahweh demanded worship of this sort. Not even in those early days when Yahweh had manifested Himself so wondrously to the children of Israel. The sacrificial cult with all its ramifications was not, now, nor had it ever been, an integral part of the true worship of Yahweh. It was false, illusory, blasphemous and it availed nothing. Those who put their trust in it were drowned.

Amos lays emphasis, then, upon the fact that Yahweh cannot be found in mere external worship with all its magical devices. How then can He be found? What constitutes the proper worship of Yahweh? Amos leaves no doubt in the minds of his hearers on this score.

"Amos is a spiritual prophet..... and he clearly apprehends the true essence of a spiritual religion," writes Skinner.<sup>1</sup> The question of the day was, what was the true conception to be formed of Yahweh and His requirements? "Was He to be conceived as a God who delighted in the service which Israel rendered Him, and unspiritual worship, the essence of which lay in a routine of ritual observances, in which the morality of the worshipper was a matter of indifference, and which was infused, certainly to a large extent blended with heathen elements? Or was He to be conceived as a purely spiritual Being, to Whom the sacrifices of fies were inappreciable, and Whose sole desire was righteousness, being Himself, as might be said, the very ethical conception impersonated?"<sup>2</sup>

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1 Skinner "Introduction to Book of Amos p. 111

2 Skinner "Introduction to Book of Amos p. 111



Amos felt and expressed the antagonism between these two conceptions. He saw the general prevalence of injustice and inhumanity, of brutality and greed; he observed the luxury and debauchery of the rich. In short, he noted the violation of the moral law by those who were most zealous in the performance of religious rites and ceremonies.

"They do not know how to act uprightly, saith the Lord, they who pile up the fruit of violence of tyranny in their palaces." (Amos 3:10)

"Therefore," says the prophet, "they will be utterly destroyed." Only a few individuals will be fortunate enough to escape but they will not be numerous enough to constitute a nation. Israel will cease to exist. The innocent will suffer with the guilty.

"Just as the shepherd may rescue from the mouth of the lion a couple of shin-bones or the tip of an ear, precisely so shall the Israelites escape who sit on the corner of the couch in Samaria." (Amos 3:12)

"Not gifts to God but justice to men! was his cry. How can men be so bare of all feelings of delicacy and shame as the father and son are who carry on their debauch in the name of religion at the cost of the suffering of the poor?" I

"They trample upon the heads of the poor as if on the dust of the earth and decline justice to the poor. And a man and his father go into the same maid to profane My holy name." And upon pawned clothes they recline by the side of every altar, and they drink the wine bought with money paid in fines in the house of their God (Amos 2:7-8)

Yahwe is the God of justice and righteousness and He punishes injustice with relentless anger. He distinguishes between the true worship of Himself and the false worship that is offered at the sanctuaries.

"Thus saith the Lord to the house of Israel, if ye would seek Me ye would live. And if ye would not seek Beth-El and frequent not Gilgal and make not pilgrimages to Beersheba; ye Gilgal shall be exiled and Beth-El shall fall a prey to destruction." (Amos 5:4-5)

Now we come to the positive elements in Amos' preachment, for the prophet is not content merely to break down the false notions of belief which make the nation ripe for judgment. He would point out to the people the right way to worship Yahweh, though the realization has been driven home to him, long ere this, that his advice will be scorned and rejected. If the sacrificial cult is of no value in the search for God, what, then, is of value? How can man seek God? The answer to this question seems to us to be simple, indeed, but when Amos uttered it for the first time it was a new revelation, a stupendous religious advance. He says.

"Seek good and not evil in order that you may live and that the Lord God Sabaoth be truly with you as you believe. Nay, hate evil and love good and establish justice in the courts of justice. Perchance, God may be gracious to decimated Joseph (Amos 5:14-15)

And again after he has scored the sacrificial cult,

"But let justice gush forth like waters, and righteousness like a perennial stream."  
(Amos 5:24)

Here we have the very essence of the only worship which Amos deems acceptable to Yahweh. In this succinct statement he sums up the requirements which God lays down for those who seek His presence. They are brief and simple. All that Yahweh requires is a life of justice and humanity, a life lived in accordance with His universal law of morality. A striking parallel to this though is found in Micah 6:8.

"He hath told thee, O man, what is good; and what the Lord God doth require of thee, only to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."

But few and simple as Yahweh's requirements seemed to be, they remained for Israel an unattainable ideal.

Along with Amos' reactions against the popular notion of Yahweh, as the tribal God of Israel, and his scathing denunciation of the cus-

customary mode of worshipping Him at the sacrificial altar we must consider his new interpretation of the so-called "Day of Yahweh." Here again we find him at war with an idea which held sway in Israel for many years before he delivered his prophecy and which was to continue to be popular for generations afterward.

Ardently the people looked forward to the Day of Yahweh, that day of days, when Yahwe would triumph over all the enemies of Israel. It was to be the day of final victory. Thereafter Israel would enjoy undisturbed peace and prosperity. A new era of happiness would ensue for the nation. The day of Yahwe would usher in the millenium.

Amos with his customary love of paradox rudely shatters this belief. He says,

"Woe unto those who long for the day of Yahwe. Of what use would be unto you the day of Yahwe. It is a day of darkness and not of light." (Amos 5:18)

This passage is to be correlated with the previous passage,

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God Sabaoth, in all places there will be wailing, and in all streets they will call out, "woe, woe". The husbandman will call the professional wailers for mourning and lamentation. In all vineyards there will be wailing when I pass through your midst. (Amos 5:16-17)

And again

"Verily the day of Yahwe is a day of darkness and not of light; a day of utter darkness without any ray of light." (Amos 5:20)

Thus, according to Amos, the "Day of Yahwe", far from being a day of victory, will be a day of utter gloom and despair. It will bring triumph for Yahweh, but for the people, only destruction and doom. In fact the entire third section of Amos' prophecy is taken up with description of the woes that will prevail when Israel meets the fate it richly deserves. The destruction of Israel was so real for him that he spoke of it as if it had already taken place (Amos 5:3). Not for a moment was he dazzled and blinded by the temporary military

successes gained by Jereboam II. He judged society by one standard. Did it measure up to the divine requirements of justice and righteousness? If not, no matter what prosperity a nation attained it was doomed to destruction.

"There is a sternness in Amos which was born of moral indignation. He was a man of steel whose indomitable spirit no opposition could break. But we must not forget that he pleaded twice with Yahwe for little Jacob." I

"And when they (the locusts) had consumed the herbs of the soil, I said, O Lord, forgive; how could Jacob endure since he is so small."  
(Amos 7:2)

And again

"And I said, O Lord God desist. How should Jacob exist since he is so small." (Amos 7:5)

"But these warnings had been in vain! Too blind to understand the meaning which God meant His visitations to convey, the people sought to appease His wrath by increased zeal in their ceremonial worship, by sacrifices and gifts; and so Amos' fears, for their future, grew evermore, until at last he found himself face to face with the awful realisation that their doom was sealed.

"Thus God caused me to see and behold the Lord stood upon the wall and in His hand was a Plumb-line. And the Lord said unto me what seest thou, Amos? And I said, a plumb-line; And God said, I am about to apply a plumb-line to My people, Israel, I shall no longer forgive them." (Amos 7:7-8)

From that time on, however fervently he had interceded with God for them before, he was unable to pray for them, for he was absolutely convinced that no intercession could stay God's judgment. In view of this it cannot be doubted that Amos started out on his mission with a clear vision of the utter hopelessness of the situation, that



is, as far as the immediate future of his people was concerned. "I

"In Amos' prophecies there is no clear assurance of pardon or mercy or hope, only stern uncompromising justice." 2

"Days will come saith the Lord when I will send famine in the land, not famine of bread nor drought of water, but of hearing the word of God. They shall wander from sea to sea, from the north even to the sunrise they shall roam to find the word of God but shall not find it. (Amos 8:11-12)

This is a unique statement in biblical literature. Hosea 6:3 states the very opposite. Light is shed upon Amos 8:11-12 and upon Jeremiah 14:18 and Isaiah 48:19 (similar pessimistic utterances) by Micah 3:6-7. Everyone of these passages refer to one fact. Because of the people's belief in Yahwe as a national God they are bound to be bewildered when destruction overtakes them. They will be left utterly desolate, without anchorage, without light to guide them out of the darkness. Ezekiel 37:11 confirms the prophetic view. Those who survived the destruction thought of themselves as utterly ruined.

Amos 8:11-12 is, however, fragmentary in character and we are justified in assuming that verses of a more hopeful nature may have followed them. We come to this conclusion from surveying the writings of Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Micah, all of whom agree that destruction will result in regeneration and rebirth. The present conclusion of the book, 9:11-15, cannot have been written by Amos. It shows evidences of exilic authorship.

Amos has been justly called the prophet of righteousness. He assumed the knowledge of the moral law in all men. He understood its implications. He was the first to develop the idea of the divine immanence. He held that God is inherent, indwelling in man, that He reveals Himself through man's moral and spiritual self to all men

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1 Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel" p. 223

2 Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel" p. 303



alike. Thus, for the first time in history it came to be recognized that the relationship between man and God was a moral one. And from this time on moral perfection became the religious ideal. Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah, in short, all the great literary prophets, who followed Amos, insist that justice and righteousness are the bonds that bring man near to God.



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## CHAPTER II

### HOSEA

In George Adam Smith's fine commentary on the book of Hosea, he makes this significant statement, "There was needed a prophet to arise with as keen a conscience of law as Amos himself, and yet affirm that love was greater still; to admit that Israel were doomed, and yet promise their redemption by processes as reasonable and as ethical as those by which the doom had been rendered inevitable. The prophet of Conscience had to be followed by the prophet of Repentance." I

The prophet of repentance was, of course, Hosea. He began to prophesy a few years after Amos, during the concluding years of the reign of Jereboam II and he continued his preaching until the death of Menahem or perhaps until the overthrow of his son, Pekahia, by Pekah ben Remalyah.

In the first two chapters of his prophecy, the prophet relates the story of his life. He had married a woman who proved to be unworthy, yet he continued to love her even after she had been untrue to him. It seems that he suspected her fidelity as early as the birth of his second child for he calls her by a strange name, "Not Beloved." His third child he calls "Not-my-kin." After this, his wife ran away from home and abandoned herself to a sinful life, finally selling herself into slavery. But, in spite of all this, Hosea found that he still cared for her. He paid the master the purchase price of a slave and brought her once more to the protecting shelter of his home.

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"At the end of this experience it was revealed to him that this was the Lord's doing. He saw that the scenes he had gone through were a presentation in human life of the drama in which Yahwe and Israel had the leading parts. Yahweh had chosen Israel as His own but Israel had been unfaithful. The very names that Hosea had been led to give his children were revelations of the mind of Yahweh. Jezreel, the first-born, foreshadowed the vengeance that should be taken for the crime of Jezreel. ( i.e. Jehu's murder of the two kings and Jezebel). Unloved, the next child, shows the revulsion of feeling in the heart of Yahweh, in view of Israel's defection from Him. Not-my-kin, the youngest, indicates the breaking off of the relations which had existed between Yahwe and Israel. And yet even when the final sentence of separation had been pronounced the heart of Yahwe goes out to His people, as the heart of the prophet goes out to his erring wife. He cannot give them up. Though for a time he may be unable to restrain them from wandering, yet His love impels Him to go after them. He will seek them and lead them again into the wilderness, where, as of yore, the covenant will be established between them. The heart of Yahweh is revealed to us by the heart of man."I

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Hosea's picture of the state of affairs in his time is as dark as that of Amos -- perhaps even darker.

"Hear the word of Yahwe, sons of Israel. Yahweh hath a quarrel with the inhabitants of the land for there is no truth, nor love, nor knowledge, of God in the land. There is virtually deceit, murder, theft and adultery! They are dissolute and one bloody deed follows closely on the heels of another." (Hosea 4:1-2)

"The great Jereboam is dead and society, which in the East depends so much on the individual, is loose and falling to pieces. The sins

which are exposed by Amos were those that lurked beneath a still strong government, but Hosea adds outbreaks which set all order at defiance. Later we shall find him describing house breaking, highway robbery and assassination." I

Especially does Hosea attack the priests who feed on the sins of the people. The more the people sin, the more merrily the priests thrive on fines and sin offerings. And in 4:9<sup>a</sup> he points out "like priest like people." Instead of being the leaders among the people and setting a good example for them, the priests are utterly immoral and corrupt, and the masses follow in their footsteps. Therefore continues Hosea,

"Thou wilt incur ruin presently and the prophet will meet ruin with thee. My people must perish because of lack of knowledge of God, for thou hast rejected knowledge of God. Therefore I shall reject thee from ministering to Me as priest. Thou hast forgotten the revelation of thy God, therefore I shall forget thy children. As many as they are they sin against Me, therefore I shall change their glory into disgrace."  
(Hosea 4:5-7)

He condemns the sacrificial cult just as his predecessor Amos, had done.

"Thou, Israel, art leading a lewd life. Would that Judah might not incur guilt. Do not go to Gilgal. Do not cross over to Beth-Aven and do not swear 'as God liveth'." (Hosea 4:15)

Here is proof that Hosea was familiar with the preaching of Amos and in thorough accord with his views as regards the sacrificial cult. In 10:5 he mentions "the calves of Beth-Aven" in connection with the worship of the people of Samaria and it is clear that he means Beth-el. Amos, in speaking of the sanctuary at Beth-el, had used the expression, "Beth Aven", the "doomed sanctuary and Hosea repeats the very words of the earlier prophet.

Like Amos, Hosea is a preacher of morality. He represents Yahweh



as saying,

"For I delight in love and not in sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God more than in burnt-offerings." (Hosea 6:6)

This passage is reminiscent of Amos' words,

"Seek good and not evil in order that ye may live and that the Lord God Sabaoth may be truly with you as you believe. Nay hate evil and love good and establish justice in the courts of justice. Perchance God might be gracious unto decimated Joseph." (Amos 5:14-15)

or it reminds one of that striking denunciation of the sacrificial cult, beginning

"I loathe your festivals, I cannot endure your holy assemblies, etc." (Amos 5:21)

Hosea, too, rejects as false worship, the whole system of sacrifices that seems to have gotten such a firm hold upon the popular imagination. He accepts as true worship the spiritual striving of man to attain perfection, the conscious moulding of human life after the pattern of the divine, the "imitatio Dei." He says,

"Ye shall know God by aspiring to know Him. If we but search for Him we shall surely find Him."  
(Hosea 6:3)

God cannot be found at the sacrificial altar. Those who frequent the sanctuaries in the hope that they will find Him there are doomed to disappointment. The key which leads man to the presence of God is not in the possession of the priests and prophets. Neither is it to be found in the performance of magic rites and ceremonies, no matter with what scrupulous care they may be enacted. No, this key is in the heart of man. His spiritual self must search for God. As the psalmist expressed it,

"My heart avers to Thee, myself doth seek Thyself, I will ever seek Thyself, O Lord." (Psalm 27:8)

"Nothing could be more characteristic of Hosea, nothing more consonant with his views in general than the revelation of this fundamental

truth. For Hosea, knowledge of God is the sum of what man should aspire to, and lack of knowledge the cause of all evil; -- that vice and corruption hold sway, and that "the spirit of whoredom possesseth the people" is for him the result of their not knowing God. See 4:1 ff and 5:4. "I

If the people only knew Yahwe, as the prophet knew Him, they would not confound the worship of Yahwe with the demoralizing Baal worship; they would not commit the terrible sins with which the prophet charged them; they would not violate every law of decency. If they really knew Yahweh the people would not enter into entangling alliances with foreign nations; they would not become involved in political intrigues. The people perish for lack of knowledge. They face disaster and ruin because they do not know God, do not aspire to know Him.

Hosea was well aware of the fact that sinning had become a habit with the people. He held no hope for any miraculous change of heart. He had witnessed several instances of so-called repentance, several half-hearted attempts at reformation. But always there had been backslidings and the people were worse now than ever before. Therefore, they were ripe for destruction. The inevitable doom must overtake them. The inexorable decree of punishment must be visited upon them.

Up to this point, Hosea does not differ materially from Amos, except, perhaps, that a ring of pathos is noticeable throughout his writings, a deep undercurrent of sympathy, which, while not lacking in the prophecy of Amos (see Amos 7:1-5) is nevertheless not so apparent. "There is a note of austerity in the terms in which Amos speaks. It is true the message he bears is a hard one; but his younger contemporary, Hosea, has substantially the same message to bring; and yet there is a marked difference in the tone in which he delivers it. Hosea's whole soul goes

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but in affection and sympathy for his people; he would give his all to reclaim it, if only it were possible; every line almost, testifies to the reluctance with which he sadly owns the truth that the prospect of amendment is hopeless."I

Both prophets preach the impending doom of the nation. They look upon it as a foregone conclusion that the people must pay the supreme penalty. But here a new factor enters into the preaching of Hosea, which marks another great epoch in the advance of religious thought. This new idea, fundamental in the prophecy of Hosea, is that the relationship between Israel and Yahweh is one of love. This novel conception of the bond, which unites Israel to its God, gives his whole teaching a different coloring from that of Amos.

As stated above, Hosea came to the realization that God was love, through the tragic experience of his life. As he looks back upon his own marital experience he sees the hand of God leading him to become a prophet. He begins to understand that the drama enacted in his own life is but a parallel in miniature of the mighty drama enacted between God and Israel. Gomer has been faithless to him and he is able to forgive her. So, too, with Israel and Yahweh. Israel has acted the wanton, has wilfully forsaken Yahweh and broken His moral law of justice and righteousness. Yet, Yahweh is able to forgive. Thus "when all is lost, the prophet's love for guilty and fallen Israel forbids him to despair. For that love is no mere earthly affection. It is Jehovah's love for His erring people that speaks through Hosea's soul. The heart of the prophet beats responsive to the heart of Him who loved Israel when he was a child and called His son out of Egypt.

"How can I give thee up Ephraim? How can I cast thee away Israel? My heart burns within Me, My compassion is kindled. I will not execute the

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fierceness of My wrath; I will not turn to destroy thee; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee." (Hosea 11:8)

In the extremity of judgment Jehovah will yet work repentance and salvation, and from the death knell of Samaria the accents of hope and promise swell forth in pure and strong cadence in the last chapter of the prophecy, out of a heart which has found its rest with God from all the troubles of a stormy life.<sup>1</sup>

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew to Israel; he shall bud forth as the lily and strike his roots in Lebanon."  
(Hosea 14:5-6)

The ideas expressed in the fourteenth chapter of Hosea are not at variance with those of the rest of the book, as Battenwieser points out.<sup>2</sup> The confession of sin,

"Assyria shall not save us; and we will no longer ride on horses; nor will we call any more the work of our hands our gods; For in Thee the fatherless finds mercy." (Hosea 14:4)

is in harmony with Hosea's view of a new nation which will be built upon the ruins of the old. The Israel of his generation, sadly deficient in the knowledge of God, hopelessly entangled in alliances with the world-powers of the day, will surely perish. But the destruction, terrible to contemplate, will not be final. There will be a rebirth. A new nation will arise different from the old as day is different from night. In this regenerated Israel the foundation of society will be the true knowledge of God. Justice and righteousness will prevail. There will be no straying after other Gods, no hope of salvation in alliances with other nations. It is this Israel of the future that will utter the sentiments expressed in 14:4.

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith "Profits of Israel." p. 159

<sup>2</sup> Battenwieser "Profits of Israel." p. 246



Perhaps the most significant part of Hosea's prophecy is taken up with this hope for the future. He dwells at length on the process, by means of which Israel will finally be reunited with Yahweh.

"Therefore I shall speak persuasively to her. I shall lead her to the wilderness and appeal to her heart. Then I will reassign to her, her vineyards, and the valley of tribulation I shall convert to the gate of hope. Then she will respond to Me as in the days of her youth, as the day that I brought her forth out of Egypt. On that day, saith the Lord, thou shalt call Me Ishi, thou shalt no longer call Me Baali. I shall remove the names of Baal from her mouth and they shall no longer be recalled. And on that day I shall make on their behalf a covenant with the beasts of the field and with the birds of the heaven, and the reptiles of the earth, and the bow and the sword and war I shall eradicate from the land and I shall cause them to live in security. (Hosea 2:16-20)

In these verses the prophet implies that Yahweh will follow Israel through the misery and degradation awaiting her, again driving home the central idea of the prophetic teaching, that God is ever present in the heart of man, that He reveals Himself through man's spiritual and moral self.

In the Israel of the future there will be no longer traces of Canaanitish paganism. Neither will there be war any more. The people will dwell in security and ease, at peace with one another. How this will be brought about he explains in the following verses.

"I will betroth thee unto Me forever. I will betroth thee unto Me by the bond of justice and righteousness, by the bond of love and fervent devotion. I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness and thou shalt truly know God." (Hosea 2:21-22)

In these verses we have the very essence of Hosea's teaching. He reiterates the words which Amos had spoken before him

"But let justice gush forth like water, and righteousness like a perennial stream." (Amos 5:24)

and he expands upon them. He touches upon the basic truth of the whole prophetic preaching which proceeds directly from the prophet's own

spiritual consciousness, from his keen understanding of the moral relationship between God and man -- the truth that justice and righteousness are the ties which bind man to God. But he goes a step beyond Amos.

Both prophets are concerned with the moral relation existing between Yahweh and Israel but each one emphasizes a different aspect of that relation. The thought of Amos centers in the absolute justice of Yahweh, the ruler of the universe. "He looks upon the election of Israel as a purposive moral act always subject to moral criticism and control... Just as Yahweh punishes the iniquities of other nations on moral grounds, so will He punish those of Israel; the special relation that exists between the nation and Himself carries with it a higher moral demand, and severer penalties. The idea of God, that dominates the prophet's mind, is clear and unmistakeable. Yahweh is righteous and has both will and power to administer the government of the world by the standard of His own character. The moral revulsion of Amos from the immoral religion and the religious immorality of the Northern Kingdom became his divine call to prophecy. His contribution to the idea of God is essentially the faith that the divine personality is not less moral than the human heart of the prophet."<sup>1</sup>

Hosea, on the other hand, "with a moral realism no less stern than his predecessor and a moral standard every whit as high, proclaimed Love to be the ultimate element in religion; not only because it moves man to a repentance and God to a redemption more sovereign than any law; but because if neglected or abused, whether as love of man or love of God, it enforces a doom still more inexorable than that required by violated truth or outraged justice."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Robinson "Religious Ideas of the Old Testament." p. 68

2 G. A. Smith "Book of the Twelve" p. 231

Viewed in the light of Hosea's teaching, it can readily be seen, then, that great as was the message of Amos it was in some respects defective. For, after all, fear of punishment is not the highest motive for living in harmony with the moral law of justice and righteousness. The Yahweh, of whom Amos spoke, was an ethical God, but He was not a loving God. The punishment He decreed was final. There was no repeal from the sternness of His judgment. No note of optimism or hopefulness appears to relieve the awful monotony of the constantly repeated pronouncement of doom. Deep despair and gloomy forebodings lurk in every sentence of Amos' prophecy.

Hosea, however, in his interpretation of Yahweh, as the God of love, supplies a new motive for ethical righteousness. He shares with Amos the belief that Yahweh is the King of the Universe, the God of justice and righteousness, Who rejects the false ritual of sacrifices and condemns immorality, social wickedness and oppression. He agrees with Amos that Israel is a sinful nation, and that it cannot endure. But he cannot believe that Yahweh will turn away from His people forever. The covenant entered into by Yahweh and Israel is not an ordinary business agreement which, when broken by one of the contracting parties, becomes null and void. Yahweh chose Israel to be His own out of love, and even though Israel proved faithless to the terms of the covenant, Yahweh would not withdraw His protection forever.

Hosea pictures Yahweh as being deeply grieved by Israel's attitude. He must punish Israel but He does so only when it becomes clear that the people are beyond redemption. Hosea, himself, is heartbroken at the message he must proclaim. Robertson Smith characterizes his whole prophecy as a long cry of anguish, but this is hardly true.

Part of it is a long cry of anguish -- that part which deals with the Israel of his own day. But the rest of his prophecy, that part which deals with the purified Israel of the future, might better be called "a song of hope and promise." For in it the prophet gives assurance that God will reclaim His people and wondrously manifest Himself to them

"The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that, instead of that which was said to them 'Ye are not My people', it shall be said unto them: Ye are the children of the living God.....for great shall be the day of Jezreel." (Hosea 2:1-2)

### CHAPTER III

#### ISAIAH

Isaiah's ministry extended from the year 740 to 701. These forty years were a stormy period in both the Northern and the Southern kingdoms and practically every important event, which took place during this time, called forth some utterance on the part of the prophet. The events of these years are bound up with the rise of the Assyrian Empire under Tiglath Pileser III and his successor.

Some of the important events recorded are as follows: the civil war that started in Israel after the death of Jereboam II and continued for about six years (742-736); the alliance of Pekah, King of Israel, with Damascus for the purpose of opposing Assyria; (the two kings, Pekah and Rezin threatened, but did not actually attack Judah) the downfall of Samaria brought about by Shalmaneser III and Sargon IV in 722; the insurrection of the Palestinian countries against Assyria, 713-711, which led to the conquest of Ashdod by Sargon's army; the alliance of Judah and other Palestinian and Syrian countries with Egypt to oppose Assyria on the death of Sargon in the year 705. (The result of this alliance was that Sennacherib appeared in 702 and 701 and gained a decisive victory. He sent a detachment of his army to Jerusalem and demanded the surrender of the city.)

It will be seen, upon examination of Isaiah's records, that, basically, he entertains the same views as his predecessor, Amos and his predecessor and contemporary, Hosea. "The two great ideas of God, as righteous and as loving, spring from the fundamental thought of the



personal relation which unites Him to His people and are both needed to reveal its content. But when these two are recognized, all other moral attributes are implicitly given. Consequently we do not find that the third great prophet of this century is able to add any further attribute which we can place beside the fundamental qualities of love and righteousness. What Isaiah does is, however, to lift the idea of the righteous and loving God of Israel to a new majesty of conception by his repeated emphasis on the divine holiness. The familiar details of the vision in the Temple, which constituted the prophet's call, sufficiently illustrate this as does his favorite title for Yahweh -- the 'Holy One' of Israel! I

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I beheld God sitting upon a high, a lofty throne and the hem of His robe filled the Temple. Seraphim surrounded Him, each having six wings, with two they would cover their faces, with two they would cover their legs, and with two they would fly. And I heard them call to one another and say: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is aglow with His glory." And the sills of the portals shook from the sound of them that were calling, and the house became ever more filled with smoke. And I said, woe is unto me, I must die; since I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips: yea, my eyes have beheld the King, the Lord of Hosts. Thereupon, one of the Seraphim flew unto me with a red-hot coal, fetched with tongs from the altar, in his hand. And he touched my mouth and said, inasmuch as this touches thy lips, thy guilt departs and thy sin is blotted out. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, Here am I, send me. And He said, go tell this people: Keep on hearing but do not understand, keep on seeing but do not perceive. Dull the hearts of this people, deafen its ears, blind its eyes, lest it see with its eyes and hear with its ears, and understand with its mind, and be restored. And I asked, "How long, O, Lord?" and He said, "Until the cities are desolate without inhabitants, and the houses be destitute of men and the land be covered with desolation. And until God

hath removed mankind from the land, and the desolation be great in the land. And should there be a tenth still left, this, in turn shall fall a prey to destruction like the oak and the terebinth, of which, when felled, only a stump remains. (Isaiah Chapter 6)

In this chapter we have a new interpretation of the word  $\text{קדש}$ . The earlier idea of "holiness", which etymologically may mean "separation", is that of inaccessibility, perilous and unknown powers. In this sense of the word  $\text{קדש}$  implies physical existence and it is bound up with mysterious taboos. It was thought that the man who approached the Deity must pay with his life. This idea is common to many peoples in their primitive stage, and it has no essential connection with the moral development of the idea of God.

But for Isaiah the word takes on a different meaning. "When the moral ideas of divine righteousness and love were firmly grasped, as they were by Amos and Hosea, the recognition of the transcendent majesty of God by Isaiah gave them a wider range and fuller meaning. It reminded men that the Personality, with which man had to do, was divine, not human. Men were men, not Gods, as the boasted cavalry were flesh, not spirit. The idea of God thus reached in the eighth century became the permanent and underlying idea of the highest religion of Israel." I In chapter 6:5 Isaiah feels that he cannot bear the presence of the divine because of his sinfulness. He calls himself a man of unclean lips, living among people of unclean lips and he feels himself unworthy to stand before the presence of God. Thus he brings out, clearly and forcefully, the idea that  $\text{קדש}$  represents the moral distance between God and man. Not until he has broken with the past, not until he has been purged of his sinfulness does he feel

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that he can endure God's presence. But when the coal of fire has been set to his lips, when his guilt departs and his sin is blotted out, he ventures to offer himself as God's messenger.

"From his consecration vision, chapter VI, it is clear that at the very outset of his ministry Isaiah cherished no illusions whatever about the situation. He fully realized the insuperable difference 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 knew that they were doomed. How ineffectual he felt his preaching to be for his own age may be seen from his bitter declaration in vv.9f. that the purpose of his mission was "to dull their hearts, to deafen their ears and to blind their eyes" -- that is to say, to demonstrate their utter corruption and spiritual blindness and so to make clear their ripeness for judgment."I

The last two verses of chapter VI make it clear that the destruction, when it comes, is to be complete. In chapter 17:5 ff he again emphasizes this fact.

"It shall be as when the harvest man grasps the standing grain, and his (other) arm reaps the ears -- Yea, it shall be as when the ears are gleaned in the Vale of Rephaim; or gleamings shall be left as at the beating of an olive tree -- two or three berries in the top branch, four or five in the (other) branches of the fruit tree. (Isaiah 17:5 f.)

Buddenwieser points out that both of these passages are analogous to the verse in Amos, which reads

"As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion a couple of shin bones or the tip of an ear, precisely so shall the Israelites escape who sit in Samaria in the corner of the couch....  
(Amos 3:12)

"In all these comparisons, the idea expressed is that the nation shall be reduced to nothingness; those surviving the destruction will no more



constitute a body politic than the stump of a tree forms a tree." I

In chapter II Isaiah dwells upon the inevitable doom about to overtake the nation, and like Amos before him, he associates it with the "day of Yahweh." The popular notion of the "day of Yahweh" was that on that day Yahweh would deal destruction to the nations round about and would show Himself to be the protector and deliverer of Israel. Isaiah dispells this notion with his opening sentence:

"Betake yourselves to the caves and clefts, hide in the holes of the ground at the terror of God and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to strike the world with awe." (Isaiah 2:1)

Amos had started out in much the same fashion:

"And he said: The Lord will rage from Zion, and thunder from Jerusalem, and the pasture places of the shepherds shall mourn, and the summit of Mt. Carmel shall wither. (Amos 1:2)

The influence of Amos on Isaiah is obvious. In chapter two, Isaiah sets forth explicitly the ideas which Amos before him had formulated in regard to the day of Yahweh. For him, as for the earlier prophet, the "day of Yahweh" is a "day of darkness and not of light: a day of utter darkness without any ray of light." His mind is absorbed with reflections of the imminent destruction. The gloom of the picture he paints is not relieved by any reference to his future hope. Throughout this prophecy he merely elaborates upon one thought, i.e.; that in destroying Israel, God will reveal Himself as the supreme moral being of the Universe

"Mankind will be abashed, man will be brought low, the haughty eyes will be humbled. The God Sabaoth will be exalted in justice, the Holy God will be sanctified through righteousness." (Isaiah 5:15-16)

That is to say, Israel's day of doom will be a day of Universal judgment. It will be a day of triumph for God but not for the people as the refrains at the end of each strophe proclaim. (See

chapter 2:11 and 2:17)

Like Amos and Hosea, Isaiah directed his attention to the outstanding evidences of injustice, oppression and ungodliness in the country. In his "day of Yahweh" prophecy he arraigns the people for worshipping idols:

"Their land is full of nonentities (idols), they worship their handiwork, that which their fingers have made." (Isaiah 2:8)

In chapter ten, he speaks of their social injustice;

"Woe unto those that legislate iniquitous laws and record wicked verdicts. Who deny justice to the poor; rob the poor of My people of their rights; they despoil widows and rob orphans."  
(Isaiah 10:1-2)

And again in chapter nine:

"They slice to their right and are not sated, they devour to the left and remain hungry; everyone consumes the flesh of his fellow-man." (Isaiah 9:19)

These verses are reminiscent of Amos.

"For I know that your transgressions are many, and your sins numerous, ye that oppress the righteous, accept bribes, and deny justice to the poor in the gate of justice. Ye that turn justice into wormwood and drag righteousness to the ground." (Amos 5:12, 5:7)

Chapter 5:1-7, the parable of the vineyard, also reminds one of Amos. Amos in chapter 2:9-11 relates how Yahweh befriended Israel, how He brought them forth from the land of Egypt, destroyed the Amorites from before them, caused them to inherit their land and even raised up prophets among them, the Nazarites. And in 3:2 Amos puts the following words in Yahweh's mouth;

"Verily I have cared for you more than for all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you all your sins."

That is to say Israel has been Yahweh's favorite. Israel, above all the other nations, has been the recipient of Yahweh's tender love.

Or as Isaiah puts it:

"The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel: the men of Judah are His favorite plantation; and He hoped for justice, and there is lawlessness, for righteousness and there is an outcry." (Isaiah 5:7)

The rest of the chapter enumerates in detail the sins to which the people are addicted.

"Woe to those who join house to house, that add field to field until there is no place left, and ye remain the only landlords in the country." (Isaiah 5:8)

We find statements of a similar nature in the writings of Hosea and Micah. e.g.

"The princes of Judah are like them that remove the landmark; I will pour out My wrath upon them like water." (Hosea 5:10)

"And they covet fields and sieze them; And houses and take them away; thus they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." (Micah 2:2)

And Isaiah concludes, along with the other prophets, that as a result of their sinfulness, destruction will overtake the nation. Nothing can avert the doom. This he reiterates in a later prophecy, chapter twenty-eight (28). This prophecy dates from 733-726. The Northern Kingdom was still in existence at the time. It is evident, from the context, that the prophecy was delivered after Judah had made an alliance with Assyria and some time after the planned attack of Syria and Ephriam had been averted. Isaiah gave this prophecy in the course of one of the great religious festivals of the year, though, from the tenor of his prophecy we discover that there was sadly lacking anything of a religious nature in the celebration of the holyday.

"These, here, also reel from wine, stagger from strong drink: Yea, priest and prophet reel from strong drink, they are befuddled from the wine, they stagger from strong drink, they reel during their visions, and totter while giving decisions. Yea, all the tables are full of vomit, and pollution all over." (Isaiah 28:8-9)

In 28:17-18 Isaiah maintains that the alliance with Assyria will be to no avail. The Assyrian army will trample Israel underfoot. The doom is inevitable;

"As often as it sweeps by it will fetch you, Yea, daily it will sweep by, by day and night, then it will be sheer terror to interpret the oracle." (Isaiah 28:19)

This is a parallel to Amos 8:10-12 where the prophet affirms that when the destruction has taken place the people will be utterly disconsolate. They will be inconsolable. There will be a famine and a thirst, not for bread or water, but for the words of the Lord. "They will wander from sea to sea, from the North to the East; they will run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it."

Both Amos and Isaiah mean to imply that Israel, because of its belief in Yahweh as a national God, will be cast in darkness. The people will be bereft of all hope for they will conclude that Yahweh is an impotent God or that He has wilfully deserted His people. And, being exiled to a distant land they will no longer be able to worship Him. The prophets strike again and again at the fallacious notion that Yahweh is bound to protect His people, that on the "day of Yahweh" He will deal terror and destruction to the nations and give victory to His people. Once more Isaiah gives the prophetic interpretation of the day of Yahweh.

"Yahweh Himself will rise, as He did at Mt. Perotzim as in time of old. He will strike terror as He did in the valley of Gibeon to perform His task. Strange will be His task to do, strange will be His work." (Isaiah 28:21)

And in the next verse he goes on to say that their doom is beyond recall and it would be wise for them to refrain from scoffing and scorn-ing.

The tone of this prophecy is elegiac. The severity of the sentence



which the prophet must proclaim, is tempered by the tinge of sadness apparent in almost every verse. The prophet speaks with regret of the fading flower and the proud wreath soon to be trampled underfoot. From the very start Isaiah has realized the futility of his preaching, insofar as his own generation is concerned. (See chapter six) Yet the emotions he experiences as he pronounces the doom of his people, tear at his heart and leave him sad and dejected. But there is no alternative for him since the people are deaf to his entreaties. Late in his ministry we find him pronouncing the doom with all the vehemence which marked his utterances at the beginning of his career. In chapter 30, for example, a prophecy delivered about the time that Sennacherib came upon the throne of Assyria, Isaiah assails the alliance of his nation with Egypt and once again he sounds the death knell of their hopes:

"Thus saith the Lord: because ye spurn this message and trust in extortion and craftiness and rely on them; therefore, this sin will turn out for you like a cracked wall that bulges out and threatens collapse and the collapse of which will come all of a sudden. And their destruction will be as complete as a potter's vessel that is shattered to pieces ruthlessly and among the shattered pieces of which there is not found a potsherd to fetch fire from a heath or water from a well."

(Isaiah 30:13-14)

Again in chapter 29, a prophecy dating from the same period, Isaiah relates vividly how Yahweh will arise to bring about the destruction of the nation. He shatters the popular illusion of the inviolability of the sanctuary by insisting that Yahweh, Himself, will lay it waste.

"Woe to Ariel, Ariel, the city against which David once encamped. Add year to year, let the festivals take their round. Then will I bring Ariel into straits. There will be wailing and lamentation. This shall be to Me a veritable Ariel. I shall besiege thee as David did of old; I shall erect palisades against thee and raise up ramparts." (Isaiah 29:2-3)

Even so had Amos, in a most graphic manner, foretold the downfall of the nation. (See Amos 9:1-4) And Micah, his contemporary, had given a similar version of the fate which was soon to befall the people. (See Micah 3:12)

In chapter 29:9-13 Isaiah speaks of the reason for God's action. He answers the question: Why will God take the field against Zion and Jerusalem? Let Isaiah speak for himself. His words are more forceful than a dozen commentaries, seeking to explain them, could ever be;

"Be astounded and bewildered; be dazed and blinded; stagger, but not from wine; reel, but not from strong drink, for God has poured out upon you the spirit of legarthy and has shut your eyes. The prophets and your heads, the seers, He has covered. Therefore the prophecy of all this is for you like the words of a sealed book, which if you give it to one that can read and say, "I pray, read this," he says, "I cannot, it is sealed" -- and if you give it to one who cannot read and say, "I pray read this," he says, "I cannot, I am not learned." The Lord says, because this people approaches Me with its mouth and honors Me with its lips, but its heart is far from Me and the fear of Me is like precept of man learned by rote, therefore I shall continue to deal with this people in an amazing way so that the wisdom of the wise will be lost and the insight of the intelligent will be confounded." (Isaiah 29:9-14)

Yahweh will wage war against Israel because the people are spiritually blind. As Hosea put it "they perish for lack of knowledge" "there is no knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1). Isaiah characterizes the popular religion as lip service. It consists of rites punctiliously observed, of ceremonies scrupulously carried out. They memorize every detail and they imagine thereby to placate God and gain His favor. It is all a hollow mockery in the eyes of the prophet. "Religion, as conceived and practiced by the people, was not the heartfelt recognition of God's holy character; but the homage rendered to Him was purely formal, "a human tradition learned by rote" (29:13) a profuse and elaborate sacrificial ritual" (1:10-17) I

....."their zealous resort to ceremonial piety, whenever danger threatened or disaster befell them, their blind belief that they could appease God and induce His good will by ritualistic observances, were for Jeremiah, even as for the other prophets, the proof that by nothing short of their destruction could they be made to realize the hollowness and mockery of their religious customs and beliefs." I

"The religious indifference, the skepticism, the luxury, the dissipation of the statesmen and nobles all proceed from the same root of insensibility to the claims of Jehovah's holiness or the reality of His divinity; and their pride in horses and chariots, in fortifications and armies, in skilled diplomacy and strong coalitions reveal their utter unbelief in the spiritual Power which rules the universe. In all these features of society the prophet reads the symptoms of a deep-seated national ungodliness and apostasy, of a people in veiled rebellion against its true Sovereign. "They have forsaken Jehovah, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have apostasised and gone backward." (1:4) "They are children in ungrateful and unnatural revolt against their Father. (1:2, 30:9) The alienation between Israel and its God is complete; Israel has forsaken Jehovah, and Jehovah has rejected His people. (2:6)."2

The prophecies in chapters 29 and 30 leave no room for doubt that Isaiah at no time changed his mind with regard to the doom of his people. Even the fragment 31:5-9, as emended by Battenwieser, is in no wise contradictory to Isaiah's life long conviction that the sinful nation is doomed to destruction. In this fragment "Yahweh's rising in defense of Jerusalem and His destroying Assyria is contingent on Israel's renouncing its deep-rooted apostasy and returning to

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I Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel" p. 206

2 Skinner "Introduction to Isaiah" p. 56

God.....Isaiah points out the one course by means of which the present crisis could, and without fail, would be averted. He did the same thing at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic campaign, and again on the completion of the alliance with Egypt which precipitated the alarming situation of the year 701 (chapter 30:15 ff) For though he, like the other prophets, was well aware that his preaching fell on deaf ears, he was convinced, even as they, that if only a spiritual regeneration of his contemporaries might be effected, no power on earth could thenceforth prevail against them; -- their future would be assured." I

Likewise, as pointed out by Battenwieser, there is no discrepancy between chapter (10:5-19) and the rest of Isaiah's preaching. This prophecy relates that God will ultimately hold a reckoning with Assyria. The important point to remember, for the correct interpretation of this passage, is this: the reckoning with Assyria will come after Yahweh has made use of Assyria as a rod of destruction wherewith to punish Israel. Verse 12 bears out the reasonableness of this interpretation.

"Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord has performed His task upon Mt. Zion and Jerusalem, then will He mete out punishment upon the King of Assyria for the fruit of his proud heart and for the boastfulness of his haughty eyes." (Isaiah 10:12)

The misinterpretation of chapter 10:5-19 has led many scholars into all sorts of difficulties. Observe, how Beyer is hard pressed to explain an apparent contradiction of ideas if this prophecy is to be applied to Assyria before the destruction of Jerusalem has been accomplished. "Although to the superficial reader he, Isaiah, appears to contradict himself, he was nevertheless true to his fundamental

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faith in the holiness of God and the obligation of humility on the part of men. The Assyrian had been Yahweh's instrument again and again. He had used him against His own people, but now He had overstepped the limits of His commission. Isaiah had long observed that the Assyrian was not conscious of being Yahweh's servant, that it was sheer lust of conquest that carried him on. But now when he dared to boast in reckless arrogance that he would overthrow the city of Yahweh and Yahweh, Himself, Isaiah replied with scornful irony,

"Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith? Shall the saw magnify itself against him that wields it? As if a rod should wield them that lift it up, or as if a staff should lift him that is not wood!" (Isaiah 10:15)

The blasphemous folly of it all. The Assyrian can no longer be Yahweh's instrument, but must himself be punished. He shall not take Jerusalem, but shall himself be broken by Yahweh."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the scholars who accept this point of view, (and practically all of them do) would have us believe that Isaiah, during the last and most critical years of his ministry, 705-701, renounced unreservedly the teachings he had promulgated up to this time. They would have us believe that Isaiah made a complete right-about-face. How a man of Isaiah's character could so readily abandon the ideas of a life time and formulate new theories on the spur of the moment, they do not tell us. Do they want us to believe that Isaiah was in his dotage at the time of the great national emergency? If we accept their conclusions, that is the most logical explanation we can discover. Certainly, such inconsistencies, such positive contradictions are otherwise unthinkable. They are at variance with every truth the prophet has uttered from the very beginning of his ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Bewer "Literature of the Old Testament" p. 113

Robertson Smith says of Isaiah: "More happy in his work than Amos and Hosea, he succeeded during this long period in acquiring a commanding position in the state.....It was through him that the word of prophecy, despised and rejected when it was spoken by Amos and Hosea, became a practical power not only in the state but in the whole life of the nation."<sup>1</sup> If this were true Isaiah would indeed be unique among the prophets. He would have the distinction of being the only prophet whose words did not fall on deaf ears, whose utterances were heeded, whose advice was sought and followed. As a matter of fact, however, Isaiah was no different from the other great prophets in this respect. He was honored no more than they were honored; his words were heeded no more than their words were heeded. In short, Robertson Smith is wrong in assuming that Isaiah attained any degree of success during the trying years of his ministry. He bases his conclusion mainly upon the account in II Kings Chapter 19.

This account relates that King Hezekiah sent for Isaiah, the prophet, and begged him to use his influence with Yahweh to avert the crisis which threatened the nation, in the form of a great army led by Sennacherib. Isaiah reassures the King with these words;

"Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the King of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake and for My servant David's sake."

(II Kings 19:32-34)

Of this account it may be said: interesting if true. There is, however, another version of Sennacherib's invasion that seems to contradict it.

"And the King of Assyria sent Tartan and Rab-saris and Rab-Shakeh from Lachish to King

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith "Prophets of Israel." p. 205

Hezekiah with a great army unto Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fullers' field." ( II Kings 18:17)

Obviously the author of the II Kings 19 account was not the author of the II Kings 18 account. The II Kings 18 account describes conditions as they actually existed. The II Kings 19 account is a fanciful legend, assigning to Isaiah a role he never played and putting into his mouth a prophecy he could never have spoken. The author, who lived long after the prophet, did not understand the real Isaiah any more than his contemporaries did. Nor was he familiar with the elementary facts of the siege. He did not know that at the very time Isaiah was supposed to have made the prediction of deliverance, Jerusalem was actually besieged by Sennacherib's army as II Kings 18:18 conclusively proves.

As for the supposed fulfillment of the prediction -- the destruction of the Assyrian army in a single night -- (See II Kings 19:35) we can dismiss it with a word. We know from experience that plagues don't act in this fashion. The story is nothing but a legend. The truth of the matter is that Sennacherib withdrew his army suddenly and the people were filled with elation. But Isaiah was not elated as a survey of chapter 22, written at this time, will disclose.

Before we proceed to this last prophecy of Isaiah, let us see what G. A. Smith has to say of Isaiah's position during this critical period. He writes "Instead of sweeping past Isaiah in their revelry and leaving him to feel that after forty years of travail he had lost all his influence with them, we see them gathering round about him as their single hope and confidence. (chapter 37) King and people look to Isaiah as their counsellor, and cannot answer the enemy without consulting him. What a change from the days of the Egyptian alliance,

embassies sent off against his remonstrance and intrigues developed without his knowledge; when Ahaz insulted him, and the drunken magnates mimicked him, and, in order to rouse an indolent people, he had to walk about the streets of Jerusalem for three years stripped like a captive! Truly this was the day of Isaiah's triumph, when God by events vindicated his prophecy, and all the people acknowledged his leadership."I

Now let us turn to chapter 22:1-14.

"What possesses you that you all ascend the housetops, that the boisterous city is full of commotion." (Isaiah 22:1)

It seems that some extraordinary event has taken place and the people are celebrating. It is evident that in some manner a great catastrophe has been averted. The jubilation of the multitude knows no bounds. But the prophet is heartbroken. He cannot be comforted

"Therefore I say: turn away from me that I may weep bitterly, do not insist upon comforting me for destruction awaits my people, for a day of panic of treading down and confusion hath in readiness the Lord God Sabaoth." (Isaiah 22:4)

In verses 7-11 he describes what has taken place immediately before the crisis was averted. The country has been besieged. The protecting screen of Judah has been removed. The land has been devastated. The enemy has come to the very gates of Jerusalem, just as II Kings 18:17 and II Chronicles 32:1-5 and 32:30 relate.

It is evident that the prophecy in Isaiah 22 was delivered on the occasion of Sennacherib's sudden withdrawal from the country. If Isaiah had predicted this event it is not likely that he would have been affected in such a manner as is described in verse 4. He would have rejoiced with the people, instead of proclaiming again his message of doom. But he could not be elated at the attitude he saw displayed



"On that day the Lord called for weeping, for mourning, for shaving of tonsure, for girding oneself with sackcloth" And now there is joy and rejoicing, cattle are killed, sheep are slaughtered to feast and drink. You gorge yourselves on meat and drink wine, saying, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we must die." Therefore the Lord of Hosts has revealed to me--Verily the guilt of this people shall not be condoned except by their death."  
(Isaiah 22:12-14)

We can have no more conclusive evidence than this to confirm Isaiah's attitude during the great crisis of the year 701. It is his last public utterance and in it he repeats the truths with which he startled his hearers at the very beginning of his ministry.

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Let us now consider briefly, those aspects of Isaiah's preaching which have secured for him the name "prophet of faith." "The idea that faith must be the ruling principle of political action for Israel, and is the indispensable condition of national salvation, is one to which he always attached supreme importance. There are three memorable sayings of his in which this truth is embodied. These are found in 7:9, 28:16, 30:15. These utterances seem to carry us into the very heart of Isaiah's teaching, for they express that which was deepest in his own spiritual life.....Isaiah believed and therefore he spoke. And knowing thus by experience what it was to live by faith, he dared to ask of statesmen groping their way blindly in a difficult and intricate situation, not seeing for themselves the work of Jehovah nor the operation of His hands, that they, too, should exercise the same implicit trust in the God whose sovereign will was made known to them in the prophetic word."I

In chapter 7 we have the story of the contemplated attack upon Judah by the allies Rezin, King of Aram, and Pekah ben Remaliah, King

of Israel. Ahaz is greatly alarmed and he begins to make preparations for war. "Isaiah ..... bids Ahaz to consider that the whole strength of his enemies has no better front than the two half-consumed and smouldering firebrands Pekah and Rezin, and then adds, "If ye will not have faith ye shall not be established." He plainly contrasts the mere human leaders of Ephraim and Damascus with the strength of Jehovah, the King of Israel. The same thought recurs in 8:12, "Speak not of conspiracy, and fear not what they fear, neither be ye afraid. Sanctify Jehovah of hosts, and let Him be your fear and your dread." The strength of Judah lies in its divine King, against whom man can do nothing; and lack of faith in Him can alone imperil the continuance of the state."<sup>1</sup>

The prophet is convinced that if Ahaz will rely on Yahweh and put his trust in the Lord of Hosts, he will have nothing to fear. It was clear to Isaiah that everything was in God's hand. He had seen the vision of the heavenly King enthroned on high. He knew that Yahweh was the sole ruler of the universe, that He, alone, controlled the affairs of nations and men. "Isaiah is a monotheist in the strictest sense of the word. There is no sentence in his writings which suggests that he attributed any sort of real existence to the heathen deities; and if he never reasons on the subject of the divine unity, it is because the fact was too fundamental in his mind to admit of demonstration. He speaks of idols as "the work of men's hands."... For him, in short, there was but one divine Being; and all his conceptions of Godhead are summed up in the revelation which made him a prophet, the vision of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel."(chapter 6)<sup>2</sup>

In chapter 28:16, there is found another striking reference to

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith "Prophets of Israel" p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Skinner "Isaiah p. 48

faith. "He who has faith will not be in haste" says the prophet. This is in harmony with his earlier utterance "If ye have not faith, verily ye shall not endure." (7:9 b) "In accordance with this spiritual law, the only policy which Isaiah recommended in the crisis of the Syro-Ephraimitic campaign and again in the critical years 704-702, was that of "refraining from action and trusting in God" that is of abandoning all efforts at self-defence and relying absolutely on God.

"This idea of faith is, essentially, the same principle that underlies the viewpoint of all the literary prophets in regard to the material strength and political safeguarding of the nation. But Isaiah developed the idea more fully and forcibly than any of the others. He was the first to make it clear that trust in God meant for a nation, righteous government -- conformity with the divine standard of holiness." I

"And I shall make justice the rule, righteousness the standard and the hailstorm shall sweep away the deceptive refuge and the waters shall overflow the illusory protection." (Isaiah 28:17)

In chapter 31, Isaiah drives his point home with more telling emphasis than upon any earlier occasion. King Hezekiah, unable to resist the pressure of his counsellors, has joined the anti-Assyrian alliance. He looks to Egypt for material assistance. But Isaiah comes upon the scene and denounces the people for putting their trust in Egypt....."but they do not turn to the Holy One of Israel and God they do not seek." For Isaiah there is only one real helper and that is Yahweh.

"Egypt is man and not God, their horses are flesh not spirit. The Lord will stretch out His hand and he who proffers help will meet with doom and he, to whom help is offered will perish -- all of them will perish." (Isaiah 31:3)

And in chapter 30:15, he sums up his counsel, as follows:

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Buddenwieser "Prophets of Israel" p. 269



"By repentance and by remaining calm you might have been saved -- by remaining inactive and showing trust your strength would have consisted."

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There is yet another problem to consider before proceeding to the next prophet. What of those passages in the book of Isaiah which are termed "messianic utterances?" In chapter 11:1-10 Isaiah speaks of "a scion who shall sprout forth from the trunk of Jesse....who will delight in the fear of the Lord, he will not judge according to appearances, nor give verdict according to rumors. He will righteously judge the poor etc." By moral persuasion he will do away with wrong doers and wickedness

"And the wolf shall pasture alongside the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid-- and the calf, the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child will be able to lead them." (Isaiah 11:6)

And in chapter 9

"The people that walk in darkness shall see a great light. Light shall shine upon those that dwell in the shadow of death." (Isaiah 9:1)  
 "For a child will be born unto us, a son will be given us. The rulership will rest upon his shoulders and his name will be called wonderful counsellor, powerful God, ever providing father, prince of peace." (Isaiah 9:5)  
 "And I shall reach out My hand to thee again and I shall purge thy dross as with lye and I shall remove all alloy. I will reinstate thy rulers as in the past, thy counsellors as befores. Then shalt thou be called faithful city, righteous town." etc. (Isaiah 1:25-26)

There is really no ground for disputing the Isaianic authorship of the three above cited passages. Isaiah, like Hosea (see Hosea 2:16-25) is speaking of his future hope for the nation. In some far distant time he looks for a spiritual rebirth to be effected. A king will arise in this ideal future who will be a man of spirit instead of a man of war. By pacific means he will make an end of evil in the country, and will



usher in that golden era when justice and righteousness will prevail. Through his efforts, the land will be full of the knowledge of God. The spiritual qualities of this future scion of David will earn for him the titles "prince of peace", "wonderful counsellor" etc.

For his own generation Isaiah held no hope. Remember the words in chapter 6:12 "Should there be a tenth still left, this in turn shall fall a prey to destruction like the oak and the terebinth, of which, when felled, only a stump remains." "The destruction of the nation must be complete. And yet--there are the passages concerning the remnant, and these show that the hope of the believer refused to accept so sweeping a statement. The judgment will be something more than a vindication of the divine justice. It will result in or it will be followed by a restitution. Yahweh will give His people officers like those of the good old days, so that Zion may again be called a city of right. More striking is the word spoken out of the midst of the scattering denunciation we have already considered, dating it in the time when conspiracy was rife.

"Behold I lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious foundation stone; he who trusts shall not be moved." (Isaiah 28:16)

The confidence of the prophet that there would be some to trust in Yahweh, inspired him in naming his son -- perhaps his first born -- "A-remnant-will-return." And this remnant began to realize its mission during Isaiah's own life, for he had a band of disciples to whose keeping he could entrust the message he had received.<sup>1</sup>

Buttenwieser, too, in his footnote two on page 294 of "Prophets of Israel" points out that "the proven stone, the precious corner-stone laid as a foundation in Zion" by God has reference to the spiritual community of the faithful, the circle of disciples of whom the prophet said:

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Preserved Smith "Old Testament History" p. 251

"(There is nothing left for me to do but to)  
bind up the message-warning -- seal up the  
revelation among my disciples and I will hope-  
fully trust in the Lord who hides His face from  
the House of Jacob and in Him will I place my  
trust, my hope. Verily I and the children which  
the Lord hath given me, are signs and tokens of  
that which has been revealed in Israel, by the  
Lord Sabaoth, who resides in Mt. Zion." (Isaiah  
8:16-18)

## CHAPTER IV

### MICAH

According to Battenwieser, Micah, the younger contemporary of Isaiah, began to prophesy shortly before the conquest of Samaria. G. A. Smith maintains that his earliest prophecies were given after the fall of Samaria, between the years 720-719 B.C. "Some time in the reign of Hezekiah, when the kingdom of Judah was still inviolate but shivering to the shock of the fall of Samaria, and probably while Sargon, the destroyer, was pushing his way past Judah to meet Egypt at Raphia, a Judean prophet of the name of Micah, standing in sight of the Assyrian march, attacked the sins of his people and prophesied their speedy overthrow beneath the same flood of war."<sup>1</sup>

If Smith is right, then Micah's prophecy is addressed to his own people, the inhabitants of Judah; whereas, if Battenwieser's view is the correct one, (and there are elements in the prophecy which tend to support it) Micah's message applies to Samaria as well as to Jerusalem....."he started, some short time prior to the conquest of Samaria, to predict that Samaria and Jerusalem would be completely destroyed, and after the fall of the sister-kingdom, he, in more sweeping terms than ever, reiterated his prediction of the complete overthrow of his home-state."<sup>2</sup>

Of Micah's life we know next to nothing. The heading of his prophecies does not mention the name of his father. No hint is given of the manner in which he earned his livelihood. He is called Micah,

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<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith "The Book of the Twelve Prophets." P. 375

<sup>2</sup> Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel" P. 297

the Morashtite, from which we infer that he hailed from the little Judaeian town of Moresheth-Gath near the border of Philistia.

His prophecy, is, however, a splendid record of the life of those days. He describes the state of affairs in a bold and rigorous fashion, dwelling with particular emphasis upon the sinfulness of the people. Like Amos, he begins his preaching by asserting that Yahweh is about to manifest His power. But he is very blunt. He does not arraign the nations of the world for their sinfulness, leaving Samaria and Judah for the last, as Amos had done on that memorable day some years before. He plunges boldly into the heart of his message with the words,

"Hear ye peoples, all of you; Harken O earth and all that is therein; And let the Lord God be witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple. For behold the Lord cometh forth out of His place, And will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, as waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in a place for the planting of vineyards; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will uncover the foundations thereof." (Micah I:1-6)

And again,

"Therefore on your account Zion shall be ploughed as a field. Jerusalem shall become ruins. And the temple mount a wooded hill." (Micah 3:12).

In these words Micah, like the prophets who preceded him, sounds the death knell for his people. There is no hope left for them. The decree of punishment is signed and sealed. Yahweh is about to deal destruction to His people, Israel.

Micah then proceeds to enumerate the reasons for Yahweh's wrath. Why is He about to deal in this amazing way with those who imagine that He will always protect them? The list of reasons is a formidable one, somewhat different in character from the ones enumerated by Isaiah.



The distinction has been noticed by G. A. Smith, who writes: "While Isaiah chiefly satirises the fashions of the court, Micah scourges the avirice of the land-owner and the injustice which oppresses the peasant. He could not, of course, help sharing Isaiah's indignation for the fatal politics of the capital any more than Isaiah could help sharing his sense of the economic dangers of the provinces; but it is the latter with which Micah is most familiar and on which he spends his wrath. These so engross him, indeed, that he says almost nothing about the idolatry or the luxury, or the hideous vice, which, according to Amos and Hosea, were now corrupting the nation."<sup>1</sup>

Micah was, in every sense of the word, a spokesman for the poor. His sympathies were aroused by the sufferings they had to endure. His anger flamed when he saw the rich perverting justice and grinding the poor into the dust.

"Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they execute it. Because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields and sieze them; and houses and take them away; thus they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." (Micah 2:1-2)

This is for Micah the most serious evil of the day. He views, with horror, a society which countenances, nay encourages injustice and inhumanity of so flagrant a nature. His spirit rebels against it. He cannot countenance the oppression wherewith the wealthy and powerful landlords afflict the poor tenants. The other prophets have uttered denunciations along these lines but in more general terms. Micah speaks as one of the people, as if, perhaps, he himself had been the victim of the avirice and greed he so vividly describes.

He draws attention to the dishonesty of the merchants, condemning them for the trickery they practise:

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I G. A. Smith "Books of the Twelve" p. 386

"Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I be pure with wicked balances and with a bag of deceitful weights?"  
(Micah 6:10-11)

The heads and rulers of the people he flays with the lash of his bitter denunciations:

"And I said: Hear I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, And rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know Justice? Who hate the good and love the evil; Who rob their skin from off them and their flesh from their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people and flay their skin from off them and break their bones. Yea, they chop them in pieces as that which is in the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." (Micah 3:1-3)

And again,

"The godly man is perished out of the earth, and the upright among men is no more; They all lie in wait for blood: They hunt every man his brother with a net. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently; The prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward; and the great man he uttereth the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together." (Micah 7:2-3)

Micah exposes the false prophets of his day. With bitter irony he says;

"If a man walking in wind and falsehood do lie; 'I will preach unto thee of wine and strong drink;' he shall even be the preacher of this people."  
(Micah 2:11)

And again;

"Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people to err; That cry: 'Peace' when their teeth have anything to bite; And whoso putteth not into their mouths, They even prepare war against him: Therefore it shall be night unto you, that ye shall not divine. 'And the sun shall go down upon the prophets and the day shall be black over them'." (Micah 3:5-6)

And again,

"The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money. Yet do they lean upon the Lord and say: 'Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us.'" (Micah 3:11)

In these passages "Micah describes the professional prophets of his time, who, through visions and divination, seek to secure the revelation of God, and who, though ostensibly the spiritual leaders of the people, in reality lead them astray and work their downfall. He drastically characterizes their insincerity, their utter lack of moral convictions and principles. Then he goes on to declare that he, on the contrary, is stirred by the spirit of God, by the promptings of his own conscience, and that consequently, he has the courage and the strength to denounce the wickedness of his people:

"But I am filled with might, in that I am aroused by the spirit of God, the spirit of justice and of moral power, so that I can tell Jacob his transgression, Israel his sin."<sup>1</sup> (Micah 3:8)

We learn from these utterances that Micah was thoroughly at one with the other prophets of the century. That he was a strict monotheist, is evident from the opening words of his prophecy. See (1:3-4) That Yahweh, the ruler of the Universe, was a God of justice and righteousness, we gather from his scathing denunciation of existing social evils. That the sacrificial cult, with its lecherous priesthood bleeding the common people, is obnoxious to him, we cannot doubt. He refers to it time and again. Henry Preserved Smith refers to this aspect of his preaching as Micah's unique contribution to religious thought. He says "The only thing original in Micah is the bitterness of the polemic against the popular prophets."<sup>2</sup>

He pronounces the doom of the nation with the same severity that characterizes the writings of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah:

"Therefore on your account Zion shall be ploughed as a field, Jerusalem shall become ruins and the Temple mount a wooded hill." (Micah 3:12)

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1 Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel." p. 143

2 Henry P reserved Smith "Old Testament History" p. 253

Henry Preserved Smith says of this passage, "It was this bold declaration, which is certainly more advanced than anything we have from Isaiah, which impressed succeeding generations. As we read these utterances we feel that we could wish to know more of the man -- a champion of right, fearless in denouncing oppression and wrong, and moreover, who stayed himself on God when the whole world was against Him."<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact (Micah 3:12) is not more advanced than anything we have from Isaiah, nor more advanced than statements made by the two earlier prophets, Amos and Hosea. Every one of these prophets proclaimed the doom of the nation, as we have shown in the preceding chapters. Micah was in thorough accord with the views of his predecessors and of his contemporary, Isaiah, who did not change his mind about the inevitable doom of the nation even during the great crisis of the year 701.<sup>2</sup>

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The integrity of the book of Micah has been questioned. There is a great deal of doubt as to the composition and authorship of chapters 4-7. The prophecy is disjointed and many authors suggest a different age and author for chapters 4-7. Cheyne, Duhm, Marti, H. P. Smith and others relegate the messianic prophecies in Micah, as well as in Isaiah, to the time after the exile. On the other hand there are many eminent critics who assign at least a part of chapters 4 to 7 to the author of chapters 1-3. Among the latter is Battenwieser. Speaking of Micah's future hope he writes, "Whatever Micah's hope for the future may have been in detail, it is certain that for him the future, the ideal Israel, would have to be built up on the ruins of the present, that it would have to be looked for only after the complete destruction of nation

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Preserved Smith "Old Testament History" p.253

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 3 p.34 //  
also Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel." p. 268



and country."I

This is in harmony with views expressed by Hosea and Isaiah. They, too, looked for a rebirth of the nation but both of them were convinced that a period of destruction, of deprivation, of severe chastisement would have to be experienced before a rebirth could take place. The prophetic hope for the future arose out of the ashes of the present. Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in Micah, chapters 4-7. "The immediate prospect of Zion's desolation which closes chapter 3 is followed in the opening of chapter 4 by an ideal picture of her exaltation and supremacy in the issue of the days."<sup>2</sup>

"And it shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say: 'Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths;' For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide concerning mighty nations afar off; And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Micah 4:1-3)

This passage is found, word for word, in the second chapter of Isaiah to whom it is generally ascribed. The question of authorship need give us no cause for concern, however. Here is the prophetic ideal in the fullness of its beauty. Yahweh, the holy one of Israel, will be recognized universally. The nations will flow to the house of the Lord and there they will learn of His ways. No longer will they be quarrelsome and rebellious; no longer will their actions be characterized by treachery and cunning; no longer will they worship Him

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I Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel " p. 297

2 G. A. Smith "The Book of the Twelve Prophets" p. 400

with sacrifices and lip service. Having learned what God demands of them, they will "walk in His paths." The law of justice and righteousness will prevail for Yahweh, Himself, "will judge between many peoples and decide concerning mighty nations afar off." The result will be universal brotherhood and peace.

Micah had given a hint of hope in the midst of his early condemnatory message:

"Do I change O house of Jacob? Is the spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these his doings? Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly." (Micah 2:7)

But no one heeded his words. The people he addressed were beyond hope of redemption and for this reason they must perish. His words echoed the thought of his predecessor, Amos;

"If ye sought God ye would live." (Amos 5:2)

And realizing, as Amos did, the hopelessness of the situation he condemned his own generation to speedy punishment. But the spark of faith, burning in his bosom, would not be snuffed out and he projected his hope into a happier future day when Israel, its dross burned away by the fire of wrath, would walk in the ways that were pleasing to Yahweh.

Finally, let us examine what one biblical scholar calls "the greatest saying in the Old Testament"

"Wherewith shall I approach the Lord, wherewith shall I bow myself before God on High? Shall I approach Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Doth God take delight in thousands of rams, or in myriads of streamlets of oil? Shall I give my first-born in atonement of my transgression, the fruit of my womb in expiation of my sin? He hath told thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God!" (Micah 6:6-8)

A definition of religion that has never been improved upon!

## CHAPTER V

### JEREMIAH

The title verse of his prophecy establishes that Jeremiah was the "son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth". There is added nothing more of a biographical nature. We are in ignorance as to his childhood and early youth. We know nothing of the parental influences that must have reacted upon his sensitive nature. We can only surmise, by the study of his prophecy as a whole, the ideas that influenced him most. Skinner, in his book, "Prophecy and Religion" tries to show that it is time wasted to speculate about his early history.

He writes, "We are on firmer ground when we speak of the direct influence of prophecy on the opening mind of Jeremiah. His familiarity with the ideas of the older prophets, especially with those of Hosea, appears so soon after his call, and that call came to him so early in life, that we may safely assume that he had known the prophetic writings and assimilated the principles of their teaching before he had reached the age of manhood. In Hosea he found not only a teacher but a spirit kindred to his own. Both were men of exceptionally tender and emotional temperament, sympathising intensely with the people on which they were constrained to pour out the vials of divine judgment; possibly both were of priestly descent, though neither attached the smallest value to the ceremonial side of the priests functions..... It was from Hosea that the younger prophet received the religious interpretation of Israel's history which was the framework in which his own message was to be set. What Isaiah had learned through the bitter experiences of his home life led Jeremiah early to renounce the hope of

marriage, because he felt himself to be like his predecessor, the prophet of a nation's dying agony. They are the two martyr prophets of the Old Testament, men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the most deeply exercised in spiritual religion of all the prophets of Israel."I

In the first chapter Jeremiah tells of his call to prophesy.

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet among the nations. Then said I, Ah Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am only a boy. But the Lord said unto me, Say not I am a boy for thou shalt go to all I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Then the Lord God put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold I have put My words in thy mouth."(Jeremiah chapter 1:4-9)

The deep humility of Jeremiah is shown by his words, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am but a boy." He knew the task which confronted him. He was familiar with the work out for the man who dedicated himself to the preachment of the divine law. His admiration for the prophets, who preceeded him, was unbounded, and comparing himself to them he doubtless felt his limitations, especially his extreme youthfulness. But his fears in this respect are shown to be groundless. God reassures him with these words,

"Gird thy loins and rise and speak to them whatsoever I bid thee. Be not dismayed by them lest I suffer thee to be dismayed by them. Behold I make thee this day as a fortified city, and as an iron pillar, and as a wall of brass against the whole land, the kings of Judah, her princes, her priests and the people of the land; they shall wage war against thee but not conquer thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."  
(Jeremiah 1:17-19)

With these words ringing in his ears Jeremiah goes out to preach the word of God to a people who cannot and will not understand. It



was in the year 626 B. C. and the immediate occasion for the beginning of his prophetic activity was the Scythian invasion which threatened Palestine in that year. I say "threatened" advisedly since G.A.Smith observes (and others agree) that "it is indeed doubtful that Judah was visited by the Scythians, who appear to have swept only the maritime plain of Palestine."<sup>1</sup> The Scythians did, however, aid in the deterioration of the great Assyrian empire. "Beginning with Media, they swept along to the south till they reached the border of Egypt, where they are said to have refrained from invasion in consideration of a heavy money payment. They ravaged the country far and wide, and although unable to conduct a regular siege, they reduced many of the walled towns by starvation. We are imperfectly informed of their numbers and of their separate campaigns. Herodotus says that they scourged Assyria twenty-eight years."<sup>2</sup>

The interesting little book of Zephaniah dates from this period. Zephaniah pictures the invasion as the great day of Yahweh about which the earlier prophets had spoken, the day when God would arise in His glory and wreak destruction upon the sinful nation. (a very different idea of the Day of Yahweh from the popular notion which still prevailed.)

"I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast. I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked; and I will cut man from off the land.....Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the Day of Yahweh is at hand: for Yahweh hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath invited His guests.....That day is a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds .....And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord, and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung." (Zephaniah 1:1-2,7,15, 17).

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1 G. A. Smith "Jeremiah". p. 110

2 Henry Preserved Smith (Old Testament History) p. 276

And in chapter three he gives a vivid picture of the sinfulness of the nation.

"Wee to her that is filthy and polluted to the city of oppression. She did not listen to the voice (of the Lord) She did not correct her faults; she did not trust in the Lord; she did not draw near to her God. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are wolves lurking in the evening, they do not gnaw the bones until the morrow. Her prophets are shallow and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law." (Zephaniah 3:1-4)

But a few more years of grace were coming to Judah and it was during those years, bound up with the complete overthrow of the Assyrian empire and rise of the Babylonians under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, that Jeremiah was most active. Other notable events occurring during this period were (1) the discovery and promulgation of the book of Deuteronomy, 621 B. C., (2) the rise of Egyptian power under Necho and his defeat of Josiah at Megiddo in the year 608, (3) the decisive defeat of the Egyptian forces at Carchemish in the year 605, (4) the revolt of the Syrian states against Babylonian domination leading to the first deportation in the year 597 B. C., (5) a second revolt against the Babylonians resulting in the complete overthrow of Judah in the year 586. With these events the prophecies of Jeremiah are closely related, but in the brief time at my disposal it will be impossible to deal with each stage of the prophet's activity separately and at length. Rather, it will be my aim to survey Jeremiah's life work as a unit and to present the leading ideas and principles which he set forth. Whenever necessary, of course, the historical background for his utterances will be dealt with but only insofar as it sheds light upon them. There will be no attempt at completeness in historical presentation but should the reader desire the historical background in greater length he is referred to chapter 14 of Henry Preserved

Smith's, "Old Testament History."

Let us take up, first of all, Jeremiah's view of the doom. The question we have to consider is clearly stated by Skinner. "Was he sustained at this time (in the early years of his ministry) by the hope that by his preaching the people would be turned from their evil ways, and that the judgment which he announced might be averted by an act of national repentance? Or was he from the first possessed by the conviction, which he certainly felt in later years, that the breach between Yahweh and Israel was irreconcilable, and that the doom of the nation was inevitable?.....The question, however, concerns not Jeremiah, alone, but all the prophets! It is one of the general problems of prophecy which have always been a subject of controversy and on which extreme views are maintained by the advocates of opposing tendencies."<sup>1</sup>

After presenting the problem, giving the pros and cons, and analyzing Jeremiah chapter three to help in the solution of the problem, Skinner, very lamely, and without presenting adequate proof, comes to the conclusion that "the result we arrive at is consistent with the supposition that Jeremiah, in his early years, hoped that the final destruction of Israel would be averted by the penitence of the men of Judah; but it is also consistent with the view that from the first he saw the ruin of the state to be inevitable."<sup>2</sup> In other words he does not commit himself definitely in his conclusion. But in his discussion he states, "of the two extreme views that which insists on the categorical nature of prediction seems to err most widely in this respect."<sup>3</sup>

Naturally he finds himself in opposition to Battenwieser,<sup>4</sup> who

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- 1 Skinner "Prophecy and Religion" p. 74
  - 2 Skinner "Prophecy and Religion" p. 87
  - 3 Skinner "Prophecy and Religion" p. 77
  - 4 Skinner "Prophecy and Religion" p. 78 footnote

states, "Nor is there room for the theory entertained by Duhm, Cornhill, and Henry Preserved Smith, in regard to Jeremiah and by W. Staerk in regard to Amos and Hosea, that at least in the beginning of their activity, the prophets hoped that the people might be affected by their preaching and that thus the doom might be averted. A systematic interpretation of the prophetic writings shows that at no time of their activity did the prophets entertain such a hope. They were aware from the outset that they were preaching to deaf ears for they fully realized the insuperable difference in religious views which separated them from the people; and they did not fail to make clear their belief, that by nothing short of the overthrow of the whole religious-social structure, could the people be brought to the realization of their delusions and superstitious beliefs.....The majority of Jeremiah's sermons speak with such clearness and certainty of the impending judgment that they need not be considered in detail. Only those sermons and passages need be considered which, at first glance, might seem to bear out the view that the prophets' predictions of doom are conditional." I And in chapter two of his book, Battenwieser furnishes ample proof for his contention that the prophets were aware from the beginning that the doom was inevitable.

Jeremiah 4:3-31 is conceded by practically all scholars to belong to a very early period of Jeremiah's ministry and the doom he announces seems to be as irrevocable as pronouncements from later periods of his life. We read:

"Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, remove the foreskin from your hearts, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My wrath come forth like fire and burn that none can quench it because of the evil of your doings. Announce in Judah and Jerusalem proclaim and say, sound the trumpet in the land,



call aloud, bid them assemble, that we may go into the fortified cities. Raise the standard toward Zion, flee, halt not! Yea, evil approacheth from the north, a great destruction. The lion hath come forth from the thicket, the destroyer of nations is on his way; he hath left his place in order to make thy land desolate, that thy cities may become ruins, uninhabited. Because of this gird yourselves with sackcloth, mourn and wail; for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned away from us. On that day saith the Lord, the King and the nobles shall lose courage, and the priests shall be appalled and the prophets be confounded. They they will say, Ah! Lord God, verily, Thou hast grievously beguiled this people and Jerusalem by saying ye shall enjoy safety--whereas the sword touches (our) very lives. In that time it will be said about this people and Jerusalem, a scorching wind is blowing from the bare hills of the desert toward the daughter of My people, not to fan nor to winnow. A full blast came from them against Me, now also will I pronounce judgment against them. Behold he cometh up like clouds, his chariots are like the whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles--Woe unto us! we are undone. O Jerusalem! cleanse thy heart from wickedness that thou mayest be saved! How long wilt thou harbor within thee thy evil thoughts? Hark a messenger from Dan, a bearer of evil news from Mt. Ephraim: Tell all the people, 'There (they) are!' Proclaim in Jerusalem, the besiegers have arrived from a distant land, they shout at the cities of Judah the war cry. Like guards in the field they have closed her in round about, because she hath been rebellious against Me, saith the Lord. Thy ways and thy doings have brought this upon thee. This is the fruit of thy wickedness. Yea, it is bitter, it touches one's heart.

O my innermost being! I writhe in anguish, my heart throbs violently, I find no rest. For my soul heareth but the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction meeteth destruction. Yea, the whole country is ravaged, all of a sudden my tents are destroyed, in an instant my tent-hangings (are destroyed). How long must I behold the standard, must I hear the sound of the trumpet. For My people are foolish, they know Me not, stupid children they are lacking understanding, they are cunning in doing evil, but know not how to do good. I look to the earth and there is chaos and void, to the sky and its lustre is gone; I behold the mountains tottering and all the hills shaking; I look about and there are no people, even the birds of the sky are scared away; I look about, and the fruitful country is turned to a wilderness, all its cities are destroyed, because of God, because of His fierce anger. For thus saith the Lord, the whole land shall be made desolate; therefore must the land mourn, and even the sky will be cast in gloom, because I have spoken and

will not repent, I have resolved and will not retract. At the sound of the horsemen and the archers the whole city hath taken to flight, they retreat to the woods, climb the rocks, every city is deserted none is left. But thou, doomed to ruin, why dost thou endeavor to clothe thyself in scarlet, to deck thyself with golden jewelry, to enlarge thine eyes with stibium; in vain dost thou make thyself fair, thy lovers scorn thee, they seek thy life. Yea, I hear sounds as of a woman in travail, cries of anguish as of a woman giving birth to her first-born: It is the cry of the daughter of Zion, that gaspeth for breath, that throweth up her hands: Woe unto me! My life doth succumb unto murderers." (Jeremiah 4:3-31)

This sermon ranks next to the confessions in importance, in that it so admirably portrays the conflict of feelings which was constantly being waged in Jeremiah's soul. Jeremiah knew that his people were past hope, he knew that they would not repent, that they could not be saved, and that, therefore, as far as they were concerned his preaching was in vain. But he could not reconcile his love for his people to the thought of their destruction. The very knowledge that their doom was inevitable made the thought of it torture; and the fact that he loved them so deeply made it impossible for him to get the thought out of his mind. His people were rushing blindly, unconsciously, to their doom and he was powerless to stay them. With preternatural keenness his brain worked out again and again every circumstance and detail of his people's destruction. Yet his heart cried out for the impossible, that God might suspend His judgment, that His people might yet be saved. This conflict of feelings explains how the prophet comes to break off in the very middle of his vision of the approaching catastrophe to exhort his indifferent hearers to repent while there is yet time. It is important to note that similar expression is given to these conflicting feelings in Chapter VI (cf v8 and also 10a and 15a) -- a sermon which in structure and tenor is almost the exact counterpart of 4:3-31 though in dramatic effect and vividness of description it does not come up to the level of the latter. The circumstance that both sermons belong

unquestionably to the oldest products of Jeremiah's activity lends to them a special significance for our purpose, 'inasmuch as it shows that from the very first Jeremiah believed the doom inevitable.'<sup>I</sup>

It may be pointed out in this connection that Amos, despite the apparent firmness with which he, time and again, announces the inevitable doom of the nation had likewise demonstrated the conflict that was taking place in his soul.

"Thus saith the Lord to the house of Israel, if ye sought Me ye would live and sought not Beth-El and frequented not Gilgal and made not pilgrimage to Beer-Sheba." (Amos 5:4-5a)

The situation was not entirely hopeless. There remained a way of escape from the ruin which was so soon to overtake the nation. If only the people would seek Yahweh and walk in the path He had ordained, Yahweh would not destroy them. But Amos knew that the people had strayed so far that there was no turning back. They were morally corrupt and he was convinced that they would not follow his advice. Their hearts were too hard to be moved by the prophetic word. Therefore he continues with the words,

"Yea Gilgal must wander into exile and Beth El must perish." (Amos 5:5b)

and

"Therefore thus saith the Lord, God Sabaoth in all places there will be wailing, and in all streets the people will call: Woe! Woe! The husbandmen will call the professional wailers to mourning and wailing. Even all vineyards will resound the wailing when I march through your midst, saith the Lord." (Amos 5:16-17)

There seems to be no actual evidence, therefore, for the view that the prophets cherished the hope of repentance on the part of the people.

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I Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel" p. 203 likewise translation of chapter three by Battenwieser.

Jeremiah's attitude toward the Temple with its sacrificial cult may best be gathered from his so-called Temple-sermon,

"Thus saith the Lord Sabaoth, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your doings that I may let you dwell in this place. Put not your trust in delusions like this, The Temple of God, the Temple of God, the Temple of God are these structures. Nay only if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if ye scrupulously practise justice toward one another, oppress not the stranger, the fatherless or the widow, shed not innocent blood in this place, nor worship other gods to your heart, only then will I let you dwell in this place, in the land which I gave to your fathers forever. Verily ye put your trust in delusions that are of no avail. (Think of it!) to commit theft, murder, adultery, and perjury, to sacrifice to Baal and worship other gods that ye know not, and then to come and stand before Me in this house dedicated to My name and say, we are safe--(safe) in doing all these shameful things! Is this house dedicated to My name, a den of robbers in your eyes? Verily I do look upon it as such, saith the Lord." (Chapter 7:3-11)

"Thus saith the Lord Sabaoth, the God of Israel, add your holocausts to your common sacrifices, and eat the meat! For on the day I brought your fathers out of Egypt, I did not give them any command, nor did I say aught unto them, concerning holocausts or sacrifices. But only this did I command them: Harken unto My voice; have Me for your God and be ye My people, and walk in the way that I ever enjoin upon you so that it may be well with you." (Jeremiah 7:21-23)

For this unequivocal attack upon the Temple and its worship Jeremiah was brought before the authorities. "Certainly, the priests at least took it up as an unqualified threat although Jeremiah allows that if the people will mend their ways Yahweh will alter His purpose, yet throughout the proceedings he is accused and defended and ultimately acquitted as one who has uttered a categorical prediction.... It must have been the first time that he publicly and explicitly announced the destruction of the Temple and the holy city.....The effect of his words was comparable to that of Amos' first announcement of the downfall of Israel in the royal sanctuary at Beth el in the time of Jereboam II (Amos 7:10 ff) But the old respect for the office of a



prophet, which had shielded Amos from personal violence, had been undermined by the persecuting regime of Manasseh, and the priests had no difficulty in inciting the populace to an assault on Jeremiah's life. Happily, the freedom of prophesying still found its champions in that tumultuous assembly, and through the intervention of the lay aristocracy and certain elders of the land Jeremiah was set free." <sup>1</sup>

Again Skinner finds himself in disagreement with Battenwieser who asserts that Jeremiah was condemned to death and only with great difficulty managed to escape into hiding, from which he did not emerge until the death of Jehoiakim. "This persecution which began with the Temple sermon continued, except for a comparatively brief intermission, until the very close of Jeremiah's career; it became even more violent toward the end."<sup>2</sup> Skinner terms Battenwieser's theory of Jeremiah's trial and conviction "novel and ingenious." He might have added "reasonable and convincing" were it not for the fact that he, like so many other biblical scholars, is a strict traditionalist, in that he is unwilling to accept any point of view, no matter how sound or reasonable it may be, if it conflicts with long-held notions of the majority, the traditions, as it were, of biblical scholarship. The nature of this paper is such that Battenwieser's theory cannot be presented at length, but the interested reader is referred for a full discussion to pp. 124 ff. of his "Prophets of Israel."

Likewise Battenwieser opposes the view held by practically all the scholars that Jeremiah took part in the Deuteronomic reformation. Skinner especially, devotes many pages in an attempt to prove that for a long time Jeremiah was actively engaged in assisting the Deuteronomists to reform the worship of Judah, but that when he perceived the

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<sup>1</sup> Skinner "Prophecy and Religion" p. 171, 172

<sup>2</sup> Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel." p. 14

abuses of the law he finally turned against it. Battenwieser points out that Jeremiah was ever in active opposition to the priests and legally recognized prophets. His opposition was carried on in the face of the recently promulgated Deuteronomic law which claimed that the sacrificial cult was of divine origin. There is nothing in his writings which might lead us to believe that Jeremiah was in sympathy with the Deuteronomic movement, much less an ardent worker on its behalf. On the contrary such passages as

"How do they say we are wise and the law (Torah) of the Lord is with us." (Jeremiah 8:8a)

and,

"Come let us plot against Jeremiah, that the Torah of the priest, and the counsel of the people and the revelation of the prophet may not be imperilled." (Jeremiah 18:18)

seem to prove the opposite, despite all assertions to the contrary.

In scoring the nation for its sinfulness Jeremiah makes use of Hosea's favorite figure of husband and wife to illustrate the relation between Yahweh and Israel. (See Jeremiah 3:1 ff)

"They say, if a man put away his wife and she go away from him and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not the land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return unto Me, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 3:1)

Again he uses the image of father and son utilized so effectively by Hosea

"Thou shalt call Me, father and shalt not turn away from Me." (Jeremiah 3: 19)

Jeremiah is urging the same theme as Hosea, with closer insistence on the past history of Israel. The nation owed everything to its God; its being and well being alike were due to His constant and peculiar care. Without His intervention it would have been nothing, but He had treated it before all the world as His son. Gratitude should have been

sufficient to make evident His claim to its peculiar devotion. The men should have given all to the One who grudged them nothing; but neither the recognition of what He is in Himself nor the knowledge of what He has revealed Himself to be in all their past history has been sufficient to retain their allegiance."<sup>1</sup>

The series of oracles 3:1-5, 19-25; 4:1ff form a connected whole which deals with national reformation, according to Welch, who dates them early in Jeremiah's career because of their obvious dependence on Hosea. "All through, the thought of his great predecessor governs the attitude of the younger man. In the same way Isaiah began with the ideals and even the terms of Amos."<sup>2</sup>

Year after year Jeremiah continued his vain protests against the popular religion. During the reign of Jehoiakim he tried to instruct the people by means of an object lesson. The Chaldean army was invading the land and the people were taking refuge behind the walls of Jerusalem. Among the refugees were the Rechabites, who were noted for their fidelity to ancestral traditions. Well aware of their allegiance to the ancient standards of conduct Jeremiah invited some of them into one of the Temple chambers and set wine before them.

"But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons forever: Neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us." (Jeremiah 35:5)

Then Jeremiah went forth and held up the Rechabites as an example to the inhabitants of Judah, because of their loyalty and constancy.

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1 Welch "Jeremiah" p. 63

2 Welch "Jeremiah" p. 74

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah saying.....The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment; notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto Me. I have sent also to you all My servants, the prophets, rising up early and sending them saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto Me.....Therefore thus saith the Lord God Sabaoth, the God of Israel; Behold I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered." (Jeremiah 35:12 ff)

He commends the Rechabites "not because of any of the particular forms of their abstinence, but because of their constancy. Here were people who remembered and through centuries had remained loyal to the precepts of an ancestor; while Israel had fallen from their ancient faithfulness to their God and ignored His commandments. The steadfast loyalty of these simple nomads to the institutions of a far-away human father, how it put to shame Judah's delinquency from the commands of her Divine Father! This contrast is in line with the others, which we have seen Jeremiah emphasizing, between his people's fickleness towards God and the obdurate adherence of the Gentiles to their national Gods, or the constancy of the processes of nature; the birds that know the seasons of their coming, the unfailing snows of Lebanon and the streams of the hills."<sup>1</sup>

"Hath a nation changed its God, even though they are no Gods? But My people hath changed its glory for that which is of no avail." (Jeremiah 2:11)

Some slight idea of the bitterness in Jeremiah's heart may be gained from the above quoted verse. He sees the devotion of the



nations to their gods which are nonentities and contrasts it with Israel's faithlessness, its straying away from the one, true God. The hopelessness of his preaching weighs heavily upon him. More than once he gives voice to sentiments of misery and despair. At times his heart is filled to overflowing and he complains against the suffering he must bear. "It was as if the measure of personal suffering was necessary to bring his religious endowment to its full development. Even as Hosea's bitter domestic experience led him, in advance of his age, to the realization that God was love, so the opprobrium and abuse which Jeremiah had to endure, led him through travail of spirit to a closer and more personal relation with God than we have evidence of in any of his predecessor prophets. Forsaken by his fellowmen, driven into hiding to escape death, he found a higher fellowship, a surer solace in the consciousness he acquired of God's nearness to him. His severe isolation served but to nourish and intensify his reliance upon God and to open his mind to the deeper spiritual significance of his mission. This saving sense of God's presence grew on the prophet until we find him exclaiming from a full heart, as the Psalmist later, "God is my strength and my refuge." Indeed with this sense of communion with God, Jeremiah's whole being became permeated and all his thinking surcharged."I

These utterances of the prophet laying bare the inmost secrets of his life, his fears, doubts and sufferings are known as the "Confessions." They are six in number but for our purpose it will be enough to examine one or two of them.

"Thou, O God hast enthralled me and I am enthralled;  
Thou hast seized and overpowered me. I have become  
a constant target for laughter; everyone mocketh  
me. For as often as I speak I have to cry out,  
have to complain of violence and abuse, for the

word of God but serveth to bring upon me insult and derision without end. And I thought I will not heed Him, I will not speak any more in His name; but it was within me as a raging fire, shut up in my bosom; I strove to withstand it, but I could not, Yea, I hear the whispering of many attack on all sides: inform on him, or let us play the informer; everyone of my bosom friends is watching to contrive my downfall; perhaps he will let himself be entrapped, so that we may get him into our power and take revenge on him. But God is with me. I triumph like a hero. Hence my persecutors must exhaust themselves and accomplish nothing. They suffer great shame, because they succeed not; their shame will never be forgotten." (Jeremiah 20:7-11)

"Cursed be the day that I was born! Let not the day that my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought the glad tidings to my father; 'A male child is born unto thee'-- and filled him with joy. May that man be like the cities which God overthrew mercilessly. May he hear screams of anguish in the morning, cries of alarm at noon-tide. Would that they had killed me at birth, or that my mother had been my grave, and her womb carried me for all time. Wherefore came I forth from the womb to see misery and woe, that my days should vanish in despair." (Jeremiah 20:14-18)

The pathos of this last confession is overwhelming. The tragedy of Jeremiah's life is here clearly portrayed. He has drunk the cup of despair to the dregs yet his spirit is not conquered. G. A. Smith says of him, "The man would not be mastered, but if mastered is not crushed. He questions each moment of his sufferings, each moment of his people's oncoming doom. He debates with God on matters of justice. He wrestles things out with God and emerges from each wrestle not halt and limping like Jacob of old, but firm and calm, more clear in his mind and more sure of himself--as we see him at last when the full will of God breaks upon his soul with the battle of Carchemish and he calmly surrenders to his own and his people's fate. That is how this prophet, by nature so fluid and so shrinking stands out henceforth a fenced city and a wall of bronze over against the whole people of the land; the unbreak-

able figure in the breaking up of the state and the nation."<sup>1</sup>

Or as Skinner states it "Disowned by men and driven in upon himself, he found in the truth of his rejected prophecy an indissoluble link of communion between his own soul and God. Amid all his tribulations and the defeat of his lifework it was a blessedness of which nothing could rob him that Yahweh, the God of Israel, had spoken to him, and received him into His fellowship. And in this individual response to the voice of God he discovered an earnest of that instinctive and universal sense of the divine in which he recognized the permanent essence of religion."<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah, in his letter to the exiles in Babylon, brings out the truth that Yahweh may be worshipped outside the borders of Judah, that the exiles may be loyal citizens of the country in which they find themselves and yet not swerve one iota from the worship demanded by Yahweh. He writes to them as follows:

"Build houses and dwell therein. Plant orchards and eat their fruit; Take you wives and beget children that you may wax and not diminish and seek the good of the land to which I have led you captive; and pray for it to Yahweh. For with its welfare is yours bound up. For well do I know the thoughts that I think concerning you--thoughts of weal and not of ill -- to give you a future of hope. When you pray to me I will hear. When you seek Me you shall find Me. When you seek with all your heart I shall be found of you, saith Yahweh." (Jeremiah 29:5-7 and 11-14)<sup>3</sup>

In connection with this letter Skinner wisely observes that the Zionist controversy of our day is no new phase of Jewish religion; it dates from the Babylonian captivity.

The truth contained in this prophecy is not a new one. It is the

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1 G. A. Smith "Jeremiah" p. 337

2 Skinner "Prophecy + Religion" p. 219

3 Translation by Skinner

very kernel of all prophetic teaching. It develops the theme of the immanence of God and it prescribes the method whereby man can experience God. Not by means of the sacrificial altar nor through the intervention of the priestly attendant can man approach the Deity, but by striving to know God, by earnestly seeking after Him, can he find Him. Jeremiah expresses here the same thought Hosea developed.

"Ye shall know God by aspiring to know Him. If  
we but search for Him we shall surely find Him.  
(Hosea 6:3)

The religion Jeremiah preached was independent of Judah, independent of the Temple, independent of all forms and ceremonies. The destruction of the Temple was only an incident in the Divine plan of things. For the development of the true faith it was entirely immaterial. As a matter of fact it had been a great hindrance and the religious life of the future could dispense with it.

"In accordance with this, the glorious future consummation, which is the ideal of the prophets will consist therein, that the whole people will know God, that every man will experience God in his heart and strive evermore after justice and righteousness; Jeremiah even goes so far as to predict that in the ideal future all codified law will be dispensed with, since God's moral law will be indelibly inscribed in the heart of each individual and will assert itself unfailingly in every conscience."I

"Days shall come, saith the Lord when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they broke, so that I cast them off. But this will be the covenant which I shall make with the house of Israel in the days to come, saith the Lord: I shall implant **My** law in their minds and I shall write it in their hearts, and I shall be to them



a God, and they shall be to Me a people -- Then they will no longer need to teach one another with the words, "Know God!" For they will all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

There remains now but to summarize Jeremiah's God conception. Like the prophets who preceded him he is insistent upon the righteousness of Yahweh. He looks upon Him as the eternal Judge of the Universe, Who demands of the people not holocaust and sacrifice but the better life, the carrying out of justice in the relations of man to man, the protection of the weak and innocent. If the people knew Yahweh there would be no problem, for to know Him is to obey His moral law of justice and righteousness. But the people are ignorant of the true nature of Yahweh and they practice violence, deceit and treachery, wherefore He must punish them. There is no alternative.

Secondly he was in position to point out the universality of God in a particularly striking manner. His letter to the exiles was of great significance in calling attention to the fact that God's presence was free of the Temple and the land of Judah. Whereas the popular notion of the exile held that it was a calamitous punishment, Jeremiah looked upon it as a wonderful opportunity.

Thirdly, Jeremiah developed, as no prophet before him had done, the idea that the relationship between God and man is an individual one. He delved deeply into the soul of man. He stressed individual responsibility and dealt with the habits, the sins the duties of the individual as none of his predecessors had done. The following are typical utterances stressing the individual .

"O Lord who judgest the righteous who triest the reins and the heart." (Jeremiah 11:20)

"In those days they shall say no more: The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge, but every man shall die for his own iniquity, every man that eateth sour grapes his

teeth shall be set on edge." (Jeremiah 31:29-30)

Jeremiah, himself, through doubt and struggle had come to the intimate and immediate knowledge of God. While he was being persecuted by friend and foe alike, there was no earthly companion to whom he could turn. His only friend, he discovered, was God. "No other prophet," says Battenwieser, "was possessed to such a marked degree as Jeremiah by the conviction of his divine call and by the consciousness of intimate communion with God. Other prophets showed equal fervor and singleness of purpose; some even, as the Isaiahs, excelled Jeremiah in the loftiness of their conception of God and of the universe, as in logical precision and clearness of thought, and in poetic beauty and aptitude of language--in fact, in all of those qualities which pertain distinctly to the intellectual side of the prophetic movement; but as an exponent of the purely spiritual side of this movement Jeremiah stands without a peer."<sup>1</sup>

In tenderness and in depth of feeling Jeremiah surpasses all his predecessors except perhaps Hosea in whose footsteps he followed. In him", says Bewer, "all the best of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah was brought to full fruition. He spiritualised religion by separating it from all outward institutions, even from the nation. They all perish, but religion remains; the soul in fellowship with God."<sup>2</sup>

#### T H E   E N D

1 Battenwieser "Prophets of Israel" p. 10

2 Bewer "Literature of the Old Testament" p. 166