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THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE GROUP

IN THE BIBLE THROUGH EZEKIEL

by

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Thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of requirements  
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A man must know where he begins.

A man must not know where he ends.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation of the problem of the individual and the group in the Bible through Ezekiel. As such it deals with ways of thinking. And it is based on the assumption that mankind does not perceive the world with the same mind in different stages of its development.

The first chapter attempts to describe the ancient way of thinking. This process of thought does not draw firm lines of distinction. Things merge into each other. Nothing stands separate, isolated, or alone.

Likewise the biblical way of thinking draws no firm lines of distinction. Therefore the individual does not exist in ancient Israel. There is no line where a man ends and society begins. There is no sense of separate destiny. Examples are given and linguistic evidence is cited to support this view.

Lest one conclude that the whole is important and the parts unimportant in ancient Israel the third chapter is devoted to reservations. The first half of the chapter attempts to demonstrate that the person existed in ancient Israel though the individual did not. The second half of the chapter tries to show that different degrees of solidarity were felt with different groups.

In the fourth chapter I have tried to trace the emergence of the individual in the literary prophets. With Jeremiah and Ezekiel the individual replaces the society as the basic unit of thought and destiny.

The fifth chapter is an attempt to show the relevance of different ways of thinking for the destiny of modern man.

The methodology of my biblical criticism is evolutionary but I hope cautious. The central insight of the thesis is the distinction between the person and the individual.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ANCIENT WAY OF THINKING

Western thinking is founded on lines of distinction. It is based on the perception of essential differences. Its fundamental law is that a thing cannot be both itself and not itself.<sup>1</sup>

We should not assume that this western way of thinking is the only way of thinking. As Lévy-Bruhl has aptly said: "Primitives see with eyes like ours, but they do not perceive with the same minds."<sup>2</sup> He calls the fundamental law of their way of thinking the law of participation. And he defines it:

I should be inclined to say that in the collective representations of primitive mentality, objects, beings, phenomena can be, though in a way incomprehensible to us, both themselves and something other than themselves.<sup>3</sup>

In other words the ancient way of thinking recognizes no impassable lines of distinction.

Lévy-Bruhl cites a most interesting example of this way of thought. It concerns a Brazilian tribe, the Bororo, whose totem animal is the red parakeet. The Bororos claim they are both themselves and red parakeets. When questioned by a skeptical anthropologist they insisted that they are at the present time both Bororos and red parakeets.<sup>4</sup> Another illustration of this kind of thinking is the Egyptian concept of the primeval hill.



In Egypt the creator was said to have emerged from the waters of chaos and to have made a mound of dry land upon which he could stand. This primeval hill, from which creation took its beginning, was traditionally located in the sun temple at Heliopolis, the sun god being in Egypt most commonly viewed as the creator. However, the Holy of Holies of each temple was equally sacred; each diety was -- by the very fact that he was recognized as divine -- a source of creative power. Hence each Holy of Holies throughout the land could be identified with the primeval hill. Thus it is said of the temple at Philae, which was founded in the fourth century B.C.: "This (temple) came into being when nothing at all had yet come into being and the earth was still lying in darkness and obscurity." The same claim was made for other temples.<sup>5</sup>

To us there could be only one place where the original mound of dry land emerged from the waters of chaos. But to the Egyptians this one place could be many places.

What is a contradiction to the modern mind is not a contradiction to the ancient mind. For the ancient mind sees reality as an unbroken continuum. Things merge into each other. And can be each other. Thus a part can stand for a whole. A name, a picture, a lock of hair, even a shadow is the man and their possession by an enemy is dangerous indeed.<sup>6</sup> Ancient man does not perceive these things as separate from the man. On the contrary he experiences them as the man himself. For he has not the distance from life to say, for example, "What's in a name?" The name participates in the essence of the man and has power. He has not sufficient distance from experience to differentiate levels of reality. Thus the dream which seems real is real. And we know that in the ancient world the common belief was that

the gods communicated with men through visions in dreams.

Thus we see that the world is an unbroken continuum to the ancient mind. Its process of thinking does not divide.<sup>7</sup> Things merge into each other and even are each other. Nothing stands separate, isolated, or alone.

## NOTES

1. Cohen, M. R. and Nagel, E., An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method. (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934) p. 123. This is the law of contradiction.
2. Levy-Bruhl, L., How Natives Think. Tr. by L. A. Clare, (London: G. Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1926., 1926) p. 44.
3. Ibid., p. 76.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
5. Frankfort, H., et al, The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946) p. 21.
6. Ibid., p. 12.
7. Cassirer, E., Language and Myth. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1946) p. 91. What Levy-Bruhl calls the law of participation Cassirer calls the law of the levelling and extinction of specific differences. This little book by Cassirer is a brilliant discussion of the whole problem.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BIBLICAL WAY OF THINKING

Israel was by no means an isolated nation in the ancient Near East. The biblical world was part of the ancient world. And the biblical way of thinking was the ancient way of thinking. We are therefore not surprised by J. Pedersen's brilliant one line definition of Hebrew thought: "The Israelite does not attach much importance to a sharp line of distinction."<sup>1</sup>

We know that nothing in the ancient way of thinking stood separate, isolated, or alone. The lines of distinction were not clearly marked. This was particularly true in regard to the individual. There were no firm lines about him which separated him from society. There were no boundaries which fixed his limits. He was altogether merged into the group. Because of this the basic unit of ancient thought was not the individual. "Among the early Semites the individual was subordinate to the group; he was an extreme<sup>1</sup> collectivist, and only in a later phase of history did the individual come into his own."<sup>2</sup> H. W. Robinson wrote specifically of Hebrew thought:

The unit for morality and religion is not so much the individual as the group to which he belongs, whether this be, for particular purposes, the family, the local community, or the nation.<sup>3</sup>

The individual had no clear lines of demarcation from the

group. Consequently the group was the basic unit of thought.

Among the Semites kinship was the source of group unity. It meant a common flesh, a common character, a common history and a common ancestor.<sup>4</sup> Just how completely the individual was merged into the kin is illustrated by W. Robertson Smith's definition of kinship:

A kin was a group of persons whose lives were so bound up together, in what must be called a physical unity, that they could be treated as parts of one common life. The members of one kindred looked on themselves as one living whole, a single animated mass of blood, flesh, and bones, of which no member could be touched without all the members suffering.<sup>5</sup>

This almost overwhelming sense of the group makes it the basic unit of ancient thought.

There is another result of the merging of the individual in the group. If the group collapses the individual is caught in the general ruin. He has no separate destiny. Its sickness will involve him. Conversely his sickness can infect it. This is the reason that evil must be so resolutely rooted out in biblical society. For the sickness of the individual cannot be contained within himself for the simple reason that he has no boundaries to keep it within.<sup>6</sup> Not only is the individual involved in the condition of the group, but the group may be involved in the condition of the individual.

In short -- because the individual has no boundary lines two things result. In the first place the group becomes the basic unit of thought. Its destiny is the central

concern of the ancient mind. In the second place the individual cannot be isolated from the group. Its destiny will engulf him and his destiny will affect it. There is a movement from group in and from individual out which can be stopped at no point. A modern man may consider his destiny apart from the destiny of his group. And a modern group may consider its destiny apart from the destiny of one of its individuals. But this is not possible in the ancient world.

Joshua 7 is a classic example of the group as the unit of thought. Achan sins but his sin infects the people.

Verse 11 explicitly states:

Israel hath sinned; yea, they have even transgressed  
My covenant which I commanded them; yea, they have  
even taken of the devoted thing; and have also stolen,  
and dissembled also, and they have even put it among  
their own stuff.

And the people as a whole are punished for Achan's private sin. Moreover when Achan is discovered as the one who took the devoted things he is not punished as an individual. His sons, his daughters, his animals, his tent, "and all that he had"<sup>7</sup> are destroyed with him. In this old story<sup>8</sup> Achan is completely merged into the group units -- family and nation.

Another old<sup>9</sup> story of interest is found in Judges 19-21. Here again is the idea that evil must be removed. The sin of the city of Gibeah in regard to the concubine of the Levite is somehow a threat to all Israel:

And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying: "What wickedness is this that is come to pass among you? Now therefore deliver up the men, the base fellows that are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel."<sup>10</sup>

The story in II Samuel 21 indicates the unity of the family. Here seven of Saul's sons are hanged for the sin of their father. A further point of interest is the fact that a famine comes in David's time for the sins of Saul. In other words even the generations of the nation are bound together into one unit. Here as in the ten commandments the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children. There is no dividing line between the past and the present.

There are other passages of interest<sup>11</sup> but these stories are sufficient to illustrate the point that guilt no matter how privately incurred, and punishment no matter how privately deserved, are shared by the group. Neither guilt nor punishment is individual.

Likewise the unit of merit and reward is the group. When Samuel says to Saul: "And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?"<sup>12</sup> Saul answers:

Am not I a Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?<sup>13</sup>

Samuel cannot elect Saul without electing all of his father's house. And Saul cannot believe he merits the election because

he is an indissoluble part of an insignificant family.<sup>14</sup> The unit of merit is the group. And it is the same as to reward. In I Samuel 17:25, the man who kills Goliath is promised that: "the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."<sup>15</sup> Another good example of the unit of reward is to be found in Genesis 7:1: "And the Lord said unto Noah: Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." All these examples whether of guilt and punishment or merit and reward indicate again and again that the individual is indissolubly merged in the group.

There is another phenomenon which merits comment in this chapter. It is the rapidity with which the person may shift in biblical passages. Perhaps the best example is to be found in the message of the children of Israel to the king of Edom:

And the children of Israel said unto him: We will go up by the highway; and if we drink of thy water, I and my cattle, then will I give the price thereof; let me only pass through on my feet; there is no hurt.<sup>16</sup>

Notice how the group as a collection of persons speaks as the verse begins and then how suddenly the thin lines about the persons disappear and the group as a single unit speaks. Another excellent example of the shift of persons is Jacob's reply to Simeon and Levy in Genesis 34:30:



Ye have troubled me, to make me odious unto the inhabitants of the land, even unto the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and, I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.<sup>17</sup>

Observe how the private limits of Jacob dissolve in the middle of the verse and reappear at the end of the verse. These examples illustrate just how thin are the lines which surround and limit the individual. They bring us back to the beginning of this chapter and confirm Pedersen's statement:

The Israelite does not attach much importance to a sharp line of distinction.<sup>18</sup>

## NOTES

1. Pedersen, J., Israel, Its Life and Culture. (London: Oxford University Press, 1926) Vol. 1-2, p. 55.
2. Jacobson, D., The Social Background of the Old Testament. (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1942) p. 114.
3. Robinson, H. W., The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament. (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1913) p. 87.
4. Pedersen, op. cit., pp. 48 and 57.
5. Smith, W. R., The Religion of the Semites. 3rd Ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1927) p. 273.
6. Johnson, A. R., The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1942) p. 6.
7. Joshua 7:24.
8. Pfeiffer, R. H., Introduction to the Old Testament. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948) p. 303.
9. Ibid., p. 324 and Rowley, H. H., The Growth of the Old Testament. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1950) p. 62.
10. Judges 20:12, 13.
11. Deut. 13:13 ff.; 21:1 ff.; II Sam. 12.
12. I Sam. 9:20.
13. I. Sam. 9:21.
14. Likewise see Gideon's answer to the angel of the Lord in Judges 6:15.
15. See Pedersen's comment, op. cit., p. 269.
16. Num. 20:19.
17. Other good examples of the shift of persons may be found in Exodus 34:12-14; 22:20-22; and Psalms 44:5-9.
18. Pedersen, op. cit., p. 55.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESERVATIONS

If a western mind were to conclude from the preceeding chapters that the individual was not important in ancient Israel it would not be an illogical conclusion. A western mind might infer that for the Israelite the group was the source of reality. And that the individual was merely the manifestation or expression of the group. Therefore the individual must have existed for the group. And the conclusion of a western mind would be that for ancient Israel -- the whole was important and its parts were unimportant.<sup>1</sup>

This conclusion would not be illogical. But it would nevertheless not be correct. It is too simple.<sup>2</sup> And it conveys the wrong impression. For the parts were not unimportant in ancient Israel.

To such a simplified conclusion there is objection.

G. Ernest Wright writes:

It is increasingly believed by the church's biblical scholars today that the nineteenth century views on this issue have not only misunderstood the Bible but have radically distorted it. On the one hand, it is important to realize that by the time Israel appeared on the scene of history, primitive man, with his weakly developed consciousness of himself as a responsible person, as an "I", had largely disappeared from the civilized world.<sup>3</sup>

To men like Wright scholars such as Pedersen, H. W. Robinson, and Robertson Smith carried their point too far. I shall

return to this controversy but first I must try to make clear the advantages and disadvantages of the language of the dispute i.e. "the individual and the group".

Thinking in terms of "the individual and the group" is western thinking. And the title of this thesis, its approach, its words and their overtones are all western. These facts are of the first importance. For behind our use of the concept "the individual and the group" lie two assumptions. In the first place we assume that the individual has emerged. For us the individual is a fact. The man who knows where he ends and where society begins does exist. The human being who senses his limits, his boundaries, his separate destiny is a fact. Our thinking works with this fact of our experience. In the second place we assume that "the individual or the group" are the only real alternatives for societies. We define the dictatorships as societies in which the individual exists for the group. And we define the democracies as societies in which the group exists for the individual. These are the alternatives we experience. And we assume that these alternatives are the only real options. Thus our very terminology bears the assumptions and overtones of our experience. And that experience is western.

It follows that an idea like "the individual and the group" is useful when we analyze the western world. For here its assumptions and overtones correspond with realities. But this terminology has wider application too. For some societies do emphasize the whole while others emphasize the

parts. There is something universal in the concept. It can be used with great success.<sup>4</sup> And it is a helpful way to look at certain realities.

But it is, to some extent, time bound. The term "the individual and the group" presupposes the emergence of the individual. But there are societies where the individual has not emerged and does not exist. Achan in Joshua 7 is by no means an individual. Neither his sin nor his punishment is limited to himself. Saul in II Samuel 21 is by no stretch of the imagination an individual. I think that Chapter Two proves that the individual did not exist in ancient Israel.<sup>5</sup> Therefore to think in terms of an individual where the individual did not exist is dangerous thinking. We imagine an entity overwhelmed by the power and influence of the group. But no such entity existed! An ancient mind would face a similar delusion in understanding our concept of the group. Our whole concept of the individual and the group assumes two entities in tension. But that assumption may not be valid for the ancient world. We cannot apply the categories of our experience to a different world without extreme caution.

Moreover our concept of the individual and the group assumes that this is the only alternative for society. Such an assumption is the result of our experience. And it has some universal validity. But it may not always apply. There may be a third option. Western experience and insight do not

after all prescribe all experience and insight. In fact there is another possibility. An option quite outside the individual and the group.

The western concept of the individual and the group with its assumptions and overtones is time bound. It tends to mislead us into thinking of an individual that does not always exist, a conflict that does not ~~does not~~ always exist, and an alternative that does not always exist. Thus the terms of western thought mislead us when we think of ancient Israel. And while it is quite logical for a western mind to conclude that in ancient Israel the whole was important while the parts were unimportant it is nevertheless a false conclusion.

If we compare ancient Israel with a society wherein the parts are really unimportant this will become clear. For this purpose I will quote extensively from a most illuminating article by Lewis Hodous, head of the Chinese Department, Hartford Seminary Foundation:

The last few decades have been remarkable for many changes in China, but one of the most significant and far-reaching is the emergence of the individual. The old culture of China was an impersonal culture. The group, the organization was dominant. The individual was a mere atom finding his life in the great whole. Before the law he did not exist except to be punished. Private life in our sense of the term did not exist... The personality of each individual was so penetrated by the will of the crowd that free discussion and free action was impossible... This characteristic of Chinese culture is inherent in the language. The ideographs do not undergo changes to express person, gender, number or case. They have idea content only and the situation determines the form which the idea content takes. The same character may be a noun,

verb, adjective or adverb. This produces an indefiniteness in the Chinese language which is sometimes troublesome. This absence of inflection is in contrast to the highly inflected Greek which was developed by a people with a rich personality.

The forms of address and social intercourse are impersonal. There is an atmosphere of selflessness in social relations. The self and whatever is connected with it is depreciated.<sup>6</sup>

Hodous states that: "The whole family and often the whole clan or an entire village was punished for the crime of the individual."<sup>7</sup> His comments on the impersonal nature of the family are noteworthy. For in China not only marriage but also divorce is decided by the parents.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover even a man's conscience is not his own. It is

in the keeping of the clan and its ancestors. Tradition decides whether a man's action is good or evil. His own personal opinion is of little value. Ancestral worship with all its ramifications holds the individual in his place. It is not surprising that Buddhism has spread so widely in China and the East. Its doctrine of the annihilation of the ego by merging it with the whole is quite natural in this impersonal atmosphere.<sup>9</sup>

Surely we cannot identify the old Chinese society with that of ancient Israel. They are two quite different kinds of society. The old Chinese society was impersonal. The parts of the whole were unimportant. "The ideographs do not undergo changes to express person, gender, number or case."<sup>10</sup> Certainly such a statement does not apply to Hebrew. Hebrew seems to occupy a position different from either modern

western languages or old Chinese. For persons are expressed in Hebrew notwithstanding their tendency to shift rapidly.<sup>11</sup>

The biblical concern with persons is unmistakable.

The Old Testament is largely a history of single persons within the framework of the family, the tribe, the people.<sup>12</sup>

Not only is the Bible a narrative of persons but some of the persons are extraordinary. Any reading of Samuel and Kings will show the biblical interest in those forceful figures the prophets. Here were men with the power to influence God.<sup>13</sup> Here were awesome men.<sup>14</sup> Here was a personal greatness:

Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying: "Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done."<sup>15</sup>

Man has a magnitude here. The parts are not unimportant. The Bible is not impersonal.

In the first two chapters of this thesis we have seen that there were no firm lines drawn around the person in ancient Israel. There was no line where he ended and society began. Yet through a comparison with Chinese society we clearly see that ancient Israel was not impersonal. What is the solution to the problem?

In ancient Israel the individual did not exist. The man aware of his separation from the group, conscious of his private destiny, cognizant of where he ended simply did not



exist. But there was a high consciousness of and a high pride in something else -- the person. By the person I mean a center of power radiating out, a center for both choice and responsibility, and a center for action which could be somehow significant. A sense of and a pride in where I begin. A sense of my ability to penetrate and influence the wholes I merge into.

It is this high consciousness of and high pride in the person that is lacking in old China. That is why in old China the parts are unimportant. But in ancient Israel even though a man did not know where he ended he was highly aware and proud of where he began. That is why in ancient Israel the parts are important.<sup>16</sup>

In ancient Israel the individual did not exist but the person did exist. This is, I believe, the solution of the problem.<sup>17</sup>

The faulty conclusion that the whole alone is important and the parts unimportant arises from an uncritical use of western terminology. Once we realize that our alternative for society -- group oriented or individual oriented -- is not the only possible option then we can avoid such an error. That the individual does not exist by no means proves that the parts are unimportant. To understand another society we must get out of our frame of reference and get into theirs. If this can be achieved, even momentarily and incompletely, genuine insight can be gained.

My first reservation therefore is that although the individual did not exist the parts were nevertheless important.<sup>18</sup> My second reservation concerns the extent of the solidarity felt. In my second chapter I discussed three old narratives. In each story more than one group, more than one unit of solidarity, is involved. In Joshua 7 the nation is punished for Achan's sin but his family is utterly wiped out. In Judges 19-21, the crime committed against the Levite is an offense against the entire nation. But the threat to the city of Gibeah is felt by the tribe of Benjamin as a threat to itself. Apparently tribal loyalty had a deeper meaning for the Benjaminites than national loyalty. II Samuel 21 is similar to Joshua 7. For while the nation is punished for Saul's sin seven of his sons are hanged for it. Thus we see that there are different groups and different degrees of solidarity felt with these groups.

This is a caution against any too simple evolutionary theory. A theory which would begin with a sense of solidarity without qualifications in ancient Israel. Such a theory does not take account of the facts of Israel's history.<sup>19</sup> Before we subscribe to any such theory we should carefully examine three difficult but extremely important passages in the Bible.

The first problem is found in Exodus 32. The chapter on the whole is early.<sup>20</sup> But verse ten seems to contain a late idea.<sup>21</sup>

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I (am) consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.

This verse, however, is probably secondary. My reasons are:

One. Verse ten is a part of a unit 7-14, and that whole unit may be removed with no loss to the continuity of the narrative. With these verses withdrawn, verse 15 follows naturally upon verse 6.

Two. Verses 7-14 even cause difficulties in the continuity of the narrative. They seem like an intrusion. For in them Moses is told about the golden calf while in verses 15-20 Moses does not seem to know about the calf. His conversation with Joshua is one indication. And this indication is much strengthened by verse 19. For אָזְכֹּר is a pluperfect form of the verb.<sup>22</sup>

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה וַיִּבֶן אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיִּזְכֹּר  
וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יְהוָה וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יְהוָה  
וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יְהוָה וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יְהוָה

And it came to pass when Moses had drawn near the camp that he saw the calf and the dancing and Moses' anger burned and he cast the tables out of his hands and broke them beneath the mount.

See Genesis 29:10 for an almost exact parallel to this verse! It surely seems that Moses did not know about the calf until he drew near the camp.

Three. Verse 12 looks suspiciously like Ezekiel's doctrine of לְפָנָיו "for the sake of His name". See

Ezekiel 20:10-14.<sup>23</sup> This further increases the likelihood that these verses are secondary.

With much probability we can say that these verses are secondary.<sup>24</sup> Yet probability is not proof. And there is a slight possibility that these verses are original. If so it is important to note that:

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"and I will make of thee a great nation"

is not individualism. Moses is addressed here as a family just as Abraham is in Genesis 12:2. Notice even the similarity of the Hebrew idiom. In Exodus 32:10 God promises to deliver a family unit from the general destruction of a people. This is not individualism. But it is at least implicitly the idea of a remnant. That the verse does not express individualism argues somewhat for its possible primary character. Similarly the same holds for the fact that the idea of a remnant is not made explicit. The high probability remains, however, that the verses in question are secondary.

Verse 33 in the same chapter offers less difficulty. The verse reads:

And the Lord said unto Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book."

The verse is almost certainly secondary. My reasons are:

One. The verse is part of a unit of verses 30-35. Verse 34a indicates that this unit is late. The half verse

reads:

And now go, lead the people unto the place of which  
I have spoken unto thee; behold, Mine angel shall  
go before thee;

If we compare this half verse with the appendix to the Code of the Covenant (Exodus 23:20-33) we can discover its late nature. In Exodus 23:23 we read: "For Mine angel shall go before thee,". This is of course the same idea as we find in the half verse 34a. We know the appendix to the Code of the Covenant is late.<sup>25</sup> We thus can date verse 34a as late. And since it is an integral part of a unit we can infer that the unit as a whole is late.

Two. In verses 32 and 33 of chapter 32, God's record book is mentioned. This concept occurs only four other times in the Bible. Twice it is found in the Psalms (139:16 and 69:29). Once it is found in Daniel (12:1) and once in Malachi (3:16). Psalms are notoriously difficult to date but the Daniel and Malachi references are certainly late. This casts suspicion on an early date for Exodus 32:30-35.

Three. Verse 33 itself.

'E-KGN ZEK 'N DEN SE DID' 7N1C1

: '722N WANNK

And the Lord said unto Moses: "Whosoever hath  
sinned against Me, him will I blot out of my book."

This is definitely a theological statement. It is not a statement that erupts from the narrative's action. Such

statements which are integral to a situation are not explicit in theology.<sup>26</sup> Had the verse read something like this:

"Have you sinned that I should blot you out of my book?"

one might believe more easily that the verse is original.

But here is a theological summary instead of a pointed statement forged in the heat of a situation. And how similar is this statement to Ezekiel's theological summary! We find that summary in Ezekiel 18:4: "... the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

While I can conceive that a brute outcry against injustice -- torn out of the living situation and not drawing careful inferences -- may precede its time I find it difficult to believe the same for a reasoned theological statement.<sup>27</sup>

These are my reasons for believing that verse 33 specifically and verses 30-35 as a whole are almost certainly secondary.

The second difficult and important passage is found in II Samuel 24. Verse 17 is the crucial verse:

And David spoke unto the people, and said: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done iniquitously; but these sheep, what have they done? let Thy hand, I pray Thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

This verse in all probability is from the time of David. The chapter itself is early.<sup>28</sup> And I can find no sufficient reason to remove this verse from the narrative of the chapter.

The basic reason I feel that the verse is not

secondary is that there is simply no sufficient reason to remove it. The problem is methodological.

Verse 16 cannot be withdrawn with verse 17. For then the whole succeeding narrative about Araunah's threshing floor makes no sense. Verse 17 is part of no larger unit which it would be possible to remove on any logical grounds at all. Therefore verse 17 must be extracted by itself. Now while it may be removed without obvious loss -- its removal is no advantage. When we withdrew verses 7-14 from the basic narrative of Exodus 32 a definite textual advantage was gained. For by so doing we eliminated what would have been a serious contradiction in a single narrative. Here the removal is no advantage. For verse 17 causes no difficulties in the unity of the narrative. Here, in fact, extraction seems to me to be even a slight disadvantage. For David then seems to be acting and speaking in verses 18-21 without sufficient knowledge. At any rate the removal is no advantage.

A single verse cannot be lifted from a narrative simply because:

1. It can be removed without loss.
2. It supports the author's hypothesis to remove the verse.

It seems to me that such an extraction is methodologically unsound. It opens the door to the most extreme subjectivity. It is making the facts fit the theory. It reduces scholarship to prejudice.

Preiffer seems to feel that the whole chapter has been

rehandled.<sup>29</sup> However I cannot accept his handling of the chapter.<sup>30</sup> He denies that it can be part of the early source. Yet the part he considers especially legendary (verses 10-19) contains the very type of fine prose which he considers characteristic of the early source.<sup>31</sup> If David could write the beautiful elegy over Saul and Jonathan<sup>32</sup> he surely could say the things he does in chapter 24. In the second place Pfeiffer's early source contains legendary material.<sup>33</sup> In other words even if we accept Pfeiffer's basic division of sources he fails to establish his claim that chapter 24 has been reworked.

Verse 17 is in all probability an inextricable part of an early chapter. That this is likely the verse itself confirms. It is not a theological statement. Rather it rings with the very tone of the lived situation. Moreover it is not a statement of individualism. David even asks that punishment fall on his father's house. He is saying that his family should suffer for his sins and not the whole people. It is a protest against the entire people being punished for his sin. We see here that the solidarity of the nation is not so intense as the solidarity of the family.

The third difficult and important passage is found in Genesis 18. Verse 25 is the high point of Abraham's argument with God:



That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?

This does look like individualism and individualism in Abraham's mouth is a problem for any evolutionary theory. Verse 25 is part of a unit of verses 17-33. The first half of the chapter is a J document.<sup>34</sup> And Genesis 19:1-29 is a J document.<sup>35</sup> So these verses are set in a J context.

Are these verses secondary? The problem is very difficult to decide. I find these reasons for calling verses 17-33 a later insertion into a J document:

One. Verses 17-33 can be removed with no loss to the continuity of the narrative. 19:1 follows naturally upon 18:6. Moreover verse 22 looks like an attempt to reconcile and join two different narratives. 16?

Two. If the idea of verse 25 is individualism, and it may well be, it is very different from the idea of chapter 19. For in chapter 19 Lot is not saved on the basis of any concept of justice. In Chapter 19 the whole city is to be swept away. Lot is not saved because he is a just man and has an other destiny than the wicked. He is saved only as a special act of kindness. And his life therefore stands in real jeopardy. Verse 15 is explicit: "... lest thou be swept away in the iniquity of the city." And the warning is repeated in verse 17. The reason for his deliverance is made clear in verse 16:

"... the Lord being merciful unto him."

יְהוָה יְרַחֵם אֶת לֹט

And Lot himself acknowledges this in verse 19:

Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and Thou hast magnified Thy mercy, which Thou hast shown unto me in saving my life;

וְעַתָּה יָדָעְתִּי כִּי מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְכִי גָדַלְתָּ אֶת-רַחֲמֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ לִּי בְּשׁוּשְׁרִי  
וְעַתָּה יָדָעְתִּי כִּי מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְכִי גָדַלְתָּ אֶת-רַחֲמֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ לִּי בְּשׁוּשְׁרִי

Thus Lot could easily have been lost and he is saved only by the special kindness of God. The city was to be destroyed as a totality and Lot was nearly swept away in the general judgment. And again justice is no consideration in his deliverance.<sup>36</sup> This is very different from the idea of individual justice which is expressed in chapter 18.

Three. The use of the terms "the righteous" and "the wicked." These terms do not seem to come into use as a pair until the time of Ezekiel.<sup>37</sup>

Thus there are weighty reasons for considering verses 17-33 secondary. This is especially true if they express a real individualism.<sup>38</sup> But this is by no means certain. It is equally possible that the verses in question do not refer to the individual at all.

Context is important to understand this. When Abraham begins his argument: "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" We immediately think of individualism. But what is the context? The next sentence says:

*style*

Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

The context does not suggest a separate fate for the fifty righteous! Abraham is arguing that their merit is sufficient to deliver the city. It is assumed here and in the succeeding argument that the city as a whole will perish or survive.

The unit of destiny is the whole city. This is an expression of the group as the unit of thought. But now there is conflict. For Abraham is protesting the results of the group doctrine -- that the righteous are swept away with the wicked. This is his moral genius! And I do believe such a thing can exist. But note well that even in his moment of moral genius he is not liberated from his time:

- 1 - He still thinks in terms of a total punishment or deliverance.
- 2 - He cannot think in terms of a few righteous individuals. His mind works with groups of the righteous.

Abraham is questioning a world view he is not liberated from. It is this contradiction in the narrative which most testifies to its truth.

When the narrative is so understood we see that it fits in with chapter 19. For Abraham was still bound to his world and could make no defense of the single righteous man in the wicked city. Thus chapter 18 and chapter 19 can form a continuous narrative.

These verses are then not individualism. But they are a protest against the group view of things and the first strainings toward a new world view.

I do not find in these verses the kind of theological statement that would indicate a late date. Even verse 25 is a compound of question, anger, and protest that is far removed from the positive theological statement.<sup>39</sup>

There are other indications that these verses are early. The whole very human method of argument, the familiarity of Abraham with God, God's going down to examine Sodom and Gomorrah all point to a J document.

I would insist that it is surely possible that verses 17-33 are integral to the surrounding J narrative. But it is equally possible that they are secondary. I can find no probability to found a judgment upon. I have a personal preference but my honest estimate is that the alternatives are equally possible.

Now let us review the results of my investigation of the three difficult and important passages. There is an even chance that Abraham protested against the righteous being swept up in the punishment of the wicked. Thus it appears that there is an even chance that the solidarity of such a group as a city was not beyond question. In Exodus 32:10 we have the slight possibility that Moses on Mount Sinai envisaged the deliverance of his family in the midst of the destruction of the people. And we have no reason to doubt that David questioned the justice of the whole people suffering

for his sin.

None of these early passages is an expression of individualism. But they do indicate that some men under certain conditions questioned the solidarity of groups larger than the family. The feeling of unity beyond the family seems then to have been of a lesser intensity than that same feeling within the family. Pedersen's comment is worth noting:

Thus it may, in more than one sense, be doubtful how widely the responsibility extends, but there can be no doubt that peace must normally extend to the whole of the people, and in this there is always a certain community of will, a strong fellow feeling, even if it cannot compare with the family feeling in intensity.<sup>40</sup>

My second reservation then is that group solidarity is not so simple a thing. Different degrees of solidarity were felt with different groups. And beyond the family the real solidarity, the solidarity of destiny, could be questioned.

These then are my reservations. They are important. But notwithstanding them the fact remains that the individual did not exist in ancient Israel before the literary prophets. We have surveyed the important material before that time and I believe the above conclusion is justified.

## NOTES

1. In contrast to the west where the individual is the source of reality, the group is merely a collection of individuals, and the whole is unimportant compared to its parts.
2. See a wise and balanced article in the Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th Ed. Vol. 18, under "Property, Primitive". The work of Malinowski in Melanesia is cited.
3. Wright, G. Ernest, The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society. (London: SCM Press, 1954) p. 23.
4. For an interesting example see Wolf, Walther, Individuum und Gemeinschaft in der ägyptischen Kultur. H. Wheeler Robinson summarizes Wolf's little book in Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments, September, 1935, in his article "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality", pp. 61-62: "Egyptian wall paintings show the absence of all perspective and a stereotyped rectangular view of the subject. This, he argues, is the unconscious result of that community emphasis of which Egypt is so striking an example. On the other hand, perspective drawing in the full sense did not come in till our own Renaissance times, and was itself connected with the rise of modern individualism, since perspective always implies a particular and individualized point of view. Thus the ancient drawings in the flat would be something like the popular ballad or myth, a product of the corporate personality of Egypt, a view of things as all might see them."
5. Of course human beings always exist. But the form of humanity known as "the individual" need not exist.
6. Hodous, Lewis, "The Emergence of the Individual in China," in Journal of Race Development, 1918-1919. Vol. 9, p. 168.
7. Ibid., p. 169.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 170.
10. See note 6.
11. See the end of chapter 2.
12. Jacobson, op. cit., p. 124.

13. For example: I Sam. 7:9, 12:19; I Kings 13:6, 17:22; II Kings 6:18.
14. See especially Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. I Kings 17:18. Also II Kings 1:13.
15. II Kings 8:4. Also see I Kings 21:27 and what preceeds this verse.
16. This explains the differences in language between a highly individual western society, old China, and ancient Israel. Where the person is recognized we would expect the language to express person, gender, etc. Where the individual is not recognized we would expect rapid shifts in persons which indicate merging boundaries. This is the case in ancient Israel.
17. The whole remained the basic unity of thought but not at the expense of the parts. It is our use of the alternative individual and society which assumes an either or choice between the whole and the parts...
18. And this understanding resolves the disputes over the Code of the Covenants. For whether the Code be late or early it does not express individualism. Many sections of the Code, and the Ten Commandments, and the ritual decalogue are addressed to the second person singular. But this "thou" is a person -- not an individual. For the man without limits is still a center of choice and responsibility. Likewise a supposedly individualistic verse in the Code, Exodus 22:22, does not prove individualism at all. The verse reads: "If thou afflict him in any wise -- for if he will cry at all unto Me -- I will surely hear his cry." It is the personal prayer God will answer. For surely a person may pray and be answered. Moreover the preceding and following verse are an excellent example of shift of persons and argue against any individualism. What such a verse does prove, of course, is that the parts in ancient Israel are important. For while the person is engulfed in the fate of the group he is not necessarily swept up in its actions. If Exodus 23:2 is early it is a fine example of the Israelitic sense that a man knows where he begins and feels that he has a will of his own sufficient to determine his own actions. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou bear witness in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to pervert justice." After all ancient Israel is not old China where the human personality was so penetrated by the will of the crowd that free action became impossible. Of course in ancient Israel the group will penetrated inward. But the person's influence also permeated

outward. In fact, it could so pervade the group, that the will and character of the part became the will and character of the whole. I should add that there is in this interpenetration of influence the possibility of conflict between the group and the person. However, as long as the primitive homogeneous society endured, such conflicts were at a minimum. They were temporary crises not fundamental divisions. Once a class society emerged then a person might find himself in a condition of conflict with the group. In this condition of conflict a person might become an individual. And this is what happened to the literary prophets. Thus Exodus 23:2 may be late. It may be the result of the experience of the literary prophets. But it could just as well be early. For the person is not necessarily swept up in the actions of the group. Therefore the intricate questions of the dating of the parts of the Code of the Covenant are, for our purposes, unimportant. Once we grasp the distinction between the individual and the person the controversies over the meaning of the Code of the Covenant are resolved.

19. Meek, Theophile J., Hebrew Origins. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950) pp. 25, 42-43, 82.
20. Carpenter, J. Estlin and Harford, George, The Composition of the Hexateuch. (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902) p. 517.
21. Assumed in the following discussions is an evolutionary approach which is defended in the next chapter. There I suggest that individualism emerged in the literary prophets. Thus whenever we find in an early passage verses which seem to indicate a private destiny for parts of the whole we confront a problem. The reader will find, I hope, that I fit my evolutionary hypothesis to the facts and not vice versa.
22. Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar. Ed. by E. Kautzsch, 2nd English Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press) p. 310:106f.
23. Of course to support one evolutionary hypothesis by another evolutionary hypothesis is a form of circular argument. The objections to such a methodology are immense. For then scholarship resembles building. Only in building one places brick upon brick while in scholarship one places assumption upon assumption.

Scholarship should be more solid than that. As far as I can see it is not. And this is a very bitter thing for the man who loves truth.

There seems to be no way out. Once one accepts a basic



hypothesis -- be it evolutionary or non-evolutionary -- all sorts of further hypotheses are founded on the first. And all these hypotheses depend upon each other. Our method is to pile assumption upon assumption.

To a modern mind the evolutionary hypothesis is reasonable. Yet even if our hypothesis is reasonable and our conclusions are reasonable our methodology is impossible.

I see no way out of this dilemma. Truth remains for the man who loves it most, most elusive. And the seeker is fortunate indeed if he returns with a vision of the probable.

24. This obviates the problem of an early passage expressing a private destiny for parts of the whole.
25. Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 211. "The book closes with a paraenetic peroration (23:20-33) loosely connected with the preceding laws and probably penned by one of the last editors of the covenant code, who was also the author of the brief introduction (20:22f.)" And p. 225. "It was therefore inevitable that, after the publication of the Deuteronomic Code and Josiah's reforms in 621 had profoundly modified the religion of Israel, paving the way for the birth of Judaism, a new edition of the Covenant Code, giving expression to the religious aspirations and practices of the exilic period, should be issued by editors of the Deuteronomistic school. This edition, dating from about 550 (R<sup>d</sup>), was provided after the manner of the Deuteronomists, with a suitable introduction (20:22f) and conclusion (23:20-33, where verses 28-30 may have been taken from another source), in which the transcendence of Jehovah (20:22b), denunciation of idolatry in general (20:23) and of the Canaanite religion in particular (23:24,33), previously missing in the book, received adequate emphasis." Also compare verse 26 of the appendix with Isaiah 66:9. This verse too is an indication of a late passage.
26. See the already discussed Ex. 32:10.
27. In this case the reasoned theological statement would come some 650 years before its time.
28. Dhorme, P. Paul, The Books of Samuel. (Paris, 1910) p. 446. He calls it a J account which especially in verses 10-17 has been reworked.
29. Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 353. But note that he admits it is based on a story in the early source.

30. Ibid. His emendations are not well founded.
31. Ibid., p. 341.
32. Ibid., p. 351.
33. See on the story of the ark in Philistia p. 343. And on the story of Saul's youth. p. 345. I must admit in fairness to Pfeiffer that he claims the author of the early source did not have information for the time of Saul which was as accurate as the information he had for the time of David.
34. Rowley, op. cit., p. 25 and Carpenter, op. cit., p. 510.
35. Carpenter, Ibid.
36. Of course he is not saved as an individual. His family is delivered with him.
37. Ezekiel 21:8, 13:22, ch. 18., etc.
38. In that case they are at variance with chapter 19 and also make Abraham some 1100 years ahead of his time.
39. See Exodus 32:33 or Ezekiel 18:4.
40. Pedersen, op. cit., p. 276.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROPHETS

I intend to demonstrate in this chapter the emergence of individualism in the literary prophets. Why individualism appeared at this time is not the subject of my thesis.<sup>1</sup> But we can clearly see by examining the prophets successively that it did emerge.

In Amos and Micah the innocent <sup>are thought to</sup> perish with the guilty for the society is condemned as a single totality. In Hosea the society is likewise judged as a totality, only there are no innocents. Some are more guilty than others -- but all have been infected by guilt. Like Hosea the first Isaiah feels that the guilt has spread from some to all. But in first Isaiah the first exception is made to a general doom. In Jeremiah the exceptions are numerous. And the doctrine of individual responsibility is explicitly stated. In Ezekiel the solidarity of the group is altogether dissolved. As far as Jeremiah went <sup>So</sup> Ezekiel went even further. He clearly states the most extreme implications of the doctrine of individual responsibility.

Not all are guilty in the book of Amos. Amos often accuses the rich of oppressing the poor. He nowhere accuses the poor of any crime. And in 2:6 the parallelism clearly indicates that the poor are the righteous:

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, / Yea, for four, I will not reverse it: / Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the needy for a pair of shoes.

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Even though the poor are innocent the whole people without exceptions will suffer. For the people as a whole is guilty. And as a whole it will be punished. The society is a totality which can have but one common destiny. The vision of the plumbline by which God measures the people demonstrates this. For the Lord says: "Behold I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel; I will not again pardon them any more." (7:8) And it is the people itself which is the basket of rotten summer fruit in the fourth vision. "Then said the Lord unto me: The end is come upon My people Israel; I will not again pardon them any more." (8:2) The last vision is as explicit as one can be. "And I will slay the residue of them with the sword; There shall not one of them flee away, And there shall not one of them escape." Thus the society, as a whole, is doomed.

There are, of course, grounds for disagreement. Chapter 5 contains several hopeful verses. Verse 15 is the most important:

Hate the evil, and love the good,  
And establish justice in the gate;  
It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,  
Will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

In chapter 4 Amos had said that God tried to warn the people

by famine, drought, diseases to crops, human pestilence, and other natural calamities. Nothing helped. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; /Because I will do this unto thee,/ Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." (4:12) In other words a great calamity is coming. Whether or not it will completely destroy the people Amos is not fully decided. In chapter 5 he alternates between doom and a limited hope. But two things must be remembered. This indecision is but a stage in his thought. In the visions of the last 3 chapters of the book we see how Amos progressed from hope to total doom. Chapter 5 is therefore only a stage in the prophecy of Amos. Secondly this remnant is but a stage in the process of destruction. It is not the just remnant delivered because of its merit. In itself it has no ethical character. What Amos hopes is that the belated righteousness of the people will halt the process of destruction and leave of the people a not chosen slice of itself as a remnant. It is the people as a whole saving some undetermined slice of itself. This stage in Amos' thought of a non-ethical remnant scarcely refutes my contention that the society has one common destiny.<sup>2</sup>

This feeling that the people has one common fate is expressed in Amos' condemnation of the wicked. He says of those "at ease in Zion": "Therefore now shall they go captive at the head of them that go captive." (6:7) His answer to Amaziah exhibits a similar diffusion of punishment even when he addresses himself to a single man.<sup>3</sup>

The book of Amos is permeated with an overwhelming sense of the solidarity of the group.<sup>4</sup> 3:1-2 is a striking confirmation of this fact:

Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.

הַכְּזֵה' יְהוָה אֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם  
וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם  
וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם  
וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם וְאֶתְּכֶם

Without question the children of Israel are one indivisible unit. Note well that Amos does not call them one pe or people. The designation Amos uses is family (neben). I think this shows how tightly knit a unit he was thinking of. For the family is the unit of common blood.<sup>5</sup> It is the most intense unit of solidarity possible. When Amos calls the whole people one family we may be sure that for him the whole nation is the unit of solidarity.<sup>6</sup>

Thus in Amos the people as a whole share a common fate. This is made especially clear by Amos' insistence that the poor are innocent. Nevertheless the society is judged and punished as a totality.

Micah is very much like Amos. Here too is the sense of the close knit group. The people are even called a family.<sup>7</sup>

And this family as a total unit is guilty. It has become an enemy to God.<sup>8</sup> Therefore it will be punished as a totality.<sup>9</sup> There are no exceptions in the general disaster.

In another way Micah is similar to Amos. How many times he attacks the rich and the powerful! Again and again he says that the nation's sin is their oppression of the poor and powerless.<sup>10</sup> And at one point he explicitly says that the destruction will come because of their sins:

Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of  
 Jacob,  
 And rulers of the house of Israel,  
 That abhor justice, and pervert all equity;  
 That build up Zion with blood,  
 And Jerusalem with iniquity.  
 The heads thereof judge for reward,  
 And the priests thereof teach for hire,  
 And the prophets thereof divine for money;  
 Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say:  
 "Is not the Lord in the midst of us?  
 No evil shall come upon us"?  
 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a  
 field,  
 And Jerusalem shall become heaps,  
 And the mountain of the house as the high places  
 of a forest.<sup>11</sup>

While we have no explicit statement in Micah as we do in Amos that the poor are the innocent yet we can be quite sure that the poor are for Micah innocent. There is, of course, the explicit statement that the sins of the leaders are the cause of the coming calamity. There is almost the definition of sin as the oppression of the weak by the strong.<sup>12</sup> There is the feeling of the text. I mean Micah's concern for the weak and the poor.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in only one place is there a

suggestion that the poor may be at fault. In 3:5 we find: "Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people to err." I do not feel that this half verse, isolated and indirect, is sufficient evidence to prove that Micah felt the poor were at fault. If we weigh this single half verse against the evidence to the contrary we can reasonably conclude that for Micah the poor are innocent.

We may conclude, therefore, with some assurance that Micah like Amos thought all will suffer although some are innocent. In both the nation is the unit of destiny.

Hosea is a different kind of man. He is more flexible than Amos or Micah and he alternates between doom and hope. Often he foresees, as at the end of chapter 9, a terrible disaster approaching. But at least three times in the book he holds out hope for his people.<sup>14</sup> But whether disaster or hope is the message it is always directed to the whole people. There is no division in the destiny of the people. This is clear in the individual verses and in the general approach of the book. Note that the land is thought of as the wife of Yahweh and is accused of harlotry.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Micah and Amos, Hosea draws no distinction between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak. His main criticism is a criticism of the unfaithfulness of the whole people. He has not the sharp sense of special guilt found in the other two prophets. He has the sense of a general guilt of the whole people.<sup>16</sup>



Even when Hosea specifies groups this general guilt is clear.<sup>17</sup> 4:6-9 is an interesting example of this. In verse 8 the priests are criticized for encouraging the sin of the people and profiting by it. But verse 9 equates the people and the priests:

And it is like people, like priest;  
And I will punish him for his ways,  
And will recompense him his doings.

Thus although Hosea does criticize special groups<sup>18</sup> there is not the slightest intimation that any part of the people is innocent. On the contrary the evidence is unanimous that the whole people is at fault.

But there is an idea in Hosea about the spread of guilt which is worth mentioning. Hosea seems to feel that Ephraim is the leader and its guilt has spread to Judah. 5:3 is quite clear:

I know Ephraim and Israel is not hidden from me,  
For at the time when Ephraim committed harlotry  
Israel was defiled.<sup>19</sup> *— heyd?*

So the idea of one group making another group guilty is found in Hosea.

In Hosea all are guilty. This is the new idea. But whether for punishment or redemption all share a common fate. The unity of destiny remains the people.

Similar to Hosea is first Isaiah. Here too all are guilty. God sends Assyria against "an ungodly nation."<sup>20</sup>

It is an insincere nation and their peity is "a commandment of man learned by rote."<sup>21</sup> Most of all "they were not willing to hear."<sup>22</sup> It is a nation which rejects the prophet's formula for survival.

According to Hosea Ephraim caused Judah to sin. This idea that guilt spreads is more fully developed in Isaiah. For in Isaiah the leaders carry the disease and infect their people. Thus while all become guilty all are not equally guilty. This is clearly stated:

For they that lead this people cause them to err;  
And they that are led of them are destroyed.<sup>23</sup>

The overall impression given by Isaiah is that the whole people are sinners but the leaders have led them into sin. There is, however, one passage especially which is reminiscent of Amos and Micah. In it the division between the poor and the rich is sharply drawn and there is at least the suggestion that the poor are innocent:

What mean ye that ye crush My people,  
And grind the face of the poor?"  
Saith the Lord, God of hosts.<sup>24</sup>

Yet the overall impression remains that the whole people is guilty.

Do all suffer the same fate? Almost all of the book of Isaiah is an answer in the affirmative. Both the men of distinction and the multitude will suffer in captivity.<sup>25</sup> And if after the deportation a tenth survives in the land it

shall yet be consumed.<sup>26</sup> There are some striking images of this total destruction which leaves but a symbolic remainder behind it. What will be left of the people? Something comparable to "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough" after an olive tree has been beaten.<sup>27</sup> Or like the breaking of a potter's vessel "so that there shall not be found among the pieces thereof a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water out of the cistern."<sup>28</sup> If any doubt remains what is probably Isaiah's last statement should dissolve it:

Surely this iniquity shall not be  
expiated by you till ye die.<sup>29</sup>

The whole people is condemned to death.

But the name of Isaiah's first son seems to contradict this conclusion. It is שִׁיבָה בְּיָמֶיךָ a remnant will return.<sup>30</sup> We faced a similar problem before in regard to a hope Amos held out for a remnant of the people. Here as there the idea of a viable remnant is a stage in the prophet's thought. We know Isaiah thought in terms of stages of destruction.<sup>31</sup> The likelihood is that Isaiah hoped a remnant would return to God. Moreover, there is only the barest indication that this remnant is saved because it is righteous.<sup>32</sup> The remnant here as in Amos is only a chance slice of the people.<sup>33</sup>

But there are intimations in Isaiah, meager but genuine, of a viable remnant which is righteous. Isaiah is commanded:

Now go, write it upon a tablet with them,  
And inscribe it in a book,  
That it may be for the time to come for a  
testimony forever.<sup>34</sup>

Why should Isaiah inscribe his message if the people are to perish? There seems to be an assumption here of a viable remnant. The other suggestive passage supports the idea of a viable remnant and more:

Bind up the testimony, seal the instruction  
among My disciples.<sup>35</sup>

If the testimony is to be preserved among the disciples does not this mean that the disciples will survive? That would seem to me to be the implication. And it means that the righteous will survive. At any rate what is clear is that a viable remnant is assumed. And it is further possible that the righteous do endure. Of course none of this is explicit. We have here only intimations. But they are of the greatest importance. For the first time the people do not share one common destiny. A remnant will survive. The first barely discernible crack has appeared in the great wall of solidarity.

Jeremiah's early prophecies leave no doubt that all of the people are guilty. A just man cannot be found.<sup>36</sup> The poor and the great are both guilty.<sup>37</sup> The leaders rule falsely and the "people love to have it so."<sup>38</sup> The people are all adulterers.<sup>39</sup> It is a foolish people.<sup>40</sup> And most of all it is a nation that will not receive correction (20:11).<sup>41</sup> It is clear that all are guilty.<sup>42</sup>

The nation is guilty as a whole and as a whole it will suffer. In these early prophecies there are no exceptions. "A lion is gone up from his thicket" to destroy the nation.<sup>43</sup> As Ephraim before them Judah will be cast out of God's sight.<sup>44</sup> This remnant, Judah, will be gleaned as thoroughly as a vine.<sup>45</sup> And this decree is unshakeable. Even a Moses or a Samuel could not change God's fixed intent.<sup>46</sup>

Thus early Jeremiah. But as the danger drew nearer and then became an actual calamity his words changed. The pressure of history transformed his message. And under that immense pressure what was but intimated before was formed into full reality.

Jeremiah exempted certain individuals from the general doom. These righteous remnants would not be destroyed. This is individual responsibility.

It is all quite clear in Jeremiah's word to Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian:

For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord.<sup>47</sup>

Ebed-melech will not perish with the others because he, as an individual, is righteous. Considering all that has come before Jeremiah such a verse as this is to put it mildly a shock. But a similar promise is made to Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah:

And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not; for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.<sup>48</sup>

This too is a special promise to an individual. And there is yet another promise of salvation as a consequence of merit. It is to the Rechabites for their faithfulness to the commands of their father, Jonadab the son of Rechab.<sup>49</sup> In these three cases we have without doubt righteous remnants. This is individual responsibility.<sup>50</sup>

In another area too Jeremiah departs from the idea of the solidarity of the group. This area is the case of redemption after suffering. Jeremiah seems to have had hope for groups after they were punished.

Early in his prophetic ministry when he was preaching doom to Judah, Jeremiah held out hope for exiled Israel.<sup>51</sup> There was some element of desert in this offer of redemption since Israel had proved herself more righteous than Judah.<sup>52</sup> At any rate such an offer was a contradiction to the idea of national solidarity.

Late in his ministry, after the exile of 597, Jeremiah again departed from the idea of solidarity. This time he divided the destiny of the Judean exiles of 597 from the destiny of the Judeans remaining in Palestine. I refer to the prophecy of the two baskets of figs.<sup>53</sup> But in this case the exiles do not seem to be saved because of any merit on their part. At least the text does not justify any assumption

of even relative merit.<sup>54</sup> In any case the solidarity of the group is sundered.

There is another element to be added to the individualism of Jeremiah besides the righteous remnants and the groups redeemed after suffering. It is contained in the specific individualistic statements of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah goes down to the potter's house and notices that the potter can repair marred vessels.<sup>55</sup> The point is:

At one instant I may speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy it; but if that nation turn from their evil, because of which I have spoken against it, I repent of the evil, that I thought to do unto it.<sup>56</sup>

The reverse is also true. Such a statement undermines the solidarity of the generations. It is individualism in time. And it means that there never can be a point of no return for a people. To compare this statement with Amos's vision of the basket of rotten fruit<sup>57</sup> is to see a revolution in thought.<sup>58</sup>

Another and a similar statement of individualism occurs in a messianic vision:

In those days they shall say no more:  
"The fathers have eaten sour grapes,  
And the children's teeth are set on edge."  
But everyone shall die for his own iniquity;  
every man that eateth the sour grapes, his  
teeth shall be set on edge.<sup>59</sup>

This is an outright and explicit statement of individualism.

In righteous remnants, in groups redeemed after suffering, and in explicit statements individualism comes to birth in Jeremiah. The assumptions once almost inviolable are now often changed and replaced. What was with Isaiah the first hardly perceptible crack in the wall of solidarity becomes with Jeremiah a series of great breaches. It is a very great change. And the agents of change are the sensitivity of a man and the pressure of history.

As far as Jeremiah advanced toward individualism Ezekiel went even further. Something of Ezekiel's individualism may be seen in his prophecies to Judah. Ezekiel was convinced that the people left in Judah after the exile of 597 were a guilty people. Again and again he called them a rebellious nation.<sup>60</sup> This nation is not willing to listen to the truth.<sup>61</sup> It is a nation even more guilty than Samaria.<sup>62</sup> All its parts are guilty.<sup>63</sup> Prophet, priest, elder, king, prince and people are at fault.<sup>64</sup> They are all dross.<sup>65</sup> On the whole as Ezekiel addresses the Judeans we feel that he thought them all guilty.<sup>66</sup>

The penalty for their sins seems to be destruction. They are as useless as a charred vine branch and their destiny is death.<sup>67</sup> Like Amos, Ezekiel announces that the end has come.<sup>68</sup> The residue of Israel is doomed.<sup>69</sup> Oholibah or Judah will be annihilated.<sup>70</sup>

Yet even in his prophecies to Judah the individualism of Ezekiel is apparent. For despite his strong statements



of general doom certain remnants are to be spared. And this exception of remnants, both righteous and not righteous, is of course a contradiction of the idea of group solidarity.

A few will be saved to publish the wickedness of Judah among the nations.<sup>71</sup> A remnant will be spared to convince the exiles of 597 that God was altogether just in his destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>72</sup> In a particularly vindictive chapter, Ezekiel says that a remnant will survive so that they may loathe themselves.<sup>73</sup>

These remnants are not righteous.<sup>74</sup> But in one place Ezekiel does exempt the righteous Judeans from the general destruction. I refer to the man with the writer's inkhorn who marks the foreheads of the righteous men that they be recognized and spared.<sup>75</sup>

Ezekiel's individualism is even more evident in his addresses to the exiles of 597. In their despair he extends a general hope to them. But this hope, as befits one who thinks in terms of individuals, has its exceptions. Just as some of the Judeans were excepted from a general destruction so here many of the exiles are exempted from a general redemption.

The exiles of 597 are to undergo a purge. The rebels among them will not return to the land of Israel.<sup>76</sup> The false prophets in Babylon will not be part of this people.<sup>77</sup> The strong and the leaders will be purged.<sup>78</sup> Thus the especially wicked will not share in the general redemption.

But the full extent of Ezekiel's individualism is to be found in those outright and explicit statements of that doctrine which he addressed to the exiles in Babylon. These statements constitute the very definition of individualism.

No solidarity is so certain in Israelite thought as the solidarity of the family. Knowing all we do about the intensity of that solidarity the following passage strikes us as nothing less than a revolution in thought:

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of man, when a land sinneth against Me by trespassing grievously, and I stretch out My hand upon it, and break the staff of the bread thereof, and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast; and these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job be in it, they will deliver their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. If I cause evil beasts to pass through the land, and they be-leave it, and it be desolate, so that no man may pass through because of the beasts; though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.<sup>79</sup>

If these three men cannot deliver their children then every single person is absolutely on his own.

And in chapter 18 Ezekiel says just that:

The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father with him, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son with him; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.<sup>80</sup>

This verse is the summary of the first half of the chapter which portrays in detail the independent destinies of fathers

Do you mean after 596?

and sons. In this verse we have, I believe, as extreme a definition of individualism as can be imagined. It was in fact extreme enough to be beyond the people's imagining. For when they hear Ezekiel's doctrine they ask: "Why doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father with him?"<sup>81</sup>

The second half of chapter 18 is an extreme expression of what I call individualism in time:

But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him; for his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not rather that he should return from his ways, and live?

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered; for his trespass that he trespassed, and for his sin that he hath sinned, for them shall he die.<sup>82</sup>

This extreme statement also takes the people back. And after the last verse they exclaim: "The way of the Lord is not equal."<sup>83</sup> It would seem that Ezekiel has pushed individualism to its limits.<sup>84</sup> Ezekiel is a man very much aware of the individual.<sup>85</sup>

It is quite a list if we add it up. The remnants righteous and not righteous of the Judeans left in Judah, the purge among the exiles destined for redemption, the Noah, Daniel and Job passage, and the extreme definitions of

chapter 18. The reader will, I believe, grant the justice of my claim that however far Jeremiah went toward individualism, Ezekiel went further. In his time it is hard for me to imagine anyone going further toward the pole of absolute individualism than Ezekiel did.

Something more than a difference of opinion separates Amos and Ezekiel. A century and a half have passed. And there has been a change in the mind of man.

## NOTES

1. It was the new situation of the literary prophets that forced into being the individual and individualism. Bringing an unpopular and unbelievable message these men were cut off from their people. And because this was a message of suffering and destruction they brought it to a people they loved against their will. Thus they were, in a way, cut off from God. Cut off from their people and their God they became conscious of themselves as separate entities -- as individuals. And as men divided from others they began to see life in a new way.

It is the sense of separation that is the key to the emerging individual. Amos knows that the true prophet is hated (5:10). And he feels a world apart from the professional prophets (7:14). Micah also knows that the prophet is not popular (2:6). And he too separates himself from the false prophets (3:8). This sense of separation is clearly expressed in a much overlooked line in Hosea. Here the prophet of "love" interrupts a divine message to personally curse the people: "Give them, O Lord, whatsoever Thou wilt give; Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." (9:14). Isaiah 22:4, Jeremiah 1:18, and Ezekiel 2:6 are further vivid expressions of the fact that the prophet felt apart from the people.

We know that Amos interceded with God for the sake of the people (7:2). But the first real sign of prophetic rebellion against God is found in the AN-28 of Isaiah 6:11. This prophetic rebellion reaches its magnificent climax in the confessions of Jeremiah. Here the will of God and the will of the prophet stand most opposed (20:7-9). Ezekiel too is forced by a will stronger than his own to undertake the burden of prophecy (3:14). And he, like Amos, intercedes for the people (9:8). Thus it can be seen that especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel felt a bitter opposition to God. Cut off from both people and God they were the first men so terribly alone -- and hence the first individuals. This, at any rate, is my hypothesis.

2. If 9:8b through 15 are primary my whole case collapses. If, however, there is any merit to the basic evolutionary hypothesis these verses are secondary happy endings.
3. 7:17.

4. In fact did not he in a moment of high insight extend the solidarity of the group to mankind? See 9:7.
5. Pedersen, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
6. There are nine uses of the term אֶרֶץ in the pre-exilic and exilic prophets. The three early uses in Amos and Micah are wide. In Amos 3:1 and Amos 3:2 אֶרֶץ stands for a whole people. Likewise in Micah 2:3 the use is wide. Notice that אֶרֶץ has no article and compare 2:3 with the syntax in Jeremiah 8:3.

But over a hundred years later we find in Jeremiah a wavering use of אֶרֶץ. In 2:4 the use is narrow. And I can see no adequate reason to delete the verse. Likewise 31:1 contains a narrow usage although the Septuagint casts some doubt on the text. In other cases אֶרֶץ does represent a whole people. 25:9 is a good example. And 1:15 despite our first impression is almost certainly a wide use. Either אֶרֶץ was added later to explain אֶרֶץ when the term no longer retained its wide meaning (25:9 seems to support this possibility) or the whole expression in question is original and an example of the construct in apposition. See Gesenius, op. cit., p. 422e. In either case אֶרֶץ is used in the wide sense.

Jeremiah 8:3 is probably secondary and Ezekiel 20:32 is ambiguous. The use of אֶרֶץ in the phrase makes it impossible to determine whether אֶרֶץ is used in the wide or narrow sense.

Of course an isolated study of אֶרֶץ limited to nine uses can carry but little weight. It may be interesting, however, to observe that in Amos and Micah the uses of אֶרֶץ are wide while over a hundred years later in Jeremiah the use wavers between the wide and the narrow. It could be that as time passed and the sense of national solidarity weakened the wider use of אֶרֶץ itself became less certain.

7. Micah 2:3.
8. Micah 2:8. *Sept?*
9. Micah 3:12, 1:6, 1:9, 2:3-4.
10. Micah 2:1-2, 2:9, 3:1-3.
11. Micah 3:9-12.
12. See note 10. Also note that a verse like 2:8 which seems to point to the guilt of the poor does not do so at all as the following verses proves.
13. See especially 3:2,3.

14. Hosea 2:16-19, 12:10-11, 3:1-5. Notice, however, that these are hopes which still require suffering. The demands of justice must still be met. The first two envision a wilderness period. It is a moot point whether chapter 14 is primary or not. Perhaps it is. But 11:7-11 is a much mistranslated passage. Probably it is a message of doom. The key to the passage is the knowledge that יהוה is the vengeful god of Jerusalem.
15. See 1:9 and 2:4-7. The people will be divorced and divorce from the nation's god means death.
16. For example -- 4:1-3.
17. For example -- 5:1.
18. Perhaps the prophets in 9:7, the princes in 9:15, the king in 5:1, and the priests often. The supposed attack on monarchy is a result of the failure to realize that king means divine king in Hosea. Even 13:11 refers to a divine king.
19. See also 6:10 and 4:15. וּבְהַיְתָּ means "at the time when" in Hosea.
20. 10:6.
21. 29:13.
22. 28:12, 30:9, 30:15.
23. 9:15. Also 3:12.
24. 3:15.
25. 5:13.
26. 6:13. The last three words are secondary. The idea is that even the stump of a cut down tree is destroyed.
27. 17:6.
28. 30:14.
29. 22:14.
30. 7:3.
31. 3:6, 4:1, 6:13, 8:15.

32. Against the whole mass of evidence that Isaiah thought in terms of group destiny there is one statement of individual responsibility in Isaiah 3:10-11. This statement in my opinion is secondary. It interrupts the narrative and is explicitly theological.
33. There is another equally reasonable explanation of אֵלֶּיךָ. See S. Blank, "The Current Misinterpretation of Isaiah's She'ar Yashub" in Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 67<sup>3</sup>, 1948. He feels אֵלֶּיךָ conveys no hope at all. It is a name full of doom addressed perhaps to "an unrecorded campaign not sanctioned by Isaiah." (p. 215). His linguistic case I feel is strong but I am not convinced that 10:20-22 is secondary. If they are, on the whole, primary I think they support my interpretation of אֵלֶּיךָ.
34. 30:8. Emend אֵלֶּיךָ to אֵלֶּיךָ with Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate.
35. 8:16.
36. 5:1.
37. 5:4,5.
38. 5:31.
39. 9:1.
40. 5:21.
41. 7:28.
42. 5:26-29 may seem like Amos or Micah where the nation is guilty because the wicked stamp it with their character. But "these things" of verse 29 may refer to more than the acts of the wicked men among the people. The context of all of chapter 5 is an important consideration here. While Jeremiah seems to distinguish specially wicked men all are guilty and in the matrix of sin no one element may be separated out. 6:29 illustrates the point.
43. 4:7.
44. 7:15.
45. 6:9.
46. 15:1.
47. 39:18.



48. 45:5.

49. 35:18-19.

50. And it works for punishment as well as reward. Thus in 29:32:

"Therefore thus saith the Lord:

Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither shall he behold the good that I will do unto My people, saith the Lord; because he hath spoken perversion against the Lord."

Here Shemaiah is selected for special punishment among a group destined for good. Of course, this is not strictly speaking individualism. For Shemaiah's family are involved in his ruin. Thus while Jeremiah has departed to some extent from the idea of group solidarity it is obvious that he has not departed completely from it. To expect a total break with the past would be unrealistic. Here and in 23:34 and 38:17 we find the old family solidarity reaffirmed.

51. 3:12.

52. 3:11.

53. Chapter 24.

54. 24:5. Especially 2:36 10 and the active role of God in verse 7.

55. Chapter 18.

56. 18:7,8.

57. 8:1,2.

58. A practical example of the new individualism in time is Jeremiah's offer of a last minute choice at the seige of Jerusalem. He promised to those who would desert to the Chaldeans their life as a reward. See 38:2 and 21:8-10.

59. 31:29,30.

60. e.g. 2:6.

61. 3:7.

62. 16:51.

63. 3:7.

- 64. 7:26.
- 65. 22:19.
- 66. "On the whole" this is the impression Ezekiel gives. But in chapter 9 we find there are some righteous men in Jerusalem. And in 21:8 Ezekiel threatens that God will cut off from Judea "the righteous and the wicked." However, especially after 586, Ezekiel seems to have changed his mind. In 22:29 the poor and the needy are explicitly exempted from the general guilt. And in 34:5 the exile is directly attributed to the guilt of the leaders.
- 67. Chapter 15.
- 68. 7:2.
- 69. 9:8-10.
- 70. 23:25.
- 71. 12:16.
- 72. 14:23.
- 73. 6:9.
- 74. The whole question of justice in history becomes problematical with Ezekiel. Chapter 20 with its idea of God's fixed purpose and its concept of 'NE' / ONE is a negation of justice in history.
- 75. Chapter 9.
- 76. 20:38.
- 77. 13:9.
- 78. 34:22.
- 79. 14:12-16. Verses 17-20 are a repetition of these ideas.
- 80. 18:20.
- 81. 18:19.
- 82. 18:21-24.
- 83. 18:25.

84. I do not mean to imply that he has lost all sense of the importance of the nation. See 37:15-22 especially. But I do mean that in the crises of history Ezekiel recognizes individuals with individual destinies.
85. In fact he is very much aware of his own private destiny. As a prophet he is the watchman for the people. If he properly warns them he delivers his soul. If not God will require the blood of the unwarned at his hand. This is a striking fact. The prophet here is conscious and concerned about his own individual destiny. See 3:17-21 and 33:1-9.

## CONCLUSION

The individual did not exist in ancient Israel. Not until Jeremiah and Ezekiel did the individual emerge.

The emergence of the individual was a change in the form of humanity. As individuals we trace the evolution of the individual with sympathy. As western men we greet Jeremiah and Ezekiel with enthusiasm. For they were the first individuals. They are our spiritual ancestors. We are members of the same species -- "individual man."

The emergence of the individual was a change in a way of thinking. It meant a different way of looking at the world. Ezekiel saw with the same eyes as Amos but he perceived with a different mind. Ezekiel believed that each man was rewarded or punished according to his merit or guilt. Amos perceived that a society endures or perishes as a totality.

Between these two ways of thinking there is a great gulf. As individuals we are drawn toward Ezekiel's perception. We still believe in separate destinies. We act as if America and Russia have different fates. We still draw lines which divide the future.

But I wonder if Amos was not after all right? Do not the innocent perish with the guilty? Where is the frontier that can exclude atomic fallout? Where is the nation with a separate destiny?

. It is a question of ways of thinking. But it is not an academic question.

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