

Olive M. Winchester

**The Story  
of the  
Old Testament**

Formerly  
Moses and the Prophets



• CHRISTIAN SERVICE TRAINING •

THE STORY OF THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

(Formerly "Moses and the Prophets")

*by*

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## Author's Foreword

The purpose in writing this book has been to give in quick review an account of Hebrew history and literature. It seeks to cover the Old Testament field for the Christian Service Training Course of the Church of the Nazarene.

In studying the subject it will be found profitable to read concurrently from the Scriptures the events narrated. Thus a more complete perspective will be obtained.

To give credit to all who have contributed to one's knowledge after a number of years have been spent in a field of study is not possible. Those who have been especially helpful for the present survey are Wooley, *Ur of the Chaldees*; Marston, *The Bible Comes Alive*; Robinson, *Where Did We Get Our Bible?*; Raven, *Old Testament Introduction*; Angus-Green, *The Cyclopedic Handbook of the Bible*; Geike, *Hours with the Bible*; the "Men of the Bible" series; Muir, *His Truth Endureth*; Kent and Riggs in their histories of the Hebrew and Jewish people (these writers are not conservative, but on matters of history where no questions are involved, they are very contributory); Price, *Syllabus of Old Testament History*; Sampey, *Syllabus of Old Testament Study*; Burroughs, *Old Testament Studies*, and Skinner, Streane, and Davidson in their respective commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel from the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; then come the very valuable Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias such as Hastings' and more especially the International Standard. Finally the magazine entitled *Biblical Archeology* has been found to contain some excellent material.

We trust that as it has been a source of inspiration and joy to follow once more the divine revelation unto

men and the vicissitudes of the chosen people through the Old Testament era, so it will be to others who may read and study these pages.

OLIVE M. WINCHESTER  
Pasadena, California

## Preface to Revised Edition

Dr. Olive M. Winchester was one of the most devout Bible scholars it has ever been my privilege to know. Her work will live long in the lives of the multitudes of students she influenced, and in the lives of those whom she touched through the medium of the printed page.

It is with a sense of real responsibility that I have undertaken a revision of her *Christian Service Training text, Moses and the Prophets*. Those familiar with the book will recognize that practically all of the changes have been in matters of style. The content has been altered in only a few minor points, to include the results of more recent studies.

We trust many will come to a deeper appreciation of the message of the Old Testament through the continued long use of this little volume.

W. T. PURKISER, *President*  
Pasadena College

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## The Making of the Books

The voice of God speaking to man through the centuries is of very great interest to all. We wonder how God made himself known, how the records were kept, and how they came to be recognized as authoritative expressions of divine truth.

### I. REVEALING THE MESSAGE

When we ask about the method of revelation, the Bible speaks of a variety of means such as dreams, visions, and "face-to-face communion" (Num. 12: 6-8). The dream was an earlier and lower form of revelation. Then came the vision, very close to what we might call a trance or ecstatic state. But the highest form of revelation is "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. 33: 11). Moses was the early representative of this type. God revealed himself to Moses directly with an intimacy of spiritual communion not given to others of his time. This direct method of revelation, we believe, was shared by many of the prophets of later times such as Amos and Hosea, with Isaiah as one of the most notable examples.

The revelation of God's will is one phase and the making of records of that revelation is another in the growth of the Old Testament. In connection with the writings what is known as inspiration enters in. In revelation man is passive or receptive. In inspiration he is active. His activity, however, is directed by the Holy Spirit, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1: 21).

When Jesus spoke of the revelation given to men of old, written under divine inspiration, He used different terms from those which we employ. In the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere He speaks of the law (Matt. 5: 18).

This term is frequently used. Other titles include "the law and the prophets" or "Moses and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12; Luke 16:31). Later threefold division is mentioned, the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms (Luke 24:44).

If we would look at the Scriptures Jesus used, we would find them somewhat different from the Old Testament we know. For it was customary among the Jews to divide their sacred books into three main parts. These were the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—also called the Psalms, since this was the first book of the division. Hebrew Bibles today still follow the same arrangement, beginning with Genesis but ending with II Chronicles, the last book of the Writings.

## II. THE LAW: THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES

In studying the growth of the Old Testament, one naturally turns first to the Law, or the five books of Moses. The Hebrew name is the Torah, although we often call this section of the Old Testament the Pentateuch, a Greek term meaning "fivefold book."

Concerning the origin of the Pentateuch there have been two widely divergent theories. The liberal theory is known as the documentary hypothesis, and came into the arena of debate during the nineteenth century. Those who hold this view teach that the Pentateuch was composed of four different documents, written at different periods during the nation's history, and finally put in present form after the Exile. Over against this is the conservative position which holds that the books have come down to us written by Moses himself. We belong to the conservative school and are satisfied that the evidence establishes this view.

### 1. *Early Narratives*

Coming to the books themselves, we note that the entire Book of Genesis relates to events which took place

before the days of Moses. Thus the question of sources or primitive material arises. There were undoubtedly two types of sources available to Moses: the oral tradition of his people, and written accounts, for it is now known that writing was in use long before Moses' time. In this way Moses could have known of creation and the Fall, the great flood, and the narratives relating to the lives of the patriarchs.

As to how the account of creation was given, the Bible is entirely silent. That it goes back to a very early age and probably dates before the time of Abraham is borne out by the fact that archaeologists have found various documents in Babylonia and Assyria which indicate that stories of creation and the Fall were current in that early day. The Babylonian accounts, however, while they have points of similarity to the Bible narrative, do not compare favorably with it. The Genesis account stands unexcelled in its conception of God and in its exalted description of the creative days. The evidence of inspiration is undeniable. A tradition exists that the account of creation came down through Noah, but there is nothing to establish this except its likelihood from what we know about human nature. No doubt primitive man, like the child, began to wonder about his origin; and who can deny that it was possible that some revelation from God was made before the Flood?

Concerning the stories of the Deluge, a striking confirmation of the fact of the Flood has been brought to light by archaeological research. Sir Leonard Wooley tells us that in 1928 and 1929, in excavating the mound that marks the site of the ancient city of Ur of the Chaldees, after going to a considerable depth in which the strata had yielded pottery and other objects left by an ancient civilization, the archaeologists suddenly came on a layer or stratum of clean, water-laid clay. For a while it seemed as if they had reached the bottom of everything;

but continuing to dig, at a depth of eight feet more, they again found pottery representing an even earlier civilization. Sir Leonard concluded that the eight feet of clay represented the Deluge, and that it marked the line between civilization before the Flood and after.

Knowing of this discovery, we are not surprised to learn that there were flood stories current in this section of the country in the days of Abraham. Like the creation stories of Babylonia, they are inferior to the Bible account, because of their polytheism in describing the Flood as the work of many gods. It is this very difference which marks our narrative as superior. As to the transmission of the account of the Flood, we feel that it is very likely that Abraham received it in an uncorrupted form from some of the elders of his people and then recounted it to his sons.

Passing on to the lives of the patriarchs, we will be able to understand better the possibility of written records if we consider the civilization of Ur in the days of Abraham. This city was located on the banks of the Euphrates River, and being the seaport for the city of Babylon, was prosperous and wealthy. Trade and commerce raised the standard of living and created a demand for the arts of civilization. This demand was met by various forms of manufacturing. Utensils of bronze and copper were produced for household purposes, and articles of silver and gold were made for personal adornment. Naturally in connection with these industries and in trade it was necessary that accounts be kept, and this meant a form of writing. That writing was known at that time has been verified by the discovery of tablets as well as stone inscriptions. Even hymnbooks made of clay tablets have been found.

Having been raised in this environment, Abraham would have had access to all of this knowledge, the more so since the Habiru, as his people were then known, appear to have been mercenary soldiers and traders.

Further, his stay in another center of trade and civilization such as Haran would have contributed something. Added to this is the further fact that the culture of Babylonia and Assyria in Abraham's day extended even to the borders of Egypt, so wherever Abraham went he must have contacted it.

## 2. *Moses' Training for His Task*

The other books of the Pentateuch deal mainly with events occurring during the lifetime of Moses. Since writing existed so many years before his day, we have no difficulty in accepting the fact that he himself would be versed in the art, particularly as he was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Being brought up at the court of Egypt, one of the first things he would have learned would be to read and to write. When his elementary training was finished, he would attend one of the universities and here among other subjects he would study law, government, and literature, including both prose and poetry.

This review of the education and training of Moses shows how a divine providence was preparing him for the task that lay before him. He no doubt kept a journal of the events of his own life and of the journeyings of the people of Israel. Further, his training in law and government would give him a background for the revelation of those special laws for the Israelites given to him by Jehovah. Finally, his training in literature and poetry would lend the fitness necessary for the highly literary farewell discourses in the *Book of Deuteronomy* and for the poetic productions which are credited to him.

The culture of the Mosaic era has been further established by recent archaeological finds. It is interesting to note the discovery of an alphabetical script used at the temple of Sebarit at Mount Sinai which some scholars believe dates even earlier than the days of Moses. It

would seem that the miners who worked in this section of the country worshiped at this temple. Then there are the Ras Shamra tablets, which belong to the theological school of Ugarit in Phoenicia and which are also assigned to this period. Both scripts are in languages very close to an early form of Hebrew, but the Sinai writing is more of a running hand and would lend itself more readily to continued writing. Thus it is that Moses could have known a form of writing better suited for his purpose than the hieroglyphics or picture writing of Egypt.

From several points of view, therefore, we see that Moses could have written the first five books. The priestly laws as well as the narratives could have been his, as they are given to us in the Bible, for rites and ceremonies like those observed among the Hebrews have been found to have been practiced also at Ugarit. For the early events he could have used sources, and for his own time his own records. The account of the death of Moses at the conclusion of Deuteronomy has troubled some, but it is generally thought that, since the Hebrew rolls were often attached one to the other, this stood at the beginning of Joshua originally, and later was placed at the end of Deuteronomy. Finally, it is to be noted that the fact that Moses wrote is definitely mentioned in the books (Exod. 24: 4; Deut. 31: 9, 24-26).

### III. THE PROPHETS

The second major division of the Hebrew Scriptures is the Prophets. Prophecy among the Jews included more than it usually does for us. In the Jewish catalogue of books, the Prophets contained historical as well as prophetic books. That is, Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel (counted as one book), I and II Kings (also counted as one) were included among the prophetic books as well as the Major and Minor Prophets as such. The historical

books were called the Former Prophets, and the Major and Minor Prophets were known as the Latter Prophets.

### 1. *Former Prophets*

The reason the historical books should be called the Former Prophets is to be found in the fact the historical accounts of that day were written with a different purpose from those of histories today. They were intended to show God's dealing with His people, and to relate the events which happened to their spiritual causes. The writers were not concerned primarily with history as such, but with the spiritual lessons it taught. History was written from the prophetic point of view, and quite fittingly known as the "Former Prophets."

(1) Joshua. The first book of the Former Prophets is the Book of Joshua. We are not told specifically in the Bible as to its authorship as a whole. We do read, however, that "Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God" (24:26), but that could be taken to refer to the events immediately preceding. On the other hand, it is very natural to suppose that Joshua kept a journal of the events of the conquest and division of the land among the tribes. As in the case of the account of the death of Moses, the record of Joshua's death could well have been added later.

(2) Judges. While some books give us a clue as to their authorship, there are others which do not. The Book of Judges is one of these. In such a case one seeks for suggestions from tradition, and also studies any possible evidence in the book itself which might be helpful, especially as to the time of writing. The Jewish tradition known as the Talmud names Samuel as the author of the Book of Judges. There are references to the fact that "in those days there was no king in Israel" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), which would indicate that the writer himself lived in a day when there was a king, but was writing

about an earlier period. There is also a reference to the fact that at the time Judges was written the Jebusites still occupied Jerusalem (1:21), which would point to a date prior to David. These references would show that the tradition of the Talmud has much to favor it.

Another point in favor of the authorship of Samuel is the fact that Samuel was the founder of the prophetic schools, serving as the head of the first one at his own home in Ramah (I Sam. 19:19-20). The prophets were the historians of the Old Testament, for there were many references to books written by them. Also, mention is made of a history written by Samuel the Seer (I Chron. 29:29).

These two factors would then seem to point to Samuel as the author: the time of the writing, and the reference to him as a writer of history. No doubt in writing the book he used some accounts coming down from the time of the Judges. The song of Deborah would constitute one of the sources, and as professional scribes appeared in that age (Judg. 5:14), other records probably were to be found.

(3) I and II Samuel. In connection with the Books of Samuel, it would appear at first glance that the question of authorship is settled by the name of the books. Further study indicates that this is too hasty a judgment, for when we note the contents, we find that Samuel's death is recorded in I Sam. 25:1. This was at the time when David was still an outlaw during the reign of Saul, but the events narrated in the rest of the book and in II Samuel carry us down through the reign of David. Consequently it is evident that Samuel could not have written even all of the first book. The title was given in the Hebrew Bible because of Samuel's relation to the events recounted. He was the last of the judges and the founder of the prophetic order. In addition, he anointed the first two kings of Israel, namely, Saul and David.

A point of interest is that in the Greek translation or Septuagint the Books of Samuel and Kings are called respectively the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Books of the Kings. That this is a natural combination is evident, for the history follows through as one continuous narrative, the first Book of Kings taking up the account where II Samuel leaves it. Accordingly it may be well to leave the question of the authorship until the Books of the Kings have been reviewed.

(4) I and II Kings. When the kingdom was fully organized one of the court officers was the recorder, who had among his duties the task of chronicling the events of the reign. The first mention of this official is in the reign of David (II Sam. 8:16), but as we have already noted, the professional scribe appeared in the days of the judges; therefore there may have been some who acted in such a capacity before. In any case, from the times of David on, the recorder was a member of the court. Moreover, there are references to records that were kept, such as "the book of the acts of Solomon" (I Kings 11:41), "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (I Kings 14:19, etc.), and "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (I Kings 14:29, etc.).

But the recorders probably were not the authors of the books as they are. The history as given in the Bible is not just a recital of events. It is history with a moral purpose. Historical episodes are used to illustrate moral and spiritual truth. Thus it would seem as if someone with prophetic vision had used the material written by these recorders and had chosen that which was the most pertinent to the great end in view.

With these points established, the inference is clear that there are sources which form the background for the Books of Samuel and Kings. For the Books of Samuel no doubt the sources for the early chapters came from his hand, for we read: "Then Samuel told the people the

manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord" (I Sam. 10:25). Then again it states: "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer" (I Chron. 29:29). This last passage indicates to us not only that Samuel wrote but also Nathan and Gad, and that the entire reign of David is included. Here are sources for the two Books of Samuel, besides what information the recorders might have supplied.

For the Books of Kings we know only about the sources, such as we have already mentioned. "The book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" is mentioned seventeen times. "The book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" is referred to fifteen times. Who edited our present Books of Kings we do not know, but can safely conclude that the work was done by members of the prophetic schools.

## 2. *Latter Prophets*

Under the caption of Latter Prophets the Jews included those known distinctly as prophets. There are, on the one hand, three of the Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and on the other, the twelve Minor Prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The form of literature found in the prophets might be compared with the sermonic material of our own day. The books give us the messages which the prophets proclaimed to the people. Consequently the question of authorship is not so difficult. The main issues arise as to whether all that is attributed to certain prophets really belongs to them.

(1) The Major Prophets. Since in the writings of the prophets we have sermonic literature, as we have

termed it, we may easily be prepared for the fact that the content is not always in chronological order, that is, arranged in order of the time of delivery. Such arrangement is not important for this type of literature. Moreover, since the messages are closely connected with the events of the time, we may expect personal items of a biographical nature, and also references to historical events.

Among the Major Prophets, Isaiah stands in first place. His writings indicate a profound depth of spiritual insight expressed in language majestic and sublime. Sad to say, the Book of Isaiah has been one of the chief battlegrounds of modern criticism, particularly as to the unity of the book. All of chapters 40 to 66 have been attributed to an unknown prophet of the Exile, and parts of chapters 1 to 35, especially 24 to 27, have been denied Isaiah. A complete discussion of this problem cannot be given here. However, one or two basic facts may be mentioned in passing. *First*, a recognition of the spirit of prophecy helps us to understand how Isaiah might have recorded these visions of the future, while a denial of inspiration regards that as impossible. *Second*, who would be more likely to see the glory of redemption under the symbolism of "Zion, the city of beauty and peace" than the great prophet-statesman, Isaiah?

Regarding Jeremiah, although some short passages have been questioned, there has never been as severe an attack as that made against Isaiah. That Jeremiah dictated at least some of his prophecies to Baruch is definitely stated (Jer. 36: 1-4), but the messages were his own. The order is less chronological than any of the other prophets, but the turbulence of the times may have had something to do with this.

As for the Book of Ezekiel, the facts that he was the author and that the book is a unit have not been seriously questioned. Certain characteristics continue throughout, and the work has a definite arrangement and plan.

(2) *The Minor Prophets.* Among the Jews the Minor Prophets were included in one book often known as "The Twelve." For the most part the genuineness of the individual authors is not questioned; occasionally some particular passages have been challenged, but without any good ground, it would seem. Jonah and Zechariah *suffer the most*; yet if one accepts the element of the miraculous, the difficulties in Jonah are not so great. In the case of Zechariah, it is asserted that chapters 9 to 14, because of various differences, come from another hand; but if one considers that there probably was an interval of thirty or forty years between the earlier and later sections, then these differences may easily be explained.

#### IV. THE SACRED WRITINGS

Coming to the third section of the Hebrew Scriptures, we find it divided in turn into three parts. First there are the poetical books, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. Second is the *Megilloth*, or five rolls, including the *Song of Solomon*, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. Finally there are the remaining books, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

##### 1. *Poetical Books*

The poetry of the Hebrews in main may be classified into two types, the lyrical or song type, and the didactic or teaching type. The Psalms in general belongs to the former, and Proverbs and Job to the latter.

(1) *Psalms.* One generally thinks of David in connection with the Psalms. In his youth he was a skillful musician (I Sam. 16:15-23). It would appear that he even invented some instruments of music (Amos 6:5). Furthermore, in his elegy for Saul and Jonathan (II Sam. 1:17-27) we see that he was a gifted poet. This gift is apparent again in the lamentation for Abner (II Sam. 3:33 ff.), and finds its expression in the form of a true psalm in II Samuel 22. Finally, he was a man upon whom

the Spirit of God rested (I Sam. 16:13); and when he was uttering his last words, these also in poetic form, he spoke of himself as the anointed of God, the sweet psalmist of Israel, adding:

*The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me,  
And his word was upon my tongue  
(II Sam. 23:2, A.R.V.).*

Thus it is evident that he was well equipped to write the Psalms.

As to the composition of individual psalms, we find seventy-three assigned to David. Twelve are attributed to Asaph, who was a Levite in charge of the service of song (I Chron. 16:4-7). It would seem that the superscription here refers to a guild bearing Asaph's name, for there are two psalms in this collection which imply a later date than the rule of David. Eleven psalms are attributed to the "sons of Korah." In this case a guild is clearly implied by the nature of the title. One is credited to Moses, two to Solomon, one to Heman, and one to Ethan. These last two men have sometimes been thought to be the ones referred to as the assistants given to Asaph for the Temple music, or possibly wise men living in the days of Solomon. As far as the authorship of the Psalms is concerned, it makes little difference which of these views is accepted. Forty-nine of the psalms are anonymous. It is clear that literary activity along this line was quite general in the time of David, and that many others of his day and the years following were inspired to write religious lyrics.

(2) Proverbs. With the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital and religious center of Israel during the reign of David, and the literary activity in the writing of the Psalms at this time, we are not surprised to find a similar period in the "Golden Age" of the reign of Solomon. But since Solomon did not have the religious depth

of his father, his literary activity moves in another realm, that of the practical and prudential.

That Solomon wrote songs and proverbs is clearly stated (I Kings 4:32); therefore there seems good reason for attributing the Book of Proverbs to him; that is, all except the last two chapters, which mention Agur and Lemuel as the authors. This view is strengthened by the fact that each of the main divisions of the book claims Solomon as the author. On the other hand, many critics have held that the book was gradually compiled, but for reasons which seem to be more subjective than otherwise.

(3) Job. Various opinions have been held concerning the authorship of Job. Since the setting of the book is in the patriarchal period, some claim that it was written then, with Job himself as the author. Others would refer the composition of the book to the days of Solomon because it is similar in thought to the wisdom literature. Still others date it much later. It would seem that the first two theories are most reasonable, and it is difficult to choose between them. With recent findings concerning writing in the early days and the centers of wisdom and culture then existent, there is nothing impossible about the belief that Job represents a work coming down from the days of Moses. On the other hand, with the literary activity of the days of Solomon, the oral traditions regarding Job might well at that time have been brought into the form of the poetic narrative which we now have.

## 2. *The Rolls*

The name given to the next five books in the Jewish canon sounds strange to us. They are called the Megilloth or Rolls, because each book was in the form of a roll of convenient length for use in the synagogue on five different feast days.

(1) Song of Songs. First among the rolls is the Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon. This has been attributed to Solomon, and its content seems to bear this out. It shows both knowledge of nature and evidences of luxury. Some hold that the linguistic evidence favors a later date, but this is not absolutely convincing.

(2) Ruth. There is some reason to believe that Samuel is the author of the little Book of Ruth. It is generally believed that the events took place in the time of the judges, a period with which Samuel was well acquainted. Then, the book gives an important link in the ancestry of King David, and we have already learned that Samuel was especially interested in the young man he had anointed to be the successor to Saul.

(3) Lamentations. Jeremiah, "the weeping prophet," is generally considered to be the author of Lamentations. In these elegiac poems he pours out his heart in grief over the devastation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

(4) Ecclesiastes. In the case of Ecclesiastes, the linguistic evidence for a late date is quite strong. Therefore many even among the conservative scholars have rejected the authorship of Solomon, pointing out that the words "I the Preacher was king over Israel" (1:12) could not be used of Solomon since there never was a time in his life when he ceased to be king. It may fairly be said that the viewpoint represents that of Solomon, who more than any other had the opportunity to try out worldly ways of life and note the vanity of each, and to find the true value alone in fearing God. In any case, the value of the book is not affected by our uncertainty as to its human author. Its lesson is unmistakable.

(5) Esther. The last of the Rolls is the Book of Esther. Here the author has so hidden himself that he has not left a clue to his identity, and tradition does not

help us any. The account may have been taken from the records of the Persian kingdom. Ezra has been suggested as the author, and while this is plausible, no positive claim can be made. The value of the book is the same, though we do not know who wrote it. It stands as a lesson of courage and heroism for all who read.

### 3. *The Remaining Books*

One more division among the Writings is left to be considered. This is sometimes called the Remaining Books, or the Historical Books.

(1) Daniel. Liberal critics generally claim that the *Book of Daniel* was written during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of the Jews (168 to 165 B.C.), and thus Daniel could not have been the author. In this brief review we cannot enter into the debate, but we should note the specific reference made by Jesus (*Matt. 24:15*) where He mentions *Daniel*, not as a book, but as an author. Added to this is the fact that archaeology has tended to confirm the historical data the critics have questioned. It must be remembered that the liberals always work on the theory that accounts of events must be history, written after they have occurred, and cannot be prophetic. On the other hand the conservative scholar accepts the possibility of the foretelling of events.

(2) Ezra-Nehemiah. Among the Jews the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were generally counted as one. While they are related, yet because of the repetition of certain lists (*Ezra 2; Neh. 7:6-70*) they could scarcely have been one unit originally. In discussing the books, we will note the sources first, then consider the question of authorship in connection with that of Chronicles.

As for the sources of Ezra and Nehemiah, there are sections which represent personal memoirs, such as *Ezra 7:27-9:15* and *Neh. 12:27-13:31*. In these sections the

personal pronoun is used. Additional material would have been found in records kept in the second Temple.

(3) Chronicles. In the writing of the Chronicles there was a large collection of books available to the writer which are mentioned from time to time. These include: (1) The books of the kings of Judah and Israel (II Chron. 16:11; 25:26; 28:26). That these are not our Books of Kings is evident from the fact that the events mentioned are not recorded there. (2) History of Samuel the seer, dealing especially with the early life of David (I Chron. 29:29). (3) History of Nathan the prophet, which gives information regarding both David and Solomon (I Chron. 29:29; II Chron. 9:29). (4) History of Gad the seer, which is concerned with the acts of David (I Chron. 29:29). (5) The prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, treating of the reign of Solomon (II Chron. 9:29). (6) The vision of Iddo the seer, which includes Solomon, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, and Ahijah (II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22). (7) The histories of Shemaiah the prophet, treating of the reign of Rehoboam (II Chron. 12:15). (8) The history of Jehu the son of Hanani, who takes up the reign of Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:34). (9) The commentary (marg.) of the book of kings, recording facts about Joash (II Chron. 24:27). (10) The acts of Uzziah, by Isaiah the son of Amoz (II Chron. 26:22). (11) The vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. This dealt with the reign of Hezekiah (II Chron. 32:32). (12) The words of the seers, in which was an account of Manasseh (II Chron. 33:19).

While the sources for Chronicles are given, the author is not mentioned. In the consideration of this question the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are usually included because they appear to have been written by the same author or school of authors. The reasons for assigning them to the same author are three: first, continuity of subject matter; second, similarity of style; and third, the evidence that

they were all written about the same time. Thus the Book of Ezra begins with exactly the same historical event with which Chronicles closes, namely, the decree of Cyrus. Then the books have in the main the same interest. A Levitical or ecclesiastical spirit pervades them, and they are concerned with the Temple worship and priesthood. Finally, there is the same attention to genealogies and lists in all of the books.

Ezra has been most generally thought to have been the author of all, with the possible exception that Nehemiah may have written the book named for him. Reasons for ascribing the authorship to Ezra are, first, his heritage; and secondly, his office. He was a priest of the line of Aaron and consequently would be interested in the Temple and its ministry. Then he was also a scribe, the first of that line of scribes who had for their special task the professional study of the law. Finally, in this connection there is the uniformity of Jewish tradition which assigns the books to Ezra.

#### V. RECOGNIZED AS AUTHORITATIVE

We have followed the writing of each book as far as our knowledge will take us, but the writing of the books and their recognition as scripture constitute two different questions. Here we deal, not with the origin or contents of the books, but with the question as to how they came to be received as authoritative. One thing that should be noticed is that we are not told of any time when the books were formally presented as a whole as the divine revelation. Small portions might have been given thus, such as the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20—23). On special occasions prophets came with a distinct message from Jehovah, but not the books as a whole. Here, as later in the case of the New Testament, the religious consciousness of devout men under the leading of the Holy Spirit was left to respond

to the presence and power of the Spirit in the records given.

### 1. *The Books Received*

The three divisions of the sacred books seem to indicate the order in which they were recognized. First there was the Law. This was known at once as coming from the hand of Jehovah, and in Joshua we have the Book of the Law mentioned, attributed to Moses, and defined as the "law of God" (Josh. 8:31, 34; 24:26). Moreover, a copy of the Book of the Law was to be kept beside the ark (Deut. 31:24-28, A.R.V.).

In connection with the other books we do not have anything as definite as with the Pentateuch, yet we find that the words of the prophets were considered as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and consequently as binding. To reject them brought on God's judgments. Thus they came to have formal recognition (Dan. 9:2, 6; Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12; II Kings 17:13).

As for the Writings, it is reasonable to conclude that their inspired character was recognized in the same manner as that of the Prophets. They bore their own testimony. The Spirit of Jehovah, who spoke by David and the other writers, would testify to devout hearts of the validity of the message.

We find mention of the Writings in some of the non-canonical books of a later date. One of these is the Book of Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach, written in Jerusalem about 170 B.C. He mentions the heroes of Israel from Enoch to Nehemiah, and the Twelve Prophets. A prologue to this book was written in Egypt by his grandson about 132 B.C. In this he refers three times to the threefold division of the Old Testament, "Law, Prophets, and other books of the Fathers." Thus it is evident that in his day this division of the Scriptures existed and the books were recognized.

In *I Maccabees*, written between 125 and 70 B.C., there are numerous references to Daniel which indicate that this book was regarded as authoritative at that time. The writer also quotes Psalms 79.

More important is the evidence of the New Testament. Here there is definite mention of a fixed collection of writings known as the Scriptures, and their threefold division. All are quoted except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and three Minor Prophets. In this last instance, however, since the Minor Prophets were grouped as one, the other quotations would validate the whole.

## 2. *The Canon Formed*

Finally we come to the question as to when all of the books of the Old Testament were brought together in one collection and the canon formed. The term canon is used by Bible scholars to describe the list of books recognized as inspired. According to tradition, Ezra accomplished this. Many who do not fully accept this explanation do admit that a nucleus of recognized writings was formed. No person of that time was better qualified for the task. He was devoted to the Scriptures and possessed a measure of the prophetic spirit which would give him the understanding necessary to recognize the presence of inspiration.

While the Book of *II Maccabees* (written about 124 B.C.) is not too reliable, a statement found in 2:13 is interesting in that it reveals the fact that in those days there was considerable activity in collecting the sacred books. It relates how Nehemiah founded a library in which he gathered together the acts of the kings, the prophets, and of David.

Another statement in *II Macc.* 2:14 is also illuminating. It reads thus: "In like manner Judas gathered together all things that were lost by reason of the war

we had, and they remain with us." In the religious persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes many copies of the Scriptures were destroyed; but, according to this, after the Maccabean revolt copies were recovered. This shows us their existence before and also the concern for them afterward.

Thus were the authoritative books established and gathered together. There were some individual books which were questioned for a time, especially Esther and the Song of Songs, but finally at the Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) the list of the Old Testament books was formally accepted as we have them today, and the canon fixed.

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The difference between revelation and inspiration
2. The contribution of the prophetic order of Hebrew literature
3. Evidence from archaeology confirming the Scriptures
4. The nature of Hebrew poetry, and the development of the Psalms
5. The formation of the canon
6. The apocryphal books

## The Hebrew Heritage

Beginnings are always interesting. The origin of new forms of being, the adventure of heroic people into unknown lands, and the lives of truly great men all carry special interest. Especially is this true when we deal with the appearance of the human race upon earth, and the choice of a nation which was to preserve for man the knowledge of God down through the centuries.

The Genesis account of creation is far and away the most sublime record of beginnings to be found in the literature of men. With master strokes it pictures for us the majestic panorama of the creation of the elements of matter (Gen. 1:1) which are molded and formed into different varieties, the creation of conscious life (1:21), and finally the spiritual and moral consciousness of man (1:27).

### I. THE WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD

Man stood at the head of creation, pure and untainted by sin, but morally and spiritually untried. If he was to have personal worth, he must be tested. There came the temptation to evil, the yielding, and its dire results. Driven out from the presence of God, man became an outcast, a slave to fear and evil.

#### 1. *Its Civilization*

Despite the moral wreckage which had taken place in the lives of the first human pair, some provision for worship no doubt was made, for we behold the two sons, Cain and Abel, bringing their offerings. Cain, the elder, brought the fruit of the ground. Abel brought the firstlings of his flock. As the offering from the flock meant

the shedding of blood, the type and symbol of redemption, Abel's offering was received with favor, but Cain's was rejected. This angered jealous Cain, and filled with the spirit of envy, he killed his brother.

In the case of both Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, the beginning was not promising. And it is not surprising to learn that in the line of Cain, Lamech, the seventh in descent, was a polygamist and a murderer. While in this line the arts of civilization such as agriculture, music, and craftsmanship were developed, there was no evidence of the knowledge and worship of God.

But another family appeared. Seth was given in the place of Abel. We read that very early in the history of Seth's line they called upon the name of the Lord; and Enoch, the seventh in descent in this family, has always stood as an example of fellowship with God.

The Genesis account does not give us many facts regarding the world before the Flood. There is a brief tabulation of the patriarchs of the time. It is interesting to note that Berosus, a Chaldean writer, gives the same number of antediluvian worthies whom he calls kings. From the few facts that can be gleaned from excavations which penetrate below the Flood strata, that is, the finding of stone implements, painted pottery, and bricks of burnt clay; and also from the mention among Chaldean writers that all ritualism and rules of conduct came from the period before the Flood, one may conclude that even in these very early days there was a well-developed structure of civilization.

## 2. *The Deluge*

Among the people of the day, two distinct families existed. On the one hand were the descendants of Cain, noted for their godlessness; and on the other, the righteous line of Seth. As long as they remained distinct, they retained their separate characteristics; but when they

began to associate closely, there was a tendency to break down moral barriers. The righteous line of Seth intermarried with that of Cain, and soon the whole race had corrupted its way upon the earth, thinking and doing evil continually. Then came the sentence of destruction. The span of life was to be shortened from that time on, and the existing inhabitants of the earth were to be destroyed. Noah, a perfect man in his day and generation, and his family, were the only ones to find favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Then came the Flood upon the earth, destroying all forms of life except those sheltered in the ark which Noah had built at the command of Jehovah. In the ark, Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, together with their families, found refuge. They took with them from among the animals seven pairs of the ceremonially clean and two pairs of the ceremonially unclean.

## II. THE WORLD AFTER THE FLOOD

When the flood waters subsided, Noah and his family with the beasts of the earth came forth from the ark. It was a new beginning, and most appropriately the first act was the building of an altar to the Lord upon which a sacrifice was offered. The Lord looked with favor upon this worship, and promised that never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood. Then Noah and his sons were told to multiply and replenish the earth, a command like that given to the first human pair in the Garden.

While this second beginning was favorable, yet so great is the inclination of the heart toward evil that very soon we see its expression in the attitude of Ham toward his father's misfortune. For this, a curse was pronounced upon him.

Again the Genesis narrator passes in quick review a long period, possibly as long as a thousand years, with

a list of the nations. The descendants of the three sons of Noah are named with little comment.

### 1. *Population Movements*

In these early narratives, two population movements may be noted. Nimrod, a mighty man and noted as a hunter, established his kingdom in the plain of Shinar, that is, southern Babylonia, or what is later known as Chaldea. His domain included four leading cities: Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh. From this center, Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, was founded.

Another population shift took place when a people from the east also located in this plain of Shinar. Upon arrival they started to build a city and a tower, desiring to make a name for themselves and to centralize all people in this vicinity. But as they were in the midst of this task, divine judgment fell upon them. Their sin appears to have been twofold: an attempt to centralize civilization instead of replenishing the earth as had been commanded; and, second, the tower probably had some connection with idolatrous worship. Their enterprise was brought to nought by confusion of tongues, and thereupon they began to scatter. It is generally believed that the people thus described were the Sumerians, who with the Akkadians constituted the early population of this region.

### 2. *Ur of the Chaldees*

Going back into the shadows of these early centuries is the city of Ur of the Chaldees, very important in its day and of great interest to the Bible student. Centuries before the time of Abraham it ranked high in culture and achievement.

We have already noted a few facts showing the culture of Ur, and now should make a brief review of its religious life. Both publicly and in private, religion played an essential part. Its leading form was the worship of the moon. There were two temples: one for the

moon-god Nannar, and another for the moon-goddess Nin-gal. Connected with the former temple was a ziggurat, or tower, called the "Hill of Heaven," or the "Mountain of God." This was a large moundlike structure built of brick. Its architecture was so planned that there was not a straight line in the building. Its colors were especially impressive in contrast with the groves of trees planted upon it. Up the stairways processions of priests went on the great festive days to do homage to the moon-god at the shrine on the top. The worship of idols also played a large part in the home life, and many of the homes had chapels for them. The household gods seem to have been clay figures. These no doubt were the teraphim about which we hear at a later date as having been stolen by Rachel from her father, Laban.

### III. THE PATRIARCHS

After listing the descendants of the three sons of Noah, the Genesis narrative centers upon the family of Terah of the line of Shem. In this family there were three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. The last named died in Ur of the Chaldees, leaving one son, Lot.

#### 1. *Abraham*

Since idolatry prevailed in the city of Ur and the household of Terah were its devotees also, the question arises as to how Abram, as he was first called, came to know God. There may have been traditions among the Habiru, Abram's clan. The name for God among the Habiru and among the Hebrews is somewhat similar. *Abram may have learned of these traditions. Then every man has the light of nature and the light of conscience. These two may have combined to stir belief in the heart of this great patriarch. As he followed this gleam, no doubt there was given to him some special form of revelation.*

(1) His Call. Apparently Abram received an early call from God while still in Ur (Acts 7:2). This may have

been the reason the family migrated to Haran; for while Terah did not share his son's faith, he may well have listened to his request to leave.

The city of Haran, where the family located, was situated on the trade route between Babylonia and the west. On the banks of a river, it was in the center of a fertile region, and was prosperous by reason of both its agriculture and its trade. But like Ur of the Chaldees it was idolatrous, for Haran had its special deity, the moon-god Sin. Thus the city was not a likely place for establishing a pure form of worship of the one true God. Abram's relatives, also, were still deep in idolatry.

(2) His Pilgrimage. Abram's second call is recounted in Genesis. After the death of Terah, Abram left his kindred to go forth into a land which God would show him. Taking his wife and nephew Lot, he followed the trade route south through the city of Damascus. Perhaps it was at this time that he added Eliezer to his household.

Reaching the land of Canaan, the pilgrims of necessity made a complete readjustment in their mode of living. While the Canaanites had built cities, they were small and insignificant compared to those of the eastern country from whence Abram had come, and the civilization was much more crude. From the settled life of the city with its varied activities, Abram and his little band became seminomads, living in tents.

He located first at Shechem and then moved to a mountain east of Bethel. From there he journeyed further south. In each place that he pitched his tent he built an altar unto Jehovah, and thus began to worship the true God.

When a famine swept over the land, Abram went down into Egypt. Fearing that the Egyptians would covet his beautiful wife, he instructed her to say that she was

his sister, since she was indeed a close relative. The truth became known, however, and Pharaoh asked him to leave the country.

After Abram and his family returned to Canaan, trouble arose between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot over pastureland. In order to avoid strife between them, Abram gave his nephew the choice which resulted in Lot's request for the fertile plain of Jordan. When Lot departed for this best portion of the land, the Lord appeared to Abram, telling him that all the country, north, south, east, and west, would be his. Then Abram moved to Hebron and pitched his tent by the oaks of Mamre. Here, as was his custom, he built an altar to the Lord.

While the choice of Lot seemed desirable, yet it had decided dangers. First the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, were very wicked, and Lot afterward located in Sodom. Then war broke out. Fourteen years before the plain had been placed under tribute by one of the eastern kings, but the petty sovereigns of the region had rebelled. Consequently Chedorlaomer with other minor kings from the east attacked the cities of the plain and captured them, taking many prisoners, among whom was Lot.

When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been taken, he gathered the men of his own household and some Amorite confederates, and set forth in pursuit. Overtaking the enemy near the city later known as Dan, he made a night attack, routed the invaders, and recovered both the captives and the spoil.

On the return journey a most unusual person met them, Melchizedek, a priest of the most high God. He brought bread and wine for Abram's band and blessed the patriarch, while Abram on his part gave to him a tenth or tithe of the booty.

(3) **The Promise.** Although from the first the assurance had been given to Abram that God would make of

him a great nation, and in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed, the promise was repeated even more definitely. At first Abram questioned, for his only apparent heir was Eliezer of Damascus, his steward or chief servant. However, the Lord assured him that a child of his own would be his heir. By a mighty act of faith, Abram grasped the promise. Then his name was changed from Abram to Abraham, father of a multitude; and Sarai's name was changed to Sarah, which means "princess." Apparently Sarah misunderstood God's plan, and since she had no children of her own arranged for Abraham to take Hagar as a secondary wife, to whom Ishmael was born.

At the time of this promise, the Lord also revealed to Abraham the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The patriarch prayed, but not even ten righteous people could be found within the city to save it. Only Lot and his two daughters escaped. Lot's wife, looking back, perished.

While Abraham was dwelling in the south country, the great event in their family life, the fulfillment of the divine promise, came to pass. A son was born to Sarah and named Isaac. The birth of a true heir brought friction into the household, and Hagar, the bondwoman, with her son had to leave. This was a sorrow to Abraham, but the Lord appeared again, assuring him that even Ishmael would become a great nation, so he was resigned to their dismissal from the home.

Although the promised son had been given, Abraham's faith was to be tried again. The call came to take this loved son, the hope of the promise, and offer him as a sacrifice. The sacred writer gives us no picture of the aching heart of this father as he and his only son traveled to the mountains of Moriah, but human nature is ever the same and we can readily imagine the agony of that trip. Also we can see the ever watchful providence

over our lives when we have reached the ultimate point in obedience. A ram found in the thicket was to be the substitute. No wonder Abraham called the place "Jehovah will provide."

After a sojourn of many days in the land of the Philistines, the household of Abraham returned to the oaks of Mamre. Here Sarah died. Abraham must buy a burying place. A very vivid picture is given of him as he makes the contract with the sons of Heth in Hebron for the cave of Machpelah. There he buried Sarah, and this cave became the family burying place for several generations.

While Abraham dwelt in Beersheba, news had come to him about his brother's family in the land of Mesopotamia. As he was growing old and felt that he should not leave his son Isaac to marry among the daughters of Heth, he directed his trusted servant Eliezer to go to Haran to obtain a wife for Isaac. In the spirit of his master, Eliezer, reaching the end of his long journey, bowed in prayer as he came to the wellside in Haran. He saw damsels approaching and asked the Lord that the one who gave him and his camels water might be the one he came to find. None other than Rebekah, the daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, offered her services. Eliezer was invited to her home. There he stated his mission, and arrangements were made for Rebekah to return with him to the land of Canaan.

After Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah, and had other sons besides Ishmael and Isaac. However, before his death he gave them gifts and sent them away, leaving the bulk of his estate to Isaac, the son of promise. Abraham died at the ripe old age of one hundred and seventy-five and was buried by the side of his wife in the cave of Machpelah. His life stands out in its loyalty to the worship of Jehovah. Out of the blight of idolatrous worship he came as a defender of the true faith, and

answered the call to go forth to plant this form of worship anew. Wherever he went he set up an altar, and ever remained steadfast in his faith, though at times he was called upon to believe what seemed impossible. The faults in his character are not so grave when we remember the standards of the day, and his virtues stand out so distinctly that they overshadow all faults.

## 2. *Isaac*

As the caravan that bore Rebekah from Haran to Canaan approached the tents of Abraham, Isaac had gone out into the field to pray. He saw camels approaching and went to meet them. After Isaac had greeted the caravan, Eliezer told him all that had happened. Then Isaac took Rebekah to his mother's tent, and she became his wife.

(1) His Sons. To Isaac and Rebekah twin sons were born. One had a priority of a few minutes over the other, so would be called the elder. However, the word of prophecy given to the mother was, "The elder shall serve the younger."

When the boys had grown to manhood, one day Esau, the elder, came in from the hunt faint and hungry. Jacob, who did not care for hunting but remained at home tending the flocks and herds, had prepared some particularly tasty food. When Esau asked for some, Jacob saw the opportunity for which no doubt he had long sought and replied that it would be given on condition that Esau surrender his birthright. The birthright in a family of that time meant the major share of the family possessions, but in the household of Isaac it included the blessings of the promise. Esau, heedless of the value of this priceless heritage, sold it to his brother, confirming the sale with an oath.

(2) In the Land of the Philistines. Palestine, being dependent upon seasonal rainfall, was sure to suffer the inroads of famine whenever the winter's rain supply was

insufficient. During one of these periodic famines Isaac moved to the land of the Philistines. Abraham had also taken refuge there on a like occasion. As his father before him, Isaac passed Rebekah off as his sister, hoping thereby to escape danger. When Abimelech, king of Philistia, learned the truth, he charged that no harm should befall Isaac and his wife.

Sowing in the land, Isaac reaped a good harvest, and his wealth increased. This aroused the jealousy of the local tribesmen, and they contended with Isaac about water rights to wells he had dug. Leaving Gerar finally, he came to Beersheba, in the south of Judah. There the Lord appeared to him and reassured him regarding the heritage of the promise. Here Isaac also built an altar.

(3) *His Blessings.* When Isaac was old, he felt that the time had come for him officially to pass on the patriarchal blessing, so he called his oldest son, Esau, to prepare the food for him that he liked so well. It would seem that Isaac had never recognized the sale of the birthright as a valid transaction, but Rebekah had ever in mind the prediction given her regarding the two sons. Now when she overheard the command given to Esau, she hurriedly told Jacob to go and prepare meat to take to his father. Jacob carried out his mother's bidding, and by cunning deceit obtained the blessing. Esau coming a little later bewailed his loss, but could do nothing about it, and had to content himself with a lesser blessing.

### 3. *Jacob*

Although Esau should have remembered the time he sold the birthright to his brother, angry and jealous, he determined to kill Jacob. He would only wait until his father's death.

(1) *A Refugee.* When Rebekah learned what her elder son purposed to do, she advised Jacob to flee to Padan-aram, her old home. To Isaac, however, she sug-

gested that it would not be right for Jacob to take a wife from the daughters of Heth, as Esau had done, so she influenced him to send Jacob to her father's house for a wife.

It was on this journey that Jacob had his wonderful vision of angels and the assurance of the ancestral promise. It would seem to have been a most unlikely time for Jacob to receive such divine blessing, but it indicates that latent in his heart there were religious possibilities, though for the present his natural traits were dominant. Even so, the depths of his soul were stirred and he set up a pillar unto Jehovah and offered a vow.

Reaching the land of Haran, he stopped at the well where the flocks were watered. Here he met Rachel, keeping her father's sheep. Thus the contact was made with his mother's brother and family. Serving seven years for Rachel, whom he loved, he was deceived in being given Leah, and then toiled another seven years for Rachel.

After serving for his wives, Jacob bargained with Laban for flocks, and became quite prosperous. This aroused the envy of Laban's sons and the ill will of Laban himself. After six years more, the Lord appeared to Jacob again, telling him to return to his own land. Fearing the anger of Laban, he stole away at night. Laban pursued and scolded Jacob, but since he had been warned in a dream, he did not dare to lay hands upon him. The two made a covenant and parted.

In connection with the dealings of Laban and Jacob, there are many features which seem strange to us, but in recent years clay tablets have been found in northwest Iraq belonging to this period of time. These verify many of the incidents in Jacob's life as well as in the lives of Abraham and Isaac as being in accordance with the social customs of the day. The Bible narratives accurately reveal life as lived in those far-off times.

(2) Wrestling with an Angel. As Jacob approached his homeland, fear of his brother began to trouble him. Esau in the meantime had moved to the south and now occupied the rocky, mountainous territory of Edom, named for him. Sending messengers to tell Esau about his sojourn in Haran and his return, word came back that Esau was coming to meet him. Then Jacob really became afraid, and dividing his family and his possessions into two companies, he sought the Lord in prayer. As he wrestled thus, his name was changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, indicating that as a prince he had prevailed with God.

To appease his brother, Jacob sent a generous present on before, then went to meet him. Upon seeing Jacob, Esau ran to greet him, embracing and kissing him. The old enmity was gone. He would have traveled in company with Jacob until his destination was reached, but the latter preferred to move slowly along because of his sheep and cattle, so he departed and Jacob journeyed on at his leisure.

At first Jacob located at Succoth, then moved on to Shechem. Here he bought a parcel of ground and erected an altar. Finally he prepared to go to Bethel, where God had met him as he fled from his brother. In preparation he bade his household to put away all foreign gods, which they buried under an oak at Shechem. Arriving at Bethel, Jacob built an altar there also. As at the first, God appeared to him and reassured him that the promised blessing should be his.

#### 4. Joseph

Altogether Jacob had fathered twelve sons, but the most loved of all were Joseph and Benjamin, Rachel's children. Showing his love for Joseph, he made him a coat of many colors. This act of favoritism aroused the hatred of the half brothers.

(1) **His Dreams.** The ill will thus created was increased by certain dreams the young Joseph had. In the first dream he saw his sheaf in the field arising while those of his brothers bowed before his. Again he dreamed that the sun, moon, and stars did obeisance.

(2) **In Egypt.** When Jacob sent Joseph out to check on his brothers' welfare as they were grazing their sheep and cattle, they felt that this was their opportunity and plotted to kill him. Judah made a counterproposal that they sell him to a band of Midianites who happened to be traveling by. This was done, and Joseph was brought into Egypt as a slave.

Here he was sold to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers. The favor of the Lord was with him, and he was made overseer of Potiphar's house. Being slandered by Potiphar's wife, he was cast into prison. There also he was favored and given charge over the other prisoners. While there he interpreted the dreams of the butler and baker, servants of Pharaoh.

In accordance with the interpretation that Joseph gave, the butler was restored to his former position. Soon after, Pharaoh himself had a dream and none of the wise men could interpret it. Then the butler remembered Joseph. He told of the young Hebrew and his ability to interpret dreams. Thereupon Joseph was called, and listening to the dream, assured Pharaoh that God would give him an answer. The dream indicated that there would be seven prosperous years and seven lean years in the land, and he counseled the king to store supplies during the prosperous years for the time of famine that was to follow.

(3) **Preserving Life.** When Pharaoh heard the interpretation, stating that there was no one else in Egypt in whom the Spirit of God dwelt in such measure as in Joseph, he appointed the young slave as second ruler of

the empire, giving him power to store grain during the time of plenty in preparation for the lean years ahead.

When the famine came, Jacob heard that there was grain to be had in Egypt. He sent his sons down to buy. All but Benjamin took the journey, and upon their arrival they came and bowed down before Joseph. While he knew them, they did not recognize him. He sought to prove them by many tests both this time and also the second time that they came down. The last time he skillfully tested them with respect to their loyalty to Benjamin, the younger brother. Finally he made himself known, adding that they were not to fear, for God had brought good out of their treachery in saving their lives.

Joseph then sent for his aged father to bring the whole household into Egypt, since the famine was to continue for a long time. Jacob was hesitant; the fact that Joseph was alive seemed too good to be true. Finally he was persuaded and began the journey. When Jacob reached Beersheba, where both Abraham and Isaac had camped, God appeared unto him and assured him that His presence would go with him and would bring him forth again.

Arriving in Egypt, the household of Jacob located in Goshen. The aged patriarch himself was presented to Pharaoh. Here under the care of Joseph the family was maintained throughout the remaining years of the famine.

When Jacob felt that the end of life was near, he gave his blessings to the sons of Joseph who had been born in Egypt, making them heads of tribes and thus equal in position with his own sons. After this, he pronounced blessings upon all his sons. As a dying request, he asked them not to bury him in Egypt but to take his remains back to Canaan. This they fulfilled, and laid him to rest in the cave of Machpelah, where his forefathers had been buried.

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Traditions relating to the Deluge
2. The major racial divisions of mankind
3. Life in Ur in the days of Abraham
4. Social customs in patriarchal times
5. God's purpose in the sojourn of His people in Egypt

## CHAPTER THREE

# The Birth of a Nation

When the Israelites entered Egypt, the rulers of that country were known as the Hyksos, a Semitic people. This made a racial bond between them and Jacob's people, and accounts for the favor they showed the Hebrews. But later on the native rulers regained control. Thus it was that there arose a king over Egypt that did not know Joseph.

A further cause of friction was the fact that the Israelites were keepers of flocks, an abomination to the Egyptians. When grazing land has been covered by sheep, the grass is cropped so close that nothing is left for cattle, and this has always brought on strife between shepherds and herdsmen.

Final fear sprang up among the Egyptians because of the increasing number of the Hebrews. As a result they virtually enslaved the people of Israel, and also sought to put to death their male children. The situation appeared hopeless for the Israelites.

### I. A LEADER GIVEN

During these times of distress, Moses was born and was hidden three months by his mother in the home. When he became too old to be thus protected, his mother sought to save him from the edict of the king by placing him in an ark woven of bulrushes and hiding him among the flags where the king's daughter came to bathe. Her plan succeeded. The young woman, seeing the child, was touched at heart and took him for her own.

### 1. *Early Life*

Through the quick thinking of Miriam, Moses' mother became his nurse. After he was able to leave her care, he was brought up at the Egyptian court and educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

Some time passes before another incident in the life of Moses is recorded. He had grown to young manhood, but his life at court had not made him forget those of his own race. A supreme decision had been made in his life. This is indicated in Hebrews, which tells us that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God (11:24-25). Events of great importance came from this decision.

Having made the choice, Moses went out to his fellow Hebrews in Goshen. Seeing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he killed the Egyptian. He thought his people would recognize that God was giving them deliverance by his hand (Acts 7:25), but they did not. Then he went out the second day and, seeing two Hebrews contending, he chided them. They retorted, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" (Exod. 2:14, A.R.V.)

### 2. *Moses in Midian*

When Pharaoh heard that Moses had killed an Egyptian, he sought to have him taken and executed. Consequently Moses fled to Midian. Here for forty years he served as a shepherd. One day as he was tending his sheep near Mount Horeb, he noted a bush burning, yet not consumed. As he turned aside to see this strange sight, the voice of God spoke to him, calling him to go and deliver the children of Israel from their affliction.

No doubt Moses recognized this call as the one that had come to him years before, but this time he was hesitant. Assurances of God's presence were given unto him, and moreover there was revealed to him the divine name which was ever to be the designation of the Godhead for

the Hebrews. This name indicated a very vital fact in relation to God. Over against the crude conceptions of that day as to the nature of God stood this majestic thought of being or self-existence: "I am that I am." Being on the human plane is wonderful, but being in Deity transcends thought and gives to all its ultimate reality. "I am" was the sublime name, rendered in the Revised Version as "Jehovah."

## II. THE EXODUS

Although Moses was still hesitant, with two visible signs to attest his mission and the promise that Aaron, his brother, would be his spokesman, he returned to Egypt. As the voice of God was calling to Moses, it spoke also to Aaron in Egypt, and he went to meet his brother. Both of them then came before the assembly of the elders, and related the call of God to Moses.

### 1. Before Pharaoh

Following this a request was made to Pharaoh that he let the people of Israel go, but his reply was, "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice?" (A.R.V.) Then followed a mighty struggle. Plague after plague came upon the land. At times Pharaoh would relent, and then again would harden his heart. Each plague was directed against some form of idolatrous worship. Finally came the climax in the death of the first-born.

With the last fatal plague, Pharaoh and the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave at once. In haste therefore the people of Israel went forth, carrying their unleavened dough in their kneading troughs. As was the custom of the time, they asked presents of the Egyptians, who gave them jewels of silver and gold, and clothing.

To commemorate this wonderful deliverance and more especially the fact that the first-born of the Israelites had been spared when the blood had been sprinkled upon the door, the Passover Feast was instituted, a feast to be observed throughout their generations.

## 2. *Journey to Sinai*

Beginning their journey with the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day as a guide, they encamped near the Red Sea. Here they were hemmed in by mountains on either side. The Egyptians in the meantime had repented the loss of their slave labor, so Pharaoh and his armies started out in pursuit. Dismay filled the hearts of the Israelites when they saw their pursuers, but Moses encouraged them not to fear, for God would deliver them. At dawn Moses stretched out his rod and the waters of the Red Sea were miraculously divided, allowing the Israelites to cross over dry-shod. The Egyptians, however, were drowned when they attempted to follow. Then Moses and the people of Israel joined in a great song of triumph.

They journeyed on through the wilderness seeking to find water at the various oases. Reaching Marah, they found water, but it was bitter. At the command of the Lord, Moses cast a tree into the spring, and it became pure and sweet. Then at Elim they found twelve wells. In the wilderness of Paran they began to complain about food, and supplies of manna were sent.

At Rephidim, water was obtained by a miraculous act in the striking of a rock. Here there was a battle with Amalek, a people who had been harassing the Israelites on the way. In this battle Joshua appeared as a general. He led the army to victory while Aaron and Hur upheld the hands of Moses as he lifted high the rod of God. At this place another important event occurred; Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visited him and, seeing his attempt to administer justice for all the people by himself, advised him to appoint assistant judges.

## 3. *At Sinai*

After a journey of three months, the people reached Mount Sinai, the place appointed to hold a feast to the

Lord. Here the covenant was given and its terms clearly announced. The special requirement was obedience, and this being observed, they were to be a people for Jehovah's own possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. It is important to note that the primary relationship established between God and His people was in the form of a covenant, and the fundamental requisite was obedience to God's law.

After the conditions of acceptance of the people by the Lord had been made known, then came the supreme manifestation of God on the mount. The voice of God sounded out of the midst of thunderings and lightnings, and the Ten Commandments were given, commandments which have been fundamental in the relationship of man to God and of man to man down through the ages.

Then through Moses as mediator the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:21—23:33) was given. Herein were civil, ceremonial, and sacrificial laws. Upon a newly built altar, sacrifices of burnt offerings and peace offerings were made, and the book was read in the hearing of the people.

As yet the Israelites had no form of worship. At the call of God, Moses went again into the mount and there received the plan for the Tabernacle with its court, its holy place, and the holy of holies. Henceforth this Tabernacle became the symbol of Jehovah's presence among the people, and around it the Israelites pitched their camp.

While Moses was on Sinai receiving these instructions, the people fell into idolatry under the leadership of Aaron. For this sin, a sentence of destruction was pronounced upon them, but through the prayer of Moses the nation was spared. Because of the loyalty of the Levites on this occasion, they were dedicated to Jehovah in place of the first-born, who had been set apart as belonging to the Lord because their lives had been spared in the Passover in Egypt.

To provide materials for the construction of the Tabernacle, a freewill offering was brought by the people. No doubt many of the presents given them by the Egyptians found their way into this offering. Then skilled craftsmen were found to do the work, men who had learned their trades in Egypt. When all was finished, the Tabernacle was set up, and the cloud of fire came and rested upon it as an indication of God's presence in their midst. Furthermore, a regular system of sacrifice and worship was established with burnt, peace, and meal offerings as well as sin and trespass offerings. Also three annual religious feasts were appointed.

#### 4. *From Sinai to Mount Pisgah*

During the stay at Sinai, which was about a year, there had been brought into being a people, a union of tribes and clans into one whole, the birth of a new nation among the nations. The promise given to Abraham had thus in part received its fulfillment.

When the people had been definitely organized through the various laws given and the religious worship set up, the command came to take their march toward the land of Canaan. Some minor tragedies and events occurred along the way to the stopping place at Kadesh-barnea: the burning at Taberah, the giving of quails and the selection of seventy men to help Moses at Kibroth-hataavah, and the sedition of Aaron and Miriam in the wilderness of Paran.

But at Kadesh-barnea the most tragic event of all took place: the unbelief of the people after the return of the twelve spies. Ten of the spies were completely without faith. They saw only the giants in Canaan. However, Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful ones, exhorted the people, telling them they were well able to overcome. Their exhortation fell on disappointed and resentful hearts. Then came the word of Jehovah with a sentence

of judgment against the people. But once again, as at Mount Sinai, Moses prayed, and the sentence was commuted to a decree that the people should live in the wilderness until that generation had died.

Concerning this period of wandering, which lasted about thirty-nine years, we have little information. It would seem that during this time idolatry was very common (Amos 5:25-26). Only a few incidents are recorded: the account of Sabbath desecration and its punishment, the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, and the sin of Moses at the waters of Meribah.

Resuming the journey after the years of wandering, we read of the death of Aaron on Mount Hor. Then because the people complained about the long journey around Edom, fiery serpents were sent among them. Yet the Lord provided for them the brazen serpent, unto which they could look and live.

Reaching the country east of the Jordan, they won victories over Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. With these conquests the king of Moab became afraid and sent for Balaam, a prophet of high repute. Balaam's lust for money and the surge of prophetic power represent to us the play of dual forces upon his soul. He was unable to curse the people of Israel, but he gained the end of his covetous spirit when he advised the local inhabitants to call the Israelites to sacrifice, a sacrifice which entailed immoral rites of worship. This resulted in such a moral lapse for Israel that the iniquity of Baal-peor ever stood out in their history as a haunting figure of evil. In the battle which followed, however, Balaam himself was slain and a host of the Midianites also.

At this time the Reubenites, Gadites, and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh asked that they be given the land on the east of Jordan, which was rich in pasture. They desired this because they had many herds of cattle. The request was granted on condition that the men go across

Jordan and help their brethren in the conquest on the other side.

Coming to the close of his lifework, Moses, who had been a great lawgiver, a great religious leader, and an intrepid servant of God, gave three farewell discourses on the plains of Moab. His first address was a review of the history; his second, a review of the law; while the third had for its purpose the renewal of the covenant. In connection with his last address directions were given for recording the law after the entrance into the land of Canaan. Also the consequences of obedience and disobedience were set forth.

When these addresses were finished, the people were called upon to renew their allegiance to Jehovah. A charge was given to Joshua, who had been appointed Moses' successor, and the law was put into the holy place beside the ark. With a song of praise to the Lord and the pronouncement of a blessing upon the people, the life of Moses, the servant of God, was ended. When he had viewed the Promised Land from the top of Mount Pisgah, he died at the age of one hundred twenty years, and Joshua the son of Nun became the leader of the people.

### III. THE CONQUEST

While a nation had been born at the foot of Mount Sinai, they remained a people without a country. This portion of the promise had not yet been fulfilled. The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen. 15:16). As described in Scripture the religion of the Canaanites was very corrupt. Archaeology has confirmed these facts, making it evident that it was the most immoral religion of antiquity. Therefore we can understand the command of Jehovah to destroy the Canaanites. Long forbearance had been extended to them, but now their cup was full, and the command was given to Israel to go in and claim the promised possession.

### 1. *Before Jordan*

As Joshua was encamped before the river Jordan, the word of the Lord came to him promising guidance and protection. He was to be strong and courageous and to take care that the words of the law of God did not depart out of his mouth.

Inspired by the exhortation, Joshua commanded the people to make ready for the crossing. In the meantime he sent out spies. Rahab, who lived on the wall of Jericho, received them in peace and protected them from being captured by the king of the city. She told them that the people were paralyzed with fear, and begged them, since she had saved their lives, to remember her when they should take the city.

The day arrived for the crossing of the Jordan. The priests carried the ark before the people, and as their feet touched the river's edge, the flood-swollen waters were miraculously divided and the Israelites marched across. The priests stood in the midst of the river on dry ground until all had passed over. After all the people had crossed, and the priests with the ark had reached the other side, the waters returned again to their natural course. As a memorial of this occasion they took stones from the river bed and carried them over to the other side, building them into a simple monument.

Encamping in Gilgal, the people observed the covenant rite of circumcision and kept the Feast of the Passover. Since now they had supplies of corn, the manna that had been so miraculously provided during the wilderness journey ceased.

### 2. *The First Victories*

Not far from their camp lay the city of Jericho, walled with a strong fortification ten feet thick. This city must be taken before they could proceed. It was a formidable task. Very likely Joshua was viewing the fortifications

when a man with a drawn sword suddenly appeared unto him. In answer to his question whether he were friend or foe, the reply came, "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Josh. 5:14). Joshua was told that the Israelites should march around the city once each day for six days and on the seventh day seven times. Doing as instructed, when they had gone around the walls the last time on the seventh day, the people shouted with a great shout, and the priests sounded the trumpets. Then the walls of the city fell, except the portion on which Rahab's house was built. The fall of Jericho has been attested by archaeological excavations in amazing detail.

The command had been given that the city of Jericho was to be destroyed with all it contained, except the gold and silver, which was to be brought to the Tabernacle. But one man saw a choice Babylonian garment and some silver and gold which he desired, so he took them and hid them. Thus it was that when the army went on to attack Ai they were defeated, for the command of the Lord had been disobeyed. When Joshua learned the cause of the defeat, Achan was sought out and stoned. His crime was considered a military offense, and the punishment that which would be meted out by a court-martial. Another attack was made on Ai, both directly and by ambush, and this time it fell into the hands of the Israelites.

With the capture of the city of Ai, Moses' command was obeyed that an altar be erected and the law read. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim, and half in front of Mount Ebal, but the natural acoustics of the valley were such that all could hear the words of the law. This was the establishment of the worship of Jehovah as the official religion of the land—the setting up of a family altar, so to speak, in the new home.

### 3. *The Southern Campaign*

With these first victories, the initial stage of the conquest was finished, but the major campaigns were yet to follow. The first was in the south. In the southern campaign the decisive battle was that of Beth-horon. This battle was brought on by an attack of local kings against the Gibeonites, who had tricked Joshua into an alliance. The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua for help. Encouraged by divine direction, Joshua made one of those surprise attacks which were so characteristic of his campaigns. Many of the enemy were killed, and the rest routed. Pursuing the foe a distance of four miles to the upper village of Beth-horon, he followed them on down to the lower village three miles farther. This descent was dangerous at any time, for there were sheets of smooth rock, jagged stones, and loose boulders. As the Canaanites were going down this rough road a hailstorm overtook them, and many were killed. It was at this time also that we have the long day in answer to Joshua's prayer.

In the battle of Beth-horon the five kings who had banded together were taken. One by one the cities of the south were besieged and captured. This made Joshua master of the southern portion of Canaan.

### 4. *The Northern Campaign*

The Israelites had conquered the south. However, since this was not so thickly populated, being a hill country, and because it was not possible for the enemy to use horses and chariots in this section, the supreme test for Joshua and his forces was to come in the northern campaign. A strong league was formed by the northern kings, and the decisive battle took place at the waters or springs of Merom. Again a message of encouragement came from the Lord, and strengthened by this, Joshua led the attack. Once more the enemy was completely de-

feated, and fled with the Israelites in hot pursuit. The city of Hazor was the head of the alliance and was destroyed, but the remainder of the cities were left for the Israelites to inhabit.

Concerning the fear of the inhabitants of Canaan in the face of the invasion of Israel, it is interesting to note among the finds of archaeological research the tablets known as the Tel el-Amarna letters. These reveal to us that the kings of Canaan, in their distress and dismay, sent messages to Pharaoh of Egypt begging help, for a wild people from the wilderness, the Habiru, were overrunning the country. Egypt seems to have failed to respond and in consequence lost her control over the land.

#### IV. THE LAND DIVIDED

With the victory at the waters of Merom, the general conquest was completed. This does not mean that all of the inhabitants were driven out, but Joshua and his forces were masters. The destruction of the Canaanite inhabitants in each locality was to be completed by the tribes assigned to that particular part.

Before the tribes could undertake their several tasks, it was necessary to divide the land. Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of the tribes (Josh. 14:1) assembled for this purpose. Already two and one-half tribes had been provided for on the east of the Jordan; now the rest were to receive their allotments. Simeon and Judah were located between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. The central part was given to the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, Dan, and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh. The northern part was assigned to Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher.

Caleb, one of the faithful spies, asked for the city of Hebron, which was located in the territory given to his tribe. Joshua received Timnath-serah, a barren hilly place in Ephraim.

With the division of the land completed, the Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, and became the religious center. Then the Levites were given forty-eight cities for their possession.

Now that the conquest and division of Canaan were finished, the two and one-half tribes that had fought so gallantly with their brethren returned to their inheritance across the river. Before leaving, however, they set up a memorial of stones to signify their relationship to the other tribes. At first the other Israelites thought it was an altar for idol worship and protested, but learning the truth, were satisfied.

#### V. JOSHUA'S FAREWELL

Joshua now retired to his home in the hill country and for some eighteen years appears to have lived quietly there, leaving the management of their affairs to each local tribe and its heads. When he was old, however, he called for the elders, the officers, and the judges. Recounting all that the Lord had done, he charged them to keep the law of Moses and warned them against idolatry. Later all of the people were gathered together, and to them he related the wonders that God had wrought in their behalf, concluding with an exhortation and a challenge to serve Jehovah. Accepting the challenge, the people entered into a covenant that the Lord should be their God. To seal this covenant Joshua wrote the record in a book and set up a stone as a memorial. Thus ended the work of this great military leader who had triumphed over his enemies and had established his people in a land of their own.

#### VI. WITHOUT A KING

After the death of Joshua no leader appeared sufficiently strong to unite the people as a whole. Strategic places such as Jerusalem and Gezer were still occupied by the enemy, while in the north five fortified cities re-

mained in the hands of the Canaanites. In various sections of the country men came forward at a time of crisis, but their following was local rather than general.

This was a transitional period in a twofold sense. First, there was an adjustment to a new mode of living. From being a seminomadic people, keepers of flocks and herds, they were to become an agricultural and urban people, tilling the soil and carrying on trade and commerce. Second, there was the transition from a loosely united tribal group to a full national consciousness. In any transitional period there is more or less of confusion and chaos, and so it was at this time; but progress, though hampered and slow, was being made.

### 1. *Indifference of the Tribes*

At the opening of the Book of Judges we find the record of a number of spasmodic attempts to drive out the remaining Canaanites. Among these were several victories. The town of Bezek, the lower city of Jerusalem, and Debir were captured. Judah's conquest of three cities of the Philistines is important. But with these victories the courage and energy of the people seem to have waned, and the different tribes made no effort to drive out the native inhabitants.

The failure of the Israelites is explained when one reads how the new generation that had arisen after the death of Joshua and the leaders of his time served Baalim and forsook the worship of Jehovah. The immoral religion of the Canaanites was getting its hold upon the people. It was in consequence of this that the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and they were delivered over to oppressors. When they cried to the Lord, He sent them deliverers, but again and again they returned to idol worship.

## 2. *Deliverance by the Judges*

(1) Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. The first oppression came from the forces of Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. For eight years he held the people of Israel in slavery. When they cried to God for help, Othniel was sent to deliver them.

The second oppressor was a nearby king. The Moabites allied themselves with the Ammonites and the Amalekites and advanced far enough into the land to take Jericho. But Ehud, singlehanded, assassinated Eglon, the king of Moab, with a dagger, in his own palace. Returning home to Ephraim, he rallied the people to follow him. They seized the fords of Jordan and cut down the Moabites as they sought to pass over.

The next enemy to press in upon the Israelites came from the southwest, the people of the Philistines. Again a man singlehanded, Shamgar by name, slew six hundred, and thus the foe was checked. Once more was Israel saved.

(2) Deborah and Barak. From the north came the fourth oppression. Jabin, king of Canaan, whose capital was Jazor, with his captain, Sisera, gathered a large army equipped with nine hundred chariots.

At this time in the hill country of Ephraim there was a woman who was a prophetess of such ability that the people of Israel looked to her for leadership. In this crisis she called Barak of Kedesh-naphtali, telling him that the charge was laid upon him by Jehovah to lead the battle with Jabin's army. Though rather hesitant, Barak assembled the people from Naphtali, Zebulun, and other nearby tribes, and met the enemy at Mount Tabor. On this occasion, as in Joshua's battle at Beth-horon, the breaking of a storm turned the battle in favor of the Israelites. Torrents of rain poured down and the river Kishon became swollen, making the enemy chariots use-

less. Sisera fled to the tent of Heber the Kenite, whose wife, Jael, killed him as he slept.

(3) Gideon and His Band. The next to attack the much-harassed Israelites were the Midianites, a semi-nomadic people who came in from the east. They came especially at harvesttime and raided the grain crops, going as far south as Gaza in the land of the Philistines.

Gideon, the deliverer who was raised up, received his call from an angel of the Lord, who said to him, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel." He was convinced that the manifestation was truly from the Lord through the miraculous fire that consumed his offering.

Thereupon Gideon built an altar to Jehovah, and by night he tore down the altar of Baal erected by his father. In its place he erected another altar to Jehovah. When the men of the city would have killed him for this act, his father stepped in, saying that if Baal were a god he ought to contend for himself.

Gideon, to make sure he was not mistaken in his call, made other tests by means of a fleece. Convinced, he assembled his army. But the word of the Lord came to him that he had too many, so the army was sifted until only three hundred remained.

At the command of Jehovah he visited the camp of the Midianites by night, and there overheard the dream of the barley cake that tumbled into a tent of the camp, overthrowing it. This gave him further courage. Arranging his band of three hundred around about the Midianites at the beginning of the middle watch of the night, he gave them word to blow their trumpets and break their pitchers, which had torches within. The Midianites and Amalekites, thinking a great host had attacked, fled in utter terror.

Many of the other tribes joined in the pursuit which followed. The men of Ephraim at the call of Gideon took the fords of Jordan, seizing the princes, Oreb and Zeeb. Gideon followed Zebah and Zalmunna, finally capturing them.

This victory over the Midianites was so outstanding that the people of Israel would have made Gideon king, but he refused. Abimelech, however, a worthless son of Gideon, did seek the kingship after his father died. He ruled for a short time in Shechem, but this resulted in his destruction and that of many of the people.

(4) Jephthah of Gilead. After mentioning two intervening judges, Tola and Jair, the narrative takes us across the Jordan to the land of Gilead. Here the Ammonites were oppressing the Israelites, and they also crossed Jordan and fought against Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim.

Jephthah, the leader raised up at this time, represents a strange contrast. He had been brought up in an environment of superstition and heathenism and had been a leader of vain and reckless men, a freebooter; but he also had a dim knowledge of Jehovah and believed in Him as the God of Israel. Further, he knew the background of Israel's history. He had been driven out of his own home by his half brothers because he was an illegitimate son.

When the Ammonites oppressed the people of Gilead, they sent for Jephthah. He demanded from them the promise that he would be their ruler if he delivered them, to which they agreed. Then he rallied the forces for battle. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah, and he triumphed over the Ammonites with a very great slaughter.

But the joy of triumph was soon turned into sorrow. On his return, his only daughter met him, and according to a vow he had made before he went into battle, he must offer her in sacrifice.

Then another difficulty arose. The quarrelsome Ephraimites met him and charged him with not calling them to battle. Civil strife followed in which forty-two thousand of the men of Ephraim fell.

(5) Samson and the Philistines. Three other judges are mentioned, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, but their work is not described. All we know is that two of them had large families. It has been supposed that they were men of wealth who governed well.

The story of Samson follows next. This time the oppressors were the Philistines. In the days of Joshua they had been confined to their own territory, but during the chaotic period of the judges they had extended their control as far north as the plain of Esdraelon and the cities in that vicinity.

The birth of Samson was foretold by an angel of the Lord, and his parents dedicated him as a Nazarite from his birth. He early gave evidence of divine favor, and the Spirit of God moved upon him. Growing to manhood, he performed many feats of strength. The first was killing a lion with his bare hands. From this incident he gave a riddle at his wedding feast. When the Philistines learned the answer from Samson's wife, he went out and killed thirty of their men to get the changes of raiment promised. Then he burned the Philistines' corn, and at another time he fell upon them, slaying many. One day he seized the jawbone of an ass and killed a thousand men. Trapped in Gaza, one of their cities, he carried away the gates. Thus singlehanded Samson harried the Philistines.

But while Samson could accomplish such feats, he had one serious weakness, his susceptibility to the influence of women. In consequence he was enticed to tell the real source of his strength, and with this came his downfall; for his own wife played the traitor and delivered him into the hands of the Philistines. They in turn put out his eyes and cast him into prison.

But when a feast day for the Philistines came during which they were to have a great sacrifice to the grain god Dagon, they assembled in great numbers in their temple. As a source of amusement on this occasion, they had Samson brought in. In the meantime Samson's hair, the token of his power, had grown again. When he came forth, he asked the lad who guided him to take him to the pillars that formed the main support for the house. With one mighty feat of strength, he dislodged them and the temple fell. So it came to pass that Samson destroyed more Philistines in his death than in his life.

### 3. *Contrasting Religious Pictures*

We have already noted the apostasy of the people in forsaking the worship of Jehovah for idols. The sacred writer repeats this fact over and over again in the narrative. With this condition there naturally existed confusion of thought, and in the minds of some the two forms of worship were fused.

A striking illustration of the mixture of the two is given in the account of Micah and his gods. He stole some money from his mother and later restored it. Thereupon she dedicated it unto Jehovah to make a graven image. So Micah set up a shrine and consecrated one of his sons to be a priest. Later when a Levite came by, Micah employed him, feeling sure that Jehovah would bless him now that he had a Levite for a priest. Soon afterward a group of Danites passed that way and robbed Micah of both god and priest.

In contrast to the picture thus drawn is the story of the simple and sincere piety set forth in the Book of Ruth. Here we see the sorrows and joys of domestic life abroad and at home. Through it all Jehovah is the God of their faith and trust, and in His name even the greetings in the harvest field are given. Furthermore, by their marriage, Boaz and Ruth became ancestors of our Lord.

(1) Eli, the Priest Judge. Before leaving the period of the judges, two others should be noted. First is Eli, who was both judge and priest. Eli himself was a pious man, but he did not restrain his wicked sons, which fact brought God's judgment upon him.

In an encounter with the Philistines the Israelites were defeated. Then they brought the ark of God into the camp, thinking that it would surely defend them. The ark was captured and both of Eli's sons were slain. This sad news overcame the aged priest, and falling backward from his seat beside the city gate in Shiloh, he died.

The ark was taken to the land of the Philistines and placed in the temple of their god Dagon. But here and wherever they located it, it became a source of trouble, so finally they decided to return it. After they had sent it away on a cart, it reached Kirjath-jearim, where it remained in the house of Abinadab for twenty-one years.

(2) Samuel, the Prophet Judge. In the midst of this civil and religious confusion God was preparing a leader. The child Samuel was given in answer to prayer, and as soon as possible was brought to minister at the Tabernacle. Here he had a vision of the doom of Eli's house, which he reluctantly revealed.

The favor of the Lord rested upon Samuel as he grew to young manhood, and all Israel recognized that a prophet had been given to them. When he was old enough to enter upon the duties of the prophetic office, his first great act was to call the people to repentance. He bade them put away their strange gods, the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and meet him at Mizpah. This they did, confessing their sins and repenting.

When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered, they went up to attack them. The enemy was confused, however, by the peals of thunder which broke forth, and began to flee. The Israelites set out in pursuit and slew many. This victory was so complete that the

Philistines were compelled to restore the cities that they had previously taken from the Israelites.

Samuel made annual tours throughout the land judging the people, then returning to his home at Ramah. When he was old, he appointed his sons as judges, but they were not righteous like their father, and the elders of Israel complained against them and requested a king.

Thus the period of the judges comes to a close. It was a time of lawlessness and general corruption, yet there were some very devout worshipers of Jehovah during these dark days. The lawlessness was due primarily to the fact that the people forsook the Lord. The ideal set for them was a theocracy, but they came far short, and over against this form of government desired one formed by man.

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The civilization of Egypt in the days of Moses
2. The testimony of the plagues to the supremacy of Jehovah over the gods of Egypt
3. Mosaic legislation
4. The Tabernacle and its symbolism
5. The Canaanite inhabitants of Palestine
6. Joshua as a general
7. The religious life of the Israelites in the days of the judges

## CHAPTER FOUR

### "Like the Nations"

While objection to the sons of Samuel was the reason given for asking for a king, it is probable that many of the Israelites really desired an established form of government. The elders of the people favored such a move. It was the trend of the day and age. Separate tribal groups could not defend themselves against their enemies as well as if they were united, they reasoned. The divine ideal for them was a unique form of government, a theocracy wherein God would raise up leaders by His own appointment instead of through a hereditary line. It might have been that these leaders would have come from the prophetic order, chosen on the basis of their loyalty to the Lord. But the cry of the people was for a king, that they might be like the nations around them. They made this demand in spite of the warning that in having a king they would suffer oppression.

#### I. SAUL, THE MILITARY CHIEFTAIN

Samuel sent all the people home who had come to him at Ramah asking for a king, and he waited for the leading of the Lord. He had served, not only as prophet and judge, but also as priest. It was in connection with this office that he met the future king.

A seemingly trivial incident brought about the meeting with Saul. The donkeys belonging to his father having been lost, Saul set out with a servant to find them. Failing in the search, the servant suggested that they consult the seer who lived in that vicinity. Making inquiries, they were told that the seer was to be there on that very day to bless the sacrifice of the people.

Samuel had received word from the Lord the day before that on the morrow he would meet the man who was to be prince over Israel. Accordingly, after the feast was over, Samuel took Saul and they talked together on the housetop. The next morning as Saul was leaving, Samuel anointed him to be king over Israel. To confirm the fact that this anointing was by God's appointment, Samuel told him of certain signs to be fulfilled on the way home.

Calling all the people together at Mizpah, the place where they had assembled on important occasions, an official selection of Saul was made by lot. Then Samuel presented to the people the man whom the Lord had chosen to be their king. Moreover Samuel himself wrote a book for their future use, describing the kingdom.

While the king had been chosen he was not at this time inducted into office. This came about through an act of courage and leadership on his part. The Ammonites attacked Jabesh-gilead across the Jordan. Unable to come to terms, the inhabitants asked for seven days' truce, during which they sent for help to Saul in Gibeah. Immediately he rallied the tribesmen to the defense by a dramatic message, and going forth against the Ammonites, he overcame them in an overwhelming victory. Then Samuel again sent word throughout the country calling the people to Gilgal. There with great rejoicing Saul officially was made king.

Since the task of finding a leader for the people had been completed, Samuel retired from political activity. He continued to act in the capacity of both prophet and priest. Turning over the government to Saul, he exhorted both the people and the king to fear and obey the Lord.

### 1. *Achievements*

When Saul came into power he faced two major problems. One was the need for a standing army ready

for emergencies, and the other was the fact that the Philistines had set their camps right in the heart of the country.

In the defeat of the Ammonites, Saul had been able to gather a large force; but as was the case throughout the period of the judges, it was only a temporary measure to meet a special emergency. Yet he was able to retain a small number, about three thousand in all, who formed the nucleus of a standing army. He himself and his son Jonathan were in command.

The Philistines were a fierce, warlike people with a strong, well-equipped military organization. They had skilled smiths and armorers. The Israelites had now become essentially an agricultural people and lacked well-trained men and equipment.

In beginning action against the Philistine foe, Jonathan attacked a garrison in Michmash. This was regarded by the Philistines as a revolt against their control over the land, which they had maintained for a long period. Immediately they assembled a large army, with chariots and horsemen. The Israelites, terrified, deserted by the hundreds, and the rest followed their king with trembling. Then Jonathan in another daring feat attacked a second garrison. The result was that the whole Philistine army was seized with panic and fled to their own country.

Following this great success, Saul attacked other hostile nations, such as Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Zobah, and was able to put them on the defensive, so they did not molest Israel. He also carried on a successful campaign against the Amalekites.

## *2. Failure and Rejection*

It is very natural to wonder why a man as humble and modest as Saul in his youth and so successful in many ways should close his life in such abject moral defeat. Several reasons may be offered. In the first place

one might note his inheritance. He seems to have had latent in his nature the fierce passions of the Benjamites, always liable to come to the foreground. Second, it would appear that position and authority exposed him to certain temptations which otherwise might not have come to him. When his ambition was threatened, envy arose with all its bitter fruit. Moreover, there did not seem to be any powers of self-control in his make-up. He lacked in judgment and in a sensitive conscience. Finally, he became emotionally ill with attacks of melancholy actually bordering on insanity. All these factors contributed to his tragic fall.

Certain events brought out the evil tendencies in Saul's nature. First, there was his rejection when he in haste assumed the functions of the priesthood and offered sacrifice. Then came the second rejection when he did not obey the command to destroy completely the Amalekites. Finally, the song of the women praising the triumphs of David stirred his passionate nature to envy. Thus borne on by the lower drives of his nature, and forsaken by God, in despair he sought the witch of Endor and heard his sentence of doom.

## II. DAVID, THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZER

After the second sentence of rejection had fallen upon Saul, God directed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to the household of Jesse and there anoint a king over Israel. Although David was the youngest of the sons, he was the one chosen. His was a goodly heritage, for he was a descendant of the devout Ruth and Boaz.

### 1. *Member of Saul's Court*

Because of Saul's attacks of melancholy, a skillful musician was sought to soothe him, and young David was brought to court. By this time the Philistines had rallied themselves from the previous defeat and challenged Israel

to battle by championship. Daily their giant Goliath uttered his defiance to the armies of Israel. David, who evidently had returned home after a brief stay at court, came up to visit his older brothers in the army. Here he heard the challenge and decided to accept it. With some stones from the brook and his shepherd's sling, he hurled the giant to the ground, and seizing Goliath's own sword, killed him.

The praise of the people for David's courage so aroused King Saul that he became insanely jealous from that day on. Twice he attempted to kill David with his spear as he played before him, and failing in this tried to betray him into the hands of the Philistines. Finally David became a fugitive and went into hiding in the country, but Saul hunted him "like a partridge" from place to place. At last David, concluding that he would not be safe in his own land, sought refuge among the Philistines at Ziklag.

Then came the fateful battle with the Philistines in which Saul and his sons were killed. A runner brought the news to David, expecting a reward, but instead was executed for laying hands upon the king. David, with a magnanimous spirit, poured forth his grief in an elegy of rare literary beauty.

## 2. *Organization of the Kingdom*

Upon the death of Saul, David became king over Judah at Hebron, and seven years later with the revolt of Abner from Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, he was made king over the other tribes as well. While Saul had made progress in the development of the kingdom, much remained to be done. Since there was no capital, David made it his first task to establish one. From the Jebusites he captured the upper city of Jerusalem, which before had been impregnable. Here he built a city, contracting with Hiram, king of Tyre, for the lumber and workmen.

When the Philistines heard that David had become king, they gathered their forces and attacked, only to be driven off. A second attack was also repulsed.

But the chief burden that lay upon the king's heart was the religious chaos in the nation. The ark was in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim. The Tabernacle had been moved from Shiloh to Nob, and then to Gibeon, where the altar of burnt offering was also located. Under such conditions the people, their sacred objects scattered and the regular forms of worship disrupted, frequently offered sacrifices at pagan shrines.

Gathering a company of chosen men, David sought to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Because of negligence in the observance of the proper order, the first attempt failed. In the second attempt the ark reached Jerusalem amid great joy. David would have built a temple on Mount Zion, but being a man of war, he was not given that privilege. The promise, however, was given him that his son should build the Temple, and for this he gave praise to God.

Although David could not build the Temple of the Lord, he did organize religious worship throughout the land. Of the thirty-eight thousand Levites he assigned twenty-four thousand to the work of the Tabernacle, six thousand to be officers and judges, four thousand to be doorkeepers, and four thousand to praise the Lord in music. These were divided into courses, and the musical division put under the direction of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (I Chronicles 23 to 27).

(1) Music in Worship. The employment of music in worship was introduced by David. While the rites of sacrifice were established by Moses, there had been no music. Music had become, however, a prominent feature among the prophetic guilds (I Sam. 10:5).

For instrumental music there were stringed, wind, and percussion instruments. It is supposed that the wor-

ship began with a concert of harps, followed by vocal and instrumental music. There were also interludes played by the instruments alone. Occasionally the congregation responded with *Amen* or *Hallelujah*, but there was no congregational singing.

For vocal music there were large trained choirs instructed by competent teachers. The choir work took the form of solos, antiphonal or responsive singing, and choruses.

(2) The Psalms. Not only did David introduce music in worship; he also was the founder of psalmody. The writing of David's psalms not only encouraged others of his own time, but its influence was felt down across the years. Although some of the psalms were not for use in worship, the great majority were, and these were the hymnbook of the Old Testament Church.

When we speak of the Psalms as a hymnbook we must bear in mind that it is different from the hymns we know today. Hymns for the most part consist of anthems of praise unto the Lord, but the psalms have a greater range. In some cases they are reflective and designed for instruction; others are historical, penitential, and psalms of judgment (known as "imprecatory" psalms). There are, of course, psalms of praise very much like anthems, and there are psalms that deal with special themes, such as the Messianic psalms, which refer to Christ.

The poetry of the psalms is principally lyric in type and has to do with the poet's feelings in the various experiences of life. For this reason the psalms have always made a wide appeal; for, as has been said, they are "the mirror of the soul."

How they came to be arranged in the five books or groups as we have them is not known. No doubt David himself had a personal collection of his own psalms, and others were preserved either by their authors or by the musical guilds. Special groups of psalms were formed,

such as the Hallel Psalms (113 to 118), which were chanted at the three annual festivals; and also the Pilgrim Psalms (120 to 134), which the people sang as they went up to Jerusalem to these feasts.

If David had not done any other work than the arranging of the service of music and song in the sanctuary and the writing of psalms, he would have made an outstanding contribution to music and religious literature, worthy of remembrance both in Old Testament times and throughout the Christian Church.

(3) Judicial. David's work of organization, however, did not stop with religious worship, but extended to other phases of civil life. He had a more complete court than Saul. David himself held the position of chief justice. He appointed a royal scribe who filled the place occupied today by the secretary of state. Another officer was the recorder, whose task was to keep a chronicle of events. There were two leading military officers: the captain of the host, and the captain of the Cherethites and Pelethites, six hundred in number, acting as David's bodyguard. There were two royal priests, Zadok and Abiathar. Zadok ministered at Gibeon, and Abiathar at Jerusalem. Finally there was the prophet Nathan, who acted as counselor for the king. From time to time others were added to the court, as when David invited Mephibosheth to be his guest (II Sam. 9: 1-13).

### 3. *Conquests and Reverses*

In addition to the organization of the kingdom within, there was need to protect the people from enemies without. Consequently David attacked the Philistines and won a victory so complete that these ancient foes gave him no further trouble. The Moabites and Edomites in the south were suppressed. Zobah and the Syrians in the north felt David's strong hand of conquest, and the Ammonites on the east were brought low. With these vic-

tories the borders of the kingdom were extended so that its territory was several times larger than that originally claimed by the twelve tribes.

Outstanding victories had been won, and the nation had bright prospects before it, but in connection with the conquest of the Ammonites, David committed the one great sin that marred his life. By the standard of the low morals of Oriental despots, his acts were permissible, but not in the light of Hebrew traditions and religion. The sin met with Nathan's just reproof, and David humbled himself in true penitence before Jehovah.

During the last days of David's reign internal troubles arose. These were more or less the result of underlying conditions. In the minds of some of the house of Saul ambition still lingered, expressed on one occasion by Shimei. Then there was the overbearing captain of the host, Joab. But these were minor compared with the effects of David's sin upon his own household. The rebellion of Absalom was an outcome of this directly, and that of Adonijah had its indirect connection. Further trouble was brought upon the nation when David put his reliance on numbers instead of trusting in the Lord.

Thus the reign of David, like his personal life, had its points of weakness as well as strength. Weighing them together, however, the good wrought for the nation clearly exceeds the evil. David truly was a great king and sought always to foster and maintain the worship of Jehovah.

### III. SOLOMON, THE BUILDER

With the outbreak of the conspiracy of Adonijah, Nathan urged Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon, to go to David and bring to his attention the promise he had made previously that Solomon should succeed him. Nathan himself confirmed the fact to the king that Adonijah was even then holding a feast and was being

proclaimed king. David then commanded that Solomon should be anointed at once. When this was done and the news spread, the conspirators dispersed in fear and Adonijah fled to the altar of the Tabernacle for protection, a refuge he would not leave until he had received an oath from Solomon that his life would be spared.

### 1. *Internal Relations of the Monarchy*

As David was dying, he gave a charge to the young king to walk in the ways of Jehovah, his God, that the hand of the Lord might be upon him for good. He also gave instructions concerning certain men who might be a menace, such as Joab and Shimei. These were given suitable penalties, along with Abiathar the priest, who had joined in the conspiracy of Adonijah. Adonijah himself, because of a further act which indicated that his ambition for the crown was still alive, met death at Solomon's command.

Early in his reign Solomon went to the shrine at Gibeon to offer sacrifice. Here the Lord appeared to him, giving him the opportunity to ask whatever he might desire. Riches and long life lay before him as possibilities of choice, but instead he sought for wisdom. This wisdom was not truly personal wisdom, for his life does not reveal any depth of spiritual understanding; but it was wisdom to rule his people rightly. Yet because this was so much more unselfish than would have been the choice of wealth and a long life, God's favor rested upon him.

From his father, Solomon inherited a well-organized court, but he enlarged and perfected this body. His highest officials were known as princes and ate at the king's table. These included the chief priest, who ministered at the Temple, two secretaries of state, the recorder, the captain of the host, and the captain of the

bodyguard. Then there were twelve officers over the twelve districts into which the country was divided for the purpose of collecting levies and taxes. Over the twelve officers was a superintendent, and over the palace was a chamberlain or steward.

While these were the leading officers, in addition there were a great many retainers at court. With the polygamous households of that day it has been estimated that the number ran into the thousands. Supplies were brought from the twelve tax districts, and the amount required for each day was immense.

## 2. *Buildings*

One of the most important tasks in the reign of Solomon was his construction work, and pre-eminent among his buildings was the Temple. While the general plan both for building and its furniture was copied from the Tabernacle, the materials and the increased size of the different symbols (for instance, the cherubim towered to a height of seventeen feet) indicated wealth and magnificence. Cedarwood was brought from Lebanon, and expert craftsmen from Tyre did the metalwork.

Next to the Temple was the king's palace with a harem for his Egyptian queen. Below that toward the south was the throne hall where Solomon sat on a throne of ivory as the supreme judge of the people. Between this and the House of Lebanon were two halls: one a porch, known as the porch of the pillars, and the other enclosed with cedarwood. The magnificence of these buildings was more characteristic of the Oriental courts of the day than of the simplicity of the Hebrew people.

When work on the Temple was completed, the ark was brought in and a great feast of dedication was held. Solomon's prayer on this occasion represents spiritual conception and feeling such as were befitting a king of

Israel. Then, as before, the Lord appeared to Solomon. The divine assurance was given him that his prayer was heard, and he received the promise that if he would serve the Lord and honor Him, there would never fail to be an heir upon the throne of his kingdom.

The passion of Solomon for construction work extended to other lines of endeavor. He made gardens in Jerusalem, obtaining a water supply for these in part from the springs on the Temple mount, and in part by water brought into the city through aqueducts. He planted vineyards and orchards. It would seem that he built himself a summer home in Lebanon (I Kings 9:19).

Not everything that Solomon built was for his own personal use. He thought of national defense. He built fortifications on the city wall, so that Jerusalem became almost impregnable. He built a chain of forts throughout his domain in strategic places. He built store cities, and cities to accommodate his military force of chariots and horsemen, as well as for trade and commerce. Thus many and varied were his building enterprises.

### 3. *Foreign Relations of the Monarchy*

The outstanding feature of Solomon's foreign relations was the trade and commerce carried on with different countries. One of these was Phoenicia, a country which had acquired great wealth in trade with other countries and especially through imports from its colony Tarshish in Spain. From Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon had obtained both skilled labor and materials for his buildings. In return he had supplied grain to Hiram. This exchange of commodities continued for twenty years.

Another country with which Solomon had commercial relations was Egypt. To assure a friendly alliance he had married an Egyptian wife, daughter of Pharaoh, early in his reign and she took first place among his wives. The principal articles of trade with Egypt were

chariots and horses. These were not only brought for Solomon's own use, but also sold to the Hittites and Aramaeans.

Other luxuries of life came through sea commerce with Ophir. Here again Hiram, king of Tyre, helped in building the ships which sailed from Ezion-geber to bring gold from Ophir. This indicates that they were traveling as far as India; and the commodities brought back confirm this view, for ivory, apes, and peacocks were among the imports.

En route to India they would trade with Arabia, and from thence came many spices. It has been suggested that the visit of the queen of Sheba was for the purpose of concluding a commercial treaty between the kingdom of Solomon and Arabia.

#### 4. *Cultural Developments*

The queen of Sheba was impressed not only with the splendor and magnificence of Solomon's court, but also with his wisdom. She tested him with hard questions, but he answered them all.

The wisdom of Solomon according to the sacred writer was of three kinds: prudential, expressed in proverbs; literary, manifested in songs; and natural science. Our interest centers in the first.

What David was to psalmody and psalm writing, Solomon was to wisdom literature. After his time the wise man became an important factor in the life of the people. At the gates of the city the wise man was to be found, giving instruction to all who would listen to his counsel (Prov. 1:21; Eccles. 10:12; Jer. 18:18).

Wisdom, however, was used among the Hebrews with greater meaning than we are accustomed to give the term. At times it was personified and regarded as divine, yet more frequently it remained on the human plane. While it might be theoretical, generally it was practical

and its scope was broad. It included craftsmanship; observation on life, or what might be called discretion or prudence; and more particularly the knowledge and understanding of virtue, that is, ethics.

(1) Proverbs. The Book of Proverbs holds a high place in the culture of Solomon's reign. Here in the first nine chapters Wisdom is represented as a person and as such she gives warning and admonition. Her value is more precious than gold, and in her words life is to be found. She stands in direct contrast to *Madame Folly*, who ever seeks to allure the simple into the path of evil. In these chapters there is continuity of thought, and the literary form is frequently that of the sonnet.

The rest of the book consists principally of proverbs expressed in the distich, or two-line verse, very often with the second line in contrast to the first. There are in addition a number of epigrams; and in the sayings of Agur (c. 30) we find riddles propounded, together with a peculiar form known as the number sonnet. The words of King Lemuel (c. 31) have as their theme the virtuous woman, and form an acrostic poem.

The subjects treated are many and various. They have to do with all phases of life, giving prudential maxims by which conduct may be directed. Often contrasts are drawn such as those between the righteous and the wicked, the sluggard and the diligent man, the effect of anger and the virtue of the control of the spirit, with many others. Some themes are treated often, such as the danger of pride, the sins of the tongue, and the unfortunate state of the fool, the fool being one who ignores or rejects wisdom.

Proverbs does not have the note of devotion found in the Psalms, but the author does refer everything to God. His ethical concepts are grounded in belief in God and are viewed always in the light of "the fear of the Lord."

(2) Ecclesiastes. Closely related to Solomonic culture is the Book of Ecclesiastes. The approach to life's problems is made in a little different manner from that in the Book of Proverbs. At first it might seem that the writer is a cynic, but further study modifies this attitude.

The various popular values in life, such as wisdom, riches, and honor, are tested and all are found wanting. The author finds many perplexities in life. He observes that the wise man and the fool both meet the same fate (2:14-17), that wickedness often stands in the place of judgment (3:16 f.), that the righteous man and the wicked frequently fare alike (8:14), that folly is elevated to dignity, that oppressions abound, and that skill arouses envy; these problems with numerous others trouble him.

While for a time it seems as if the writer will be overwhelmed with the disillusionments and disappointments of life, yet he begins to find a resting place for thought. Concluding that it is not well to be carried along by restless ambition or be filled with wonderings over the perplexities that arise, he decides that the supreme good is to be obtained by seeking contentment in the particular sphere in which one is placed (3:13) and doing the work that falls to his lot (9:7-10). Moreover, the most important duty is to fear God and keep His commandments (12:13-14).

(3) Job. As the Book of Job belongs with the wisdom literature, the discussion of this type would not be complete without considering it. The aspect of wisdom in this case is more theoretical than practical. It centers in a leading belief of the day, namely, that rewards are meted out in this life, and consequently the righteous will be prosperous and the wicked will suffer adversity.

In the light of this theological tenet the friends of Job charged him with sin when they saw the sore evils that befell him. Job, however, knew that he had done

no evil, and even though he was sorely beset and mentally bewildered, steadfastly maintained his innocence.

Thus through three cycles of speeches the debate raged, each side unrelentingly holding its position. Finally God spoke from the whirlwind and all were silenced. Job recognized that the wonders of God's workings were beyond his comprehension, yet the word of the Lord admonished his friends that they had not spoken that which is right, as did Job. Therefore they were commanded to bring offerings, and Job, the servant of the Lord, would pray for them. Finally Job was given twice as much as he had before the many calamities came upon him.

#### 5. *Defects in Solomon's Rule*

While the period of Solomon's reign is known as the "Golden Age" of the nation and during his time there were great prosperity and striking developments along cultural lines, there were also tragic defects. These defects were of such a nature that they opened the door for the major catastrophes that followed.

(1) *Oriental Policy.* The most serious fault in Solomon's method of government and the source of the specific weaknesses that developed was his Oriental policy. He sought to be like the nations round about him, and in many ways that broke down the peculiar and unique calling of the Hebrew people. In connection with this policy was the tendency toward luxurious living. Through many imports the Hebrews became acquainted with new kinds of self-indulgence and, from a nation of humble peasants, became a people who reveled in material prosperity.

But this enjoyment of luxury did not include all of the people by any means; only the wealthy upper class could share its pleasures. The poorer people were reduced to practical serfdom. Heavy taxes brought many

to poverty and, contrary to the law of God, Solomon resorted to forced labor.

Solomon had acquired great resources from his father; these had been accumulated by energy and hard work. But Solomon spent them lavishly, and also great sums he himself obtained through the mining which he carried on at Ezion-geber, from trade and commerce, and by heavy taxes. But his reckless spending left to his successors a discontented people and a depleted economic situation. His Oriental policy brought ruin in its wake.

Not only was this policy economically ruinous; it was spiritually fatal. The king's marriages with many foreign women brought into the land all forms of idolatry. Thus, while the worship of Jehovah was carried on with great magnificence, the groundwork was laid for the worship of idols, which periodically and persistently asserted itself throughout the remaining history of the nation.

Solomon's reign stands for glory and splendor, yet there is tragedy in it. Very favorable was its beginning, but the end had planted the seeds of economic and spiritual disorder.

### **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. The causes leading to the establishment of a monarchy
2. The nature of the Hebrew kingdom
3. The reasons for Saul's failure
4. David's achievements for the kingdom
5. Solomon's empire
6. The wisdom literature
7. The Temple and its worship

## CHAPTER FIVE

# A Kingdom Divided

When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam came to the throne, the people asked that the heavy burden of taxation be lifted. The older men counseled the young king to listen to the voice of the people, but the younger men persuaded him to reply with insolence, saying that, as his father had chastised them with whips, he would chastise them with scorpions.

### I. EPHRAIM, "JOINED TO HIS IDOLS"

The leader of the popular assembly which appealed to Rehoboam was Jeroboam, who previously, because of his ability, had been given charge of the work of the house of Joseph under Solomon. When a prophet had told him that he would be ruler over ten tribes after the death of the king and that fact reached the attention of Solomon, he had been obliged to flee, taking refuge in Egypt. Learning of Solomon's death, he returned to his home and became the leader of the people on this occasion. When Rehoboam's reply was made known to the people, the ten tribes immediately revolted and made Jeroboam their king.

#### 1. *Religious Worship*

The Hebrew people had been held together by a dual bond, national loyalty and religious faith. Jeroboam realized that if there were not some form of religious worship set up in his kingdom he would lack one very powerful element of unity. Moreover, if the people went up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice, they might soon be won back to Rehoboam. So, telling them that it was too

much for them to go to Jerusalem, he set up golden calves at Dan, on the northern boundary of his territory, and Bethel on the south. He also appointed priests from among the people who were not of the tribe of Levi, and ordered a feast in the eighth month like the feast of the Passover in the first month in Judea.

While at first the worship of the golden calves may have been regarded as symbolic, the calves being images and not idols, yet in time it became idolatrous. This evil beginning of the northern kingdom continued through to its end. No king ever departed from the sins of Jeroboam. Many added to them, but none attempted reform.

## 2. *From Jeroboam to Omri*

Founded by rebellion and upon wrong religious bases, the northern kingdom had trouble and turmoil throughout all of its days. Word came from the very prophet who had foretold that Jeroboam should be king, that his son Ahijah would die, that his house would be destroyed, and that Israel would go into captivity. The underlying cause for these judgments was the sin of Jeroboam and his successors.

Nadab the son of Jeroboam reigned but two years, when Baasha usurped the throne and destroyed all Nadab's family. Baasha's own reign lasted twenty-four years, during which time he was constantly at war with Judah. His son Elah reigned two years, and was killed by Zimri, who ruled for only seven days.

## 3. *The House of Omri*

When Zimri seized the throne, the army was besieging Gibbethon, a city of the Philistines, and they straightway made Omri, their general, king. Another faction chose Tibni; but Omri, supported by the army, won out.

In the twelve years that Omri reigned over Israel, three developments may be noted. The most important

was the purchase of the hill of Samaria and the establishment of the capital there. Before this the nation had no capital city. The king's own home town served as such. Now a central and well-fortified city was to be the center of government.

Then there were Omri's military conquests. The Moabite stone tells of the oppression of Moab by Omri.

Finally, there were the "statutes of Omri" (Mic. 6:16). Just what this means is somewhat uncertain, but it has been concluded that he made the worship of the golden calves the state religion and demanded obedience on the part of all. The writer of Kings tells us that he did more evil than all those before him. This may not mean a new form of evil, but would seem to suggest that it was an intensifying of evil already being practiced.

(1) Ahab. When Ahab the son of Omri inherited the kingdom he followed an old-time policy of strengthening his position by marrying a foreign wife, possibly because the Assyrian power was already looming upon the horizon. Along with this marriage came the introduction of Baal worship as the official form of worship, not simply a minor sect. Thus the most degenerate type of religion was introduced and fostered by an imperious, unscrupulous heathen queen. In consequence there followed "The First Great Persecution," and the prophets of Jehovah became refugees.

Like Solomon, Ahab had a passion for building. He constructed a temple for Baal in Samaria, and apparently enlarged the palace which had been built by Omri, facing it with white marble, so that it afterward became known as the "house of ivory." Another palace was built at Jezreel which probably was the summer residence of the king. He is said to have founded cities also.

The ability of Ahab is best seen in his success as a military leader. He met the Syrians and put them to

rout, not only once, but twice. But when the Syrian king begged for mercy, he granted it. This has been looked upon as another political move to consolidate the smaller kingdoms against the powerful Assyrian nation, but the act was condemned by God's prophet Elijah.

That the danger from Assyria was a grim reality is brought out by the fact that on an inscription of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, he makes mention of defeating twelve kings from these western lands, among whom was Ahab the Israelite. The battle took place at Karkar, which city was destroyed by fire.

The onward sweep of Baal worship in the kingdom was not to continue unchallenged. From Gilead across Jordan came a stern, intrepid figure, Elijah the Tishbite. Appearing before Ahab, he announced in the name of the Lord that there would not be "rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). Then at the command of God he went into hiding at the brook Cherith. When the brook dried up, he found refuge with the widow of Zarephath. Three years later he came out of seclusion and met Obadiah, the king's servant, who was going through the land searching for water. Through Obadiah, Elijah sent a message to Ahab and then went to meet the king himself. He proclaimed that the drought had come because of the sin of Baal worship, and challenged the prophets of Baal to meet him in contest on Mount Carmel.

The prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty strong, and four hundred prophets of Asherah, another pagan god, assembled. The test was, "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." In vain the prophets of Baal pleaded and cried, but there was none to answer. When Elijah prayed, however, the fire fell, and the people acknowledged, "Jehovah, he is God."

But Jezebel, the pagan queen, was not to be defeated so easily. Although rain came in abundance to the

parched land, she pursued Elijah relentlessly, threatening to take his life, as he had caused the execution of the prophets of Baal. He fled to Mount Horeb and hid in a cave, thoroughly disheartened. The word of the Lord, however, came to him with encouragement and commissioned him to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, and Jehu as king over Israel, while Elisha was to be anointed as prophet to succeed himself.

While hitherto the northern and southern kingdoms carried on intermittent warfare, Ahab established a new policy and entered into a friendly alliance with Jehoshaphat of Judah. When the king of Judah paid a royal visit to the north, Ahab suggested that they go together to battle against Ramoth-gilead, which was still held by the Syrians. Jehoshaphat was somewhat reluctant. He would not listen at all to the many prophets Ahab called, but asked whether there was not a prophet of Jehovah. Micaiah was called, but his message did not predict good for Ahab. Nevertheless the kings went forth to battle, and true to Micaiah's word, Ahab was mortally wounded.

(2) Ahab's Sons. Ahab was followed on the throne by two of his sons, Ahaziah reigning two years and Jehoram twelve years. During this period the most important feature was the work of Elisha. Differing in temperament from his great master, Elijah, and meeting different issues, Elisha's ministry was more of the pastoral type.

Elisha first appeared with Elijah as the latter was about to complete his work. Returning after his master had ascended into heaven, he smote the waters of Jordan and they receded at his command. His various miracles show a heart concerned for the welfare of the people. He sweetened the waters which had made the land barren around Jericho. He multiplied the widow's oil, and raised the Shunammite's son. He purified poisoned food

for a school of the prophets and fed a hundred men. Then there was the notable instance of the healing of Naaman. Another school of the prophets received his help when they were undertaking a building project, for a man lost his axhead in the water and Elisha caused the iron to swim.

In connection with the life of Elisha there are a number of references to the schools of the prophets. The prophetic order had been founded by Samuel when the priestly line had become corrupt. Samuel himself had been head of such a school at his own home in Ramah. When Elisha entered upon his ministry there were a number of these prophetic schools. Elijah had been their master while he lived, and Elisha succeeded to that position.

Two outstanding public services were rendered by Elisha. The first occurred when Jehoram, accompanied by Jehoshaphat, went to quell the rebellion of Moab. Water failed. When the kings sought the prophet's help, he replied that not only would there be a supply of water, but they would triumph over the Moabites. Another time the Israelites were besieged in Samaria by the Syrians, with a terrible famine in the city. The king blamed Elisha for the situation, and threatened his life, but the prophet calmly replied that on the morrow supplies would abound. The invading Syrians fell into a panic and fled, leaving all their provisions, and the Israelites went out and plundered the camp.

#### 4. *Dynasty of Jehu*

Two of the commands given to Elijah in the cave at Horeb had not as yet been carried out, and his successor, Elisha, was the inheritor of these missions as well as the prophetic spirit of his master. The first of these was the anointing of Hazael as king of Damascus, and the second the appointing of Jehu as king of Israel. The first Elisha

carried out himself, but the second he sent one of his prophets to perform.

(1) Jehu. In the succession of Jehu to the throne we have another case of the captain of the army rising to power. Jehu had previously been a member of the bodyguard of King Ahab and had ridden in the royal chariot at the time Elijah had uttered his ominous judgment. From that post he had risen until he was head of the army and leading the forces in another attack on Ramoth-gilead. Jehoram, the king, had returned to Jezreel to convalesce from wounds received in the battle.

When Jehu was anointed, the army immediately pledged its allegiance, but in carrying out his coup he used only a small bodyguard. Riding to Jezreel, before he reached the gates of the city, Jehoram and King Ahaziah of Judah, who was visiting him, came out to meet him. He shot Jehoram with a bow, and wounded Ahaziah so that he died soon afterward.

Arriving at Jezreel, he was greeted from the palace window by the queen mother, the brazen Jezebel. At Jehu's command the servants threw her down, and she was trampled to death by the invading soldiers. The rest of the family of Ahab met death at the hands of the elders in Samaria who had been given charge of them. This also was ordered by Jehu. Likewise he executed the nobles of Judea, the brothers of Ahaziah, who had come to visit the royal household of Jehoram.

But the destruction of Ahab's family was not Jehu's only gruesome blood purge. He commanded that all the worshipers of Baal be gathered in the house of Baal in Samaria. They assembled until the house was filled from one end to the other. The soldiers were bidden to take care that no worshiper of Jehovah was present, the house was surrounded, and all the Baalites slain. Because of this purging of the land from Baal worship, Jehu was

promised that his sons should reign to the fourth generation.

As to the foreign relations of the kingdom, the attacks of the Syrians against Israel were renewed, and the land on the east of Jordan was lost to the enemy. From an Assyrian obelisk or inscription we learn that Jehu paid tribute to the king of Assyria, evidently thinking this the best way to keep off the invader.

(2) Jehu's Sons. During the early reign of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, the attacks of Syria continued. Then came a respite. The sacred narrative does not tell us why, but we learn from secular history that the Assyrians had invaded Syria, making its king subject to them. Under Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, further victories were won by Israel, and the cities that had previously been held by Syria were retaken.

With the Syrians thus brought into eclipse, the way was opened for further conquest under Jeroboam II, Israel's next king. He is said to have restored the borders of Israel, from the entrance into Hamath to the Dead Sea, thus freeing the territory east of Jordan from its long subjection to Syria.

In the book of II Kings, the account of the reign of Jeroboam II is very brief, but the prophet Amos, a native of Judah who prophesied in Israel, gives a more complete picture. Wealth increased. There were summer houses and winter houses. The rich grew richer, and the poor were oppressed. Social injustice, economic oppression, and immorality abounded. Because of the prosperity of the times, the people became overconfident. Amos sought to awaken them to the real condition of the nation, but they would not listen and bade him go back to Judah and there eat bread, that is, obtain his living. He was forbidden to prophesy at Bethel, the king's sanctuary.

While Jeroboam II had a long reign of forty-one years, his son Zechariah held the throne for only six months. With the close of his rule the promise to Jehu had been fulfilled. For nearly a century the dynasty of Jehu had reigned, the longest dynasty in the history of the northern kingdom.

#### 5. *Disintegration*

With the close of the dynasty of Jehu the kingdom came under the rule of one military adventurer after another. Shallum, who killed Zechariah, reigned only one month, and he in turn was slain by Menahem.

The fact that Menahem held the crown for ten years and handed the kingdom on to his son was due to several reasons. First, the ancient enemy on the north, Syria, had been weakened by the Assyrian invasions. Then Menahem sought to appease Pul, the monarch who had seized the throne of Assyria, by paying him tribute. In his own kingdom Menahem ruled with an iron hand, and even though he had to levy heavy taxes to pay the tribute, he was able to hold the reins of government even over the lawless soldiery. His son, Pekahiah, however, ruled only two years and was overthrown by Pekah.

During the reign of Pekah, the Assyrians made heavy inroads into the kingdom. They annexed the land of Galilee and the territory east of the Jordan, taking the people captive to Assyria, so that Israel's kingdom was now reduced to the small territory around Samaria.

Pekah in turn was unseated by Hoshea. When the Assyrian monarch again threatened, Hoshea was able to buy him off by payment of tribute. Later he entered a league with Egypt. When Shalmaneser, now ruler of Assyria, learned of this, he invaded Israel, took Hoshea prisoner, and besieged Samaria. At the end of a three-year siege the city was captured, and the Israelites were carried into captivity. People from Assyria were brought

to colonize the land, and thus a mixed population grew up in central Palestine, later known as the Samaritans.

During these years of oppression and invasion God did not leave himself without a witness. Earlier the prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Amos had ministered to the people. In these latter days we have the message of Jonah to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and the warnings of Hosea to Israel. This last prophet, his own heart broken by tragic home conditions, the more readily understood the love of Jehovah for His people. He deplored the moral and social conditions of the time, the sordid intemperance, the faithlessness, stealing, and killing. He denounced their trust in alliances, first with Assyria and later with Egypt. He poured out his heart in entreaty that they might return unto the Lord.

So deep was Hosea's sorrow for the sins of Israel that it was reflected in the style of his writing as well as in the content. The style has been described as one of "sighs and sobs." But all appeal was in vain, and with poignant regret the prophet had to say, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone" (4:17). Yet even in the gloom there is a ray from the Cross. God's promise is, "I will heal their backsliding . . . Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" (14:4, 8.)

## II. JUDAH, A LAMP ALWAYS FOR DAVID

While the northern kingdom had an ever-changing series of dynasties, the southern kingdom maintained unbroken the dynasty of David, except for the brief dictatorship of Athaliah. This had been promised by Ahijah, "That David my servant may have a lamp always before me in Jerusalem" (I Kings 11:36, A.R.V.). This does not mean that David's descendants were all true to the Lord. From the days of Solomon, when foreign gods were tolerated along with the worship of Jehovah, two parties were to be found at court: one in favor of the

true worship, and the other inclined to idolatry. Whichever party succeeded in influencing the king determined the trend of that particular reign.

### 1. *Rehoboam and His Son*

After the ten tribes had seceded, Rehoboam sought to unite the kingdom by declaring war against Israel, but when this was forbidden by the prophet Shemaiah, he wisely refrained. Instead he began to fortify his own country, building walled cities, storing the strongholds with military forces and food supplies, and placing military equipment in every city.

Religiously the kingdom was strengthened by the fact that the priests and Levites, who had been displaced by Jeroboam in the northern kingdom, took up residence in Judah and Jerusalem. So did all who desired to serve the Lord. Yet as the days went by, Rehoboam leaned more and more to idolatrous worship, and many of the people followed his example.

After several years of peace, Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Judah with a large army. Seizing the fortified cities, he neared Jerusalem. The prophet Shemaiah warned the king that it was because he had forsaken the Lord that this evil had befallen him. Rehoboam and the people humbled themselves and were granted some deliverance, but the treasures of the Temple and palace were taken.

When Abijah became king after the death of his father, he began war with Jeroboam. It is probable that he had in mind once more uniting the kingdom, as Rehoboam had sought to do. While he was victorious in battle, he seems only to have weakened his northern rival.

Both Rehoboam and his son reflected the evils brought in by the many heathen wives of Solomon. The wife of Rehoboam was Maachah, the granddaughter of Absalom. Her leanings were toward idolatry, and she

seems to have influenced both her husband and her son in this respect.

## 2. *Two Religious Reformers*

With the coming of Asa to the throne of Judah, a king of another type assumed control. He began a thorough reformation, removing the various forms of idolatry and calling upon the people to seek the Lord.

Not only did he begin a religious reformation; he also strengthened the nation from a military standpoint by building fortified cities and organizing a large army. This was accomplished during a long period of peace at the beginning of his reign.

The wisdom of Asa's policy was soon to be seen, for after ten years Zerah the Ethiopian invaded Judah with a huge army. In answer to Asa's prayer, the Lord gave victory, and the people of Judah seized valuable spoils of war.

Encouraged by the prophet Azariah after this victory, Asa renewed his opposition to idolatry of every sort. Gathering the people of Judah and Benjamin, with some also from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, he offered sacrifices to the Lord from the booty that had been taken. The people entered into a covenant to seek God "with all their heart and with all their soul." In this second campaign against idolatry, Asa removed the queen mother, Maachah, who had been the evil genius of the two former reigns.

At this time Baasha, king of Israel, adopted a new policy toward Judah. The move was to shut off commerce and trade by closing the highway at Ramah. Instead of relying on the Lord as he had previously, Asa sought help from Ben-hadad, king of Damascus. This Syrian king was consistent with the attitude of Syria at all times, namely, hostility to Israel, and availed himself of the opportunity to attack some of her cities, so the

position at Ramah was abandoned. Asa on the other hand received a deserved rebuke from the prophet Hanani, but instead of humbling himself, he became angry and shut up the seer in prison. He also appears to have persecuted Hanani's friends. Thus a king who had loyally served Jehovah throughout many years of his reign failed in his last days.

When Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, came into power, he not only sought the Lord; his kingdom was established, and he was blessed with riches and honor.

As had been the policy of the kings before him, he maintained a strong military position. He not only placed regular garrisons in the fortified cities, but he was especially careful to guard the disputed frontier towns on the north. This last move seems to indicate that he was somewhat fearful regarding Israel. Moreover he kept a large army in Jerusalem.

Because of the strength of his kingdom and the blessing of the Lord upon him, the nations around sought his favor. The Philistines brought presents, and the Arabians sent flocks.

Perhaps feeling that an alliance with Israel would be better from a political standpoint than enmity, Jehoshaphat paid a visit to Ahab in Samaria. It was on this occasion that he joined in the battle at Ramoth-gilead and nearly lost his life. For this alliance he was reproved by Hanani, the prophet. Receiving the rebuke in meekness, he turned his attention again to furthering the worship of Jehovah among the people.

Among the improvements which he made, Jehoshaphat established a new form of administration of justice. He appointed judges throughout the land and set up a court of appeals at Jerusalem. The judges in the outlying districts appear to have been laymen, but the court at Jerusalem was composed of Levites, priests, and heads

of leading families. In religious issues the chief priest was the head of the court, and in civil matters the king.

The Moabites who had rebelled against the northern kingdom joined with the Ammonites and the people of Mount Seir in an attack upon Judah. This was the only attack from outside forces during Jehoshaphat's reign. The king took the matter to the Lord in prayer and received the assurance through Jehaziel that victory would be his without a battle. With songs of praise and rejoicing the army of Judah went forth to the camp of the enemy. Reaching a place where they could view the battle lines, they discovered only dead men there. The enemy had destroyed themselves. The booty was so great that it took three days to carry it away.

Once again Jehoshaphat joined in alliance with the king of Israel. This time he entered into an agreement with Ahaziah to build ships to go to Tarshish. Again the word of the prophet came in rebuke, and a sudden storm destroyed the ships while still at anchor.

In the reigns of both Asa and Jehoshaphat great reforms had been carried out, but the latter's alliance with the northern kingdom led to dire results. The most unfortunate was the marriage of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

### 3. *Baal Worship in the Land*

Acting on the policy so often followed by Oriental monarchs, Jehoram upon coming to power killed all his brothers, so that he would not have competitors. Then he began to walk in the ways of the kings of Israel, because, as the writer explains, "he had [Athaliah] the daughter of Ahab to wife." Further, he tried to compel the people of Judah to follow his example and "made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot." It is probable that at this time the temple of Baal was built which was afterward destroyed by the people in the reign of Joash. Because

of these transgressions a warning from Elijah, the prophet, was brought to him predicting that an evil disease would befall him.

Various misfortunes overtook Jehoram. The Edomites and Libnah revolted, and the Philistines and Arabians attacked. Finally, according to the word of the prophet, he became the victim of a fatal disease.

When Jehoram died, his youngest son, Ahaziah, was made king, for all the others had been killed in the Arabian invasion. Like his father, Ahaziah was under the influence of the domineering Athaliah and walked in the ways of the house of Ahab. His reign, however, was brief. Going to Jezreel to visit Jehoram king of Israel, he was slain by the indomitable Jehu.

With both her husband and her son dead, Athaliah herself seized the throne, ordering the death of all the king's sons. But a daughter of the king saved the life of one infant son. Being the wife of Jehoiada, the priest, she hid him in the Temple. Here he remained for six years while Athaliah reigned. During this time the house of Jehovah fell into decay, and even some of the holy vessels "did they bestow upon the Baalim."

#### 4. *The Temple Restored*

When Jehoiada felt that the time had come to rid his people of the usurper Athaliah, he consulted first with the soldiers, then with the Levites, and finally with the heads of the chief families. With great care the details of the restoration were planned. It was to take place at the time the Temple guard was changed on the Sabbath.

When young Joash was crowned, the people shouted, "Long live the king!" Hearing the rejoicing, Athaliah hurried to the Temple. Seeing what had taken place, she cried, "Treason!" but was quickly taken from the sacred Temple precincts, and put to death at the gate of the palace.

Jehoiada immediately made a covenant with the people to serve God, and the first act of allegiance was the destruction of the temple of Baal. This brought to an end the worship of this heathen god in Judea.

The next step in the religious reformation was the reinstatement of the regular sacrifices with appropriate worship services. Extensive repairs were undertaken in the Temple, and equipment for its services in the way of vessels of silver was provided.

Throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada, King Joash served the Lord. When this loyal priest died, the princes came to the king and persuaded him to turn to idolatry. So complete was his apostasy that although Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, faithfully warned him, he would not listen, but commanded that the prophet be stoned within the Temple court itself.

Not only was there this sad blot upon the reign of Joash, but serious reverses followed. The Syrians attacked Jerusalem and despoiled it. Finally his own servants plotted against him and killed him.

The son of Joash, Amaziah, was also wavering in his religious attitudes. He listened to the prophet who advised him not to take soldiers from Israel in his battle against Mount Seir; but after the victory, he worshipped the gods of that pagan country.

Another fatal mistake on the part of Amaziah was his rash attack on Israel. As a result he lost the treasures of both the Temple and his own palace.

##### 5. *In the Days of a Great Statesman-Prophet*

One figure towers above all others in the period which follows—Isaiah, the great statesman-prophet. Coming to young manhood during the reign of Uzziah, he received his call in the year that this king died. During the reign of Jotham, he carried on his prophetic work. When Ahaz was faced with an invasion from the north,

Isaiah made his debut as a statesman. Finally in the reign of Hezekiah at the time of the western Assyrian campaign he stood forth stalwart and true to God and his nation.

With the coming of Uzziah to the throne of Israel, Judah rose to a place of prominence among the smaller kingdoms of the Mediterranean coast. Hitherto Israel had been most important of the two Hebrew kingdoms; but, although at this time Jeroboam II was reigning in the north and that kingdom was at its peak in wealth and territory, Judah also ranked high. Edom was conquered, and the port of Elath on the Red Sea retaken. This gave access to the caravan trade with Arabia.

Under the influence of Zechariah, Uzziah served the Lord; yet while the worship of Jehovah was the official religion, the people still sacrificed at pagan shrines. However, since Uzziah himself served the Lord, God made him prosper.

He made many improvements within his kingdom. He rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem and fortified it with newly invented engines. He maintained an army of more than three hundred thousand men whom he had well equipped. Moreover he improved the resources of the country by digging cisterns and encouraging farming.

While there were many points of strength, certain weaknesses appeared. In the first place Uzziah presumed to burn incense in the Temple, the right only of the priests, and for this he was smitten with leprosy, so that his son had to act as regent. Then certain economic evils were current. Luxury prevailed among the rich while the poor were oppressed.

Jotham, Uzziah's son and successor, continued the improvements begun by his father. He himself was pious, but the people became more corrupt. This corruption is described for us in the first chapters of Isaiah's prophecies. Jotham made the Ammonites his vassals, and within

his own country he fortified cities in the mountains and built towers in the forests. Toward the close of his reign, Rezin, king of Damascus, and Pekah, king of Israel, began the attacks which created such fear in the days of Ahaz.

When Ahaz became king, he faced this combination of kings in the north. As he was inspecting the water supply, "going forth to the conduit of the upper pool," Isaiah met him. The prophet urged him to trust the Lord in this hour of danger, but this Ahaz was unwilling to do.

Religiously Ahaz stands in contrast to his father and grandfather. As one writer describes it: "He plunged into all the idolatries of the surrounding nations, making molten images for Baal, sacrificing his children to Moloch, besides offering sacrifices in the high places, on every hill and under every green tree."

His reign was one of military disasters. He was defeated by the Syrians and the Israelites. Then the Edomites and Philistines invaded his country. This led him to seek aid from the Assyrians, taking treasures out of the Temple, his own palace, and those of the princes; but Assyria proved of little help.

When Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz, he restored the Temple, cleansing and rededicating it. Thereupon he kept the Passover Feast. This institution had been neglected down through the history of the nation. There is no record of the keeping of the Passover after the one observed on the plains of Jericho. At Hezekiah's Passover, the assembled multitude destroyed the pillars, the high places, and altars built for idol worship. Moreover Hezekiah reinstated the Temple worship, the priests and Levites ministering according to their courses. Further, he commanded the people to support the priests and Levites and in this received a most hearty response.

Besides the influence of Isaiah in all these reform movements there was also a younger contemporary, Micah, who gives us a description of himself going

through the streets of Jerusalem wailing like an ostrich. He denounced the evils of the time, the robbing of the peasants of their lands, the perversions of justice, and the general moral corruption.

King Hezekiah was a very versatile man and gave his attention to many tasks. One of the most outstanding civil improvements was bringing a water supply into the city. This was done by means of a rock-cut aqueduct some seventeen hundred feet in length.

The great foreign event of Hezekiah's reign was the western campaign of Sennacherib. When Sargon, the conqueror of the northern kingdom, died, the small nations of the west, under the influence of Egypt, revolted. Isaiah counseled against any alliance with Egypt and urged his people to trust in God, but the wicked nobles in Jerusalem would not listen and persisted in making a treaty. Sennacherib advanced and camped at Lachish, sending his messengers to the very gates of Jerusalem. Both the king and Isaiah gave themselves to prayer and miraculously the city was delivered.

Two more events are noteworthy in the reign of this king, his sickness and recovery in answer to prayer, and the visit of Babylonian envoys, the messengers of Merodach-baladan. Hezekiah showed all the treasures in his house to these messengers, but such an unwise act received reproof from Isaiah, who foretold that the day would come when this very nation would take Judah captive.

### 6. *Idolatry Again*

When Manasseh came into power, there was a complete reversal of religious policy. The party favoring idolatry was once more in control. "Manasseh's idolatry," it has been said, "included every form of fake religion and abominable vice that Israel had ever learned from heathen nations. He restored high places and groves,

established Baal worship, set up an idol in the sanctuary and altars for the heavenly hosts in the two courts of the Temple." Tradition tells us that it was during his reign that the prophet Isaiah met his death by being sawn asunder. This would indicate an outbreak of persecution against the worshipers of Jehovah.

Manasseh was taken captive to Babylon by the Assyrians, and while there repented of his evil works. He was then allowed to return to Jerusalem, where he removed the idols and altars from the Temple and commanded the people to seek the Lord.

The reign of Amon, son of Manasseh, was brief, devoted to idolatry, and came to an untimely end. The transgressions of his father, even after his repentance, left their evil consequences to the son.

### 7. *The Final Reform*

With the death of Amon, a child of eight became heir to the throne. No doubt it was God's providence that Amon did not live longer, for his corrupt tendencies might have been followed by his son. It is quite possible it was through his mother's influence that Josiah began to seek the Lord as he became king. Four years later he started an attack upon idolatry. Then in the eighteenth year of his reign he undertook to repair the Temple.

Besides the influence of his mother there were other godly persons who may have shared in the spiritual guidance of the young king. Among these are named Hilkiah the high priest, Shaphan the scribe, and Huldah the prophetess. There were also the well-known prophets of the period. The messages of Zephaniah would bear early fruit. His prophecy has been described as "remarkable for the fearless courage displayed; the royal family is denounced as roaring lions; the judges as insatiable wolves; the clergy as mere talkers and deceivers,

and as polluting the temple and violating the law of God" (cf. Zeph. 3:3-4).

In the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, just before the repairing of the Temple, Jeremiah received his call to be a prophet. The early chapters of his prophecies, which are filled with reproaches because the people have forsaken Jehovah and which abound in entreaty to return unto God, belong to this time. Although Josiah and others in the court were ardent advocates of the worship of Jehovah, there were others such as the sons of Manasseh and Amon who were devotees of idolatry and all its attendant follies. Therefore it was no small task the young king had undertaken.

In the repairing of the Temple, the Book of the Law was found. When it was read before the king, he was troubled lest its words of wrath come to pass upon a disobedient nation. But when the prophetess was consulted, she replied that since the king had humbled himself the judgment of wrath would not come in his day, though it would surely follow in due season. Then the king assembled the elders of the people at Jerusalem and read the law to them. He made a covenant with them to walk in the commandments of the Lord and kept a great Passover Feast.

Thirteen years of silence follows in the account of Josiah's reign. Then he appears as the foe of the king of Egypt. Pharaoh-Nechoh was marching along the coast route toward Carchemish, where he intended to join forces with the Assyrians against the Babylonians. He had no quarrel with Josiah and sought to persuade him not to give battle. But Josiah, anti-Assyrian to the end, attacked the Pharaoh's army, was wounded, and carried home to Jerusalem to die.

There was great sorrow at the death of this righteous king; especially did Jeremiah mourn, and all "the singing men and singing women" chanted their dirges. No other

king in Judah had defended the worship of Jehovah more valiantly than Josiah.

Before leaving this period we should note the work of other prophets. While Zephaniah was sounding out warnings to Jerusalem, Nahum in the little village of Elkosh was foretelling the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and Obadiah was prophesying against Edom. Joel also may have lived at this time and brought his stirring message on "The Day of Jehovah." Thus Josiah's reign was one of much prophetic activity.

#### 8. *The Last Days of the Kingdom*

Three sons had been born to Josiah, the oldest Eliakim, the second Jehoahaz (also called Shallum), and the third Mattaniah, better known as Zedekiah. The people immediately placed Jehoahaz on the throne. Why they chose the second son, we are not told. But Necho, the king of Egypt, acting as overlord of the land, deposed him and took him prisoner. He appointed Eliakim as king, changing his name to Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years. Heavy tribute was demanded by Egypt, and for a while, with the payment of the tribute, all went well politically. But all was not well religiously. Early in the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah proclaimed that unless they repented of their evils, the Temple would come to the same fate as had the place of worship at Shiloh. Some of the leaders among the princes, priests, and prophets would have put Jeremiah to death for this statement, but others of the elders interceded for him and his life was spared.

On another occasion, when Jeremiah was in prison and not able to go personally, he wrote his prophetic messages on a roll and sent them by Baruch. This was read before the princes; and when the king heard about it, he commanded that they bring the roll to him. After

the contents had been read, he took his penknife, cut it up, and threw it into the brazier.

Another prophet of this period was Habakkuk. His work is more of the reflective type, however, than hortatory. As Habakkuk was meditating upon the evils of the time, the word of the Lord came to him telling him that the Babylonians would be the instruments in God's hands to punish the people. Habakkuk was puzzled that God in His providence would use this wicked and cruel nation. The answer was that ultimately judgment would also fall on them, and his faith rose over the perplexities of his mind and he rejoiced in the Lord.

Again a Babylonian army marched west and met the Egyptians in battle at Carchemish. The Egyptians were put to rout. Then the small kingdoms on the western front were compelled to pay tribute to Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar, the commander of the army, was called home by the death of his emperor father, and was detained some time setting his royal household in order. In this interval some of the kings revolted, Jehoiakim taking the lead. After seeking to subdue the rebels by other means, Nebuchadnezzar came, seized Jehoiakim, and carried him captive to Babylon. At this time Daniel and his companions were also taken captive, and the Temple plundered of its treasures (Dan. 1:1-3).

Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, but the queen mother appears to have been the actual ruler, and her influence evidently was not for righteousness (Jer. 13:18). The reign, however, lasted only three months, when there was another deportation to Babylon. This included the royal household, seven thousand warriors, and a thousand craftsmen and smiths. There was further plundering of the Temple, and treasure was taken from the king's house.

Nebuchadnezzar then made Zedekiah, the third son of Josiah, king. During his reign Jeremiah became very

prominent. There were two factions in Jerusalem. Jeremiah represented one political policy while Hananiah, also a prophet, stood for another. Jeremiah counseled that they should serve the king of Babylon and thereby retain their status as a nation; Hananiah, on the other hand, proclaimed that inside of two years the yoke of the foreign conqueror would be broken, and the treasure from the house of Jehovah be restored (Jeremiah 26—28).

Because of this anti-Chaldean party headed by Hananiah, and no doubt also due in part to Egyptian influence, Zedekiah revolted against Babylon in his ninth year. Nebuchadnezzar at once laid siege to the city. When tidings came that Pharaoh's army had come from Egypt, the siege was lifted temporarily (Jer. 37:5). Jeremiah, however, warned the people not to be deceived, that the Babylonian army would come again. But the princes were angry with him. They felt that their position concerning the Babylonians had now been vindicated, and that Jeremiah had been discredited. Consequently they had him placed in the dungeon house belonging to Jonathan the scribe. Here he remained many days. Then King Zedekiah called for him and inquired if there was any word from the Lord. Jeremiah repeated his warning that the king would be taken captive to Babylon. Jeremiah begged the king not to return him to the dungeon, so he was left in the court of the guard. The princes, however, feeling that Jeremiah was breaking down the morale of the people by his insistence that captivity was inevitable, demanded that he go back. Zedekiah weakly yielded and allowed them to put the prophet in "the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard" (Jer. 38:6, A.R.V.). But when one of the eunuchs of the king's house interceded, the king again relented and had him brought forth.

True to the prophecy of Jeremiah, the king of Babylon returned to besiege Jerusalem. When famine in the

city became severe, the army and the king sought to escape by making a breach in the walls. The Chaldeans pursued them, overtaking the king in the plains of Jericho. The sentence of judgment followed; Zedekiah's sons were killed in his presence, his eyes were put out, and he was bound and taken to Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down, the Temple destroyed, and the city was left a pile of rubble. The inhabitants were taken away as colonists to the plains of Babylonia. Only the very poorest of the people were left to care for the vintage and the crops.

When this great catastrophe befell Jerusalem, Jeremiah, who so often had wept over its sad condition, poured forth his heart in a dirge of sorrow. The intensity of the famine, the cruelty of the conqueror, and the desolation of the loved city he describes in the Book of Lamentations.

With the fall of Jerusalem the Hebrew people ceased to be a nation. They had come out of bondage, and with the blessings of God upon them had built up a kingdom of great splendor and power when it was at its height. But forgetting God, they worshiped idols and fell a prey to the conqueror. Thus it was as the prophet said, "From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed" (Lam. 1:6).

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Religion in the northern kingdom
2. The evils of Baal worship
3. The ministry of Elijah
4. The prophetic work of Elisha
5. The warnings of Amos and Hosea
6. Religion in the southern kingdom
7. Isaiah's prophetic messages
8. The prophets in the days of Josiah
9. Jeremiah and his mission
10. The causes for the Exile

## Rising from Captivity

Although the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed and the nation had ceased to be, the Hebrew people survived with all of their traditions. Many might forget, but others would remember Zion and the promise that they should dwell once more within its walls.

### I. THE REMNANT IN JUDEA

When the plundering of the city and the land had been completed and the band of exiles was ready to march, Nebuzaradan, who was the Babylonian general, released Jeremiah, telling him that he might choose whether to go to Babylon or remain in Judea with Gedaliah, the governor who had been appointed. Jeremiah chose to remain.

Gedaliah first encouraged the people not to fear the Chaldeans, but to serve the king, who would protect them. Jewish refugees from Moab, Ammon, and Edom returned. The governor established headquarters at Mizpah and bade the people dwell in the cities that they had chosen and gather the harvest.

Soon a conspiracy against Gedaliah was encouraged by the king of Ammon. Although warned of it, he took no heed and was soon assassinated by Ishmael, an accomplice of the king. In addition Ishmael carried away captive all of the people in Mizpah until Johanan, one of the remaining captains, delivered them.

As a result of these disorders, the people became afraid to live in Judea. They came to Jeremiah, asking him to inquire for them of the Lord whether they should

go down into Egypt. Receiving word from the Lord, Jeremiah told them that if they would remain in the land they would be secure; but if they went to Egypt, famine and the sword would follow them. Despite the fact that they had pledged themselves to do whatever God said, they charged Jeremiah with false speaking, and set their faces toward Egypt.

For the final time the word of the Lord came to the people from Jeremiah, the prophet. He denounced their idolatry in burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt. Here where they had fled for refuge they would be consumed, and even here the enemy whom they feared would come, even the king of Babylon.

Thus closed the work of Jeremiah, "the weeping prophet." His ministry had been long and in troublous times. His messages for the most part related to existing conditions. He did, however, catch a vision of the restoration and the coming Messiah and made a special contribution to spiritual religion in his description of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

## II. IN A FOREIGN LAND

While there is no complete account of the exiles in Babylon, from narratives of individual lives and incidental references we can reconstruct somewhat of the conditions. Life appears to have followed its normal course with the varying fortunes that ever attend it.

### 1. *The Priest-Prophet*

A unique and prominent figure in the early days of the Captivity was Ezekiel, the priest-prophet. He had grown up in Jerusalem at the time when Jeremiah was the leading prophetic spirit and was no doubt influenced by his teachings and his life. Then he was carried away to exile with many others of high standing during the reign of Jehoiachin, and a colony seems to have been

formed by the river Chebar in Babylon. Here Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of the Lord and received his call as a prophet five years after his captivity, and here he gathered groups in his own house for religious instruction.

While Jeremiah in Jerusalem was foretelling the destruction of the city because of the sins and iniquities of the people, Ezekiel was predicting the same in Babylon. He used object lessons to picture the truth. We see him portraying the city of Jerusalem on a tile and then laying siege to it. Then he foretold her desolation. He was given a vision of the abominations wrought in Jerusalem and announced the punishment which was to come in consequence. He was told to prepare his goods for moving as one would in a time of siege, and he was to eat his bread with fear and quaking. He pronounced a woe upon the false prophets who denied the danger and prophesied peace. Further he identified Babylon as God's agent in punishing Judah.

As for Babylon itself, Ezekiel made no reference to its fall in his foreign prophecies, as did Isaiah and Jeremiah. No doubt as a captive under Babylonian rule, silence was prudent. Isaiah had given a graphic picture of the descent of Babylon into Hades, and Jeremiah had announced that the city would "become heaps, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment, and a hissing, without inhabitant" (Jer. 51:37).

In addition to Ezekiel's announcement of impending judgment upon his own people because of their iniquities, he looked out into the future and foretold the restoration. The mountains of Israel were to be blessed, and within the people God would put a new spirit which would enable them to walk in the statutes of the Lord. Though they should lie as a valley of dry bones, yet would they be revived, and the Spirit of the Lord would dwell in them. Central in this vision stood the Lord's servant,

David, their prince who would be over them forever (Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25).

After about twelve years of silence, Ezekiel received further visions. These were related to the Temple. First he saw the gateway into the outer court, then the one into the inner court, and finally the Temple itself. He saw the glory of the Lord coming from the east, and the Divine Presence filling the house. Laws concerning the priesthood, the feasts to be observed, and the daily offerings were revealed to him. Finally he saw a stream of living water issuing from the Temple, growing deeper and deeper and bringing life wherever it went. His vision concluded with the tribes restored to the Promised Land.

Being a member of the priestly order, Ezekiel viewed the gospel age under figures peculiar to his calling. Long before his day the great statesman-prophet, Isaiah, likewise had visions of the glory to be revealed and he clothed his thought also with language peculiar to his calling. The truth presented was one and the same, but the figures were different.

All of the Major Prophets spoke of the coming Messiah. Jeremiah envisioned a "righteous Branch" who would be king, and as in Ezekiel's prophecy, this king was to be a Davidic prince. Isaiah, however, used a variety of figures. He saw the exaltation of the mountain of the Lord's house (2:2-4), the beautiful "branch of the Lord" (4:2-6), and the Child called Immanuel (8:8) and "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (9:6). He spoke of the "shoot out of the stock of Jesse," filled with wisdom and understanding (11:1-16). Above all stood his vision of the Suffering Servant, a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," who "was wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities" (c. 53).

It is, however, in his vision of the age which was to come that the concepts of state appear in Isaiah more than

in the personal Messianic passages. "Zion, the city of beauty and peace," filled his thought. Transported across the years in vision he speaks from the standpoint of the Captivity. To those far from their homes he brings a word of consolation and comfort. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed." God, supreme in majesty and power, is to come as "a mighty one." The idols that they have served are vain things. Jehovah's people are to be "a crown of beauty" and a royal diadem in the hand of their God. Jerusalem again is to be "a praise in the earth."

Both prophets beheld the glory of the Lord and its manifestation to the people of God. Out of the darkness of their own day, they saw the light of a new day when God would visit His own and it would be said:

*And they shall call them, The holy people,  
The redeemed of the Lord (Isa. 62:12).*

## 2. *Among the People*

While there were some points of similarity between the exile in Babylonia and the bondage of Egypt, in many ways they were different. In both cases the people lived in a community of their own, in Egypt in the land of Goshen, and in Babylonia by the river Chebar. In Babylon, however, there does not appear to have been any oppression of the people. Although Nebuchadnezzar was carrying on great building enterprises, as had been also in Egypt, while the Hebrews probably assisted, they were not under taskmasters, and there is no reference to persecution. As instructed by Jeremiah, the exiled Hebrews bought vineyards and built houses. Their community life was governed by their own elders, and the only restriction, as far as we know, is that they could not return to Jerusalem.

Religiously the exiles differed. Some no doubt continued their idol worship. Tradition has it that Ezekiel met his death at the hands of a prince whom he reproved

for idolatry. Others became cynical, saying the ways of the Lord were not equal; they were suffering for their fathers' sins. They cited a proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2). But Ezekiel set forth the principle of individual responsibility over against this complaint. Others were inclined to mock at the prophetic warnings, and with haughtiness remarked, "Is he not a speaker of parables?" (Ezek. 20:49, A.R.V.) They sat disconsolate when asked to sing, replying, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Ps. 137:4.) On the other hand there were those who, although they could not worship at the Temple and offer sacrifices, gave themselves to the study of the law; for at the close of the Captivity we read of one man who was "a ready scribe in the law of Jehovah," and no doubt he represented a class.

### 3. *In King's Palaces*

While the majority of the Jews in exile passed their lives in the ordinary manner of the day, there were some who rose to positions of trust and power. There was Daniel, who, with his three friends, refused to drink the wine and eat the rich food provided by the king, but who excelled in wisdom above all of the magicians. He interpreted the king's dream when all of these failed, and was made chief ruler over the whole province of Babylon. Because of the refusal on the part of the three friends to worship the golden image, they were cast into the fiery furnace; but being delivered, they likewise were promoted to power. Daniel later interpreted the vision of the tree for Nebuchadnezzar, and the handwriting on the wall for the ill-fated Belshazzar. When through the plot of the satraps he was cast into the den of lions in the reign of Darius, being brought forth unharmed, he prospered through to the reign of King Cyrus.

Then there was Esther, the queen, who interceded for her people and received permission for the Jews to

defend themselves against their enemies. Moreover Mordecai, Esther's father by adoption, was honored before all the people because he had reported a conspiracy against the king.

Thus it was that many of the Jews rose to prominence among their captors and were respected by the different sovereigns of the time. The genius of the race could not be hid, and wherever they went it shone forth.

### III. REBUILDING JERUSALEM

When Babylonia fell, the policy regarding subject peoples changed. Since the days of Assyrian rule, the conqueror had taken the conquered people and moved them to his own country, where they lived in exile. But when Cyrus the Persian came to power, he gave permission to exiled groups to return to their own lands. In the case of the Jews, he not only gave permission, but also returned the vessels of silver and gold that had been taken from the Temple.

#### 1. *The Temple Restored*

Considering the number of Jews in captivity, it was not a large company which made up that first caravan band to make the long, wearisome journey across the desert; probably about fifty thousand persons. Many preferred to remain in Babylon, where they had built their homes and had become engaged in business and trade. The fact that they did not return did not mean that they were disloyal to their religious faith; but, since they belonged to the second generation, Judah and Jerusalem did not mean so much to them.

Among those who did return were nationalists who no doubt hoped that through the Prince Zerubbabel, a descendant of the royal house, who was now their leader, there might be a restoration of their nation. Others were

priests whose interest was in re-establishing the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, the city of Zion, the holy city, at whose altars for generations they had gathered to honor their God.

When their destination was reached, the leaders made an offering to the Lord. When the seventh month arrived, they set up an altar and observed the Feast of Tabernacles. Then they sought for skilled labor and timber from their Phoenician neighbors, as they had done in the days of Solomon for the building of the Temple. From their own company they selected Levites to oversee the work. When the foundation was laid, a great service of rejoicing was held.

Through hindrances created by the people of the surrounding country the project was halted for a period of sixteen years. This long delay created indifference, and religious enthusiasm died out. Then in the fall when many were assembled for the feast of the new moon a prophet appeared. He reproved the people for their negligence in not building the house of the Lord, telling them that for this reason they had such poor harvests. Haggai's prophecies consist of only four messages, and were delivered in a period of four months. But two months after he began his ministry, he was joined by another prophet, Zechariah, the son of Iddo.

While Haggai's messages were simple and direct, Zechariah used visions and symbols, somewhat like Ezekiel. But both of them brought words of encouragement and hope to the people. Zechariah's ministry with its stirring message continued for several years, thus providing a source of inspiration as the work of rebuilding the Temple went on.

Under the impetus aroused by these prophets, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, began the work. At the same time the Persian governors in the area came and inquired who had given permission

to build the house of God. A letter was sent to King Darius, who made search and found the decree originally issued by Cyrus. Accordingly he sent word to these governors not to hinder the work, and indeed to supply from the king's tribute whatever the Jews might need. After a period of four years the house of the Lord was finished and dedicated. This again was occasion for great rejoicing.

With the Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem, interest would be aroused in its worship. This would seem to have been one of the causes for the second return, which occurred about eighty years after the first.

The leader on this second occasion was Ezra, described as a ready scribe in the law of his God. His consuming ambition was to "teach in Israel statutes and ordinances." There gathered about him a large company of the priestly order, namely, priests, singers, porters, and Levites of various ranks. The king not only gave official permission but contributed toward an offering for the Temple, which was increased through the freewill offerings of the people.

There would be danger from bandits on the journey, so Ezra proclaimed a fast, and took precautions in dividing the treasure among twelve of the chief priests and ten helpers. Then they continued on their way and arrived safely in Jerusalem. At once they offered on the altar in the Temple their burnt offerings and sin offerings.

While Ezra had come by appointment of the king, there had been no direction as to what his office was to be; his work was connected especially with the law of God which "was in his hand." But upon his arrival at Jerusalem, those in charge seemed to recognize him as the natural leader of the people.

Soon the princes came to Ezra and reported to him that the people had intermarried with the Canaanites and other foreign people. One writer suggests that the people

had become aware of the sinfulness of this practice through the circulation of copies of the law which Ezra had brought from Babylon. Not only had the common people committed this sin, but even the rulers and priests were involved.

Greatly shocked by the situation, Ezra sat in grief until the time of the evening sacrifice. Then he gave himself to prayer, confessing the sins of the people. In the meantime a large company had gathered around him, weeping. When he had finished his prayer, one from the crowd stood forth, acknowledging the transgression and suggesting that they make a covenant with their God to put away their foreign wives. Then Ezra demanded that the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear that they would do this. A proclamation was issued calling a general assembly of the people within three days. If anyone failed to appear, his property was to be confiscated, and he was to be excommunicated.

The people gathered at the appointed time, but the situation proved too complicated to handle thus. So they chose princes to hold court in the various cities and decide the issues in each particular case. It required three months to complete the work. Among the leaders, four priests who were implicated were required to acknowledge their sin by making a trespass offering of a ram.

## 2. *The Walls Rebuilt*

A period of time passes before we hear of Ezra again, and we do not know what he was doing in the meantime. It has been supposed that he returned to Babylon and there employed himself with his studies or in the service of a Persian ruler. When he did return again to Jerusalem, it was to join another in the reconstruction work there.

Meanwhile at the court of the Persian ruler in Shushan, there was a young man who was cupbearer to

the king, Nehemiah by name. Nehemiah learned through his brother that the city of Jerusalem was still in ruins, the walls a mass of debris as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar. Troubled, he made his prayer unto the Lord his God. The burden on his heart left its traces on his face, and when he came before the king, the monarch asked the cause of his distress. Upon learning the reason, the king commissioned Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, appointing him governor, and gave him letters to other provincial governors and a military escort for the journey.

After a brief rest following his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah decided to inspect the walls. This he did by night. When he reached the most important gate, the one that led to the city's water supply, the debris was piled so high that his horse could not find a place to pass. This investigation showed that the material for constructing the walls was to be found in the ruins, and that the special need was for men.

Nehemiah then sought to rally the people to the task, and found a ready response, not only in Jerusalem, but in the cities about. The priests, the Levites, the merchants, and the craftsmen, even those engaged in the most menial form of work, all offered their services.

When the task was well started, the non-Jewish people around came threatening the workmen. This discouraged many of the people, so Nehemiah armed part of his men, and from that time on half carried on the work and half stood guard.

With all of these difficulties to face, trouble of another nature arose. The people complained to Nehemiah about the heavy demands made by the rulers. They had been forced to mortgage their houses, fields, and vineyards, and to sell their daughters into slavery. Then Nehemiah rebuked the rulers for the usury they were charging. As for himself, from the time he was appointed governor he had not sought remuneration, even though

he supported a large number at his own table and had redeemed many of the Jews who had been sold into bondage. Through this reproof the rulers restored the houses and farms they had taken.

The enemies of the Jews, failing by direct attack to hinder the building of the walls, sought next through intrigue to ensnare Nehemiah, but through prayer and good sense he was able always to avoid the pitfalls set for him. Thus when the walls were finished in fifty-two days, the adversaries feared, for they saw that the hand of God was with the Jews.

When this task was completed, Nehemiah returned to the court of Persia, leaving his brother Hanani, and Hananiah, the governor of the palace, in charge of the city. He gave special directions for a watch over the city, for the population was small.

About twelve years later Nehemiah came back again to Jerusalem. There were two outstanding events on this occasion. The first was the reading of the law. On the first day of the seventh month the people assembled and asked Ezra to read the law to them. Hearing the ordinance for the Feast of Tabernacles for this month, they took olive branches and made for themselves booths. Moreover, each day of the feast they read from the book of the law. On the twenty-fourth day of the month, which was a special fast day, they read the law again and with contrite hearts confessed their sins. They also made a covenant to keep the law of God, mentioning particular regulations such as those relating to mixed marriages, Sabbath observance, the poll tax for the Temple, the wood offering, the first fruits, and the law of tithes.

The next special event was the dedication of the walls. Although they had been finished twelve years before, the ceremony of dedication did not take place until the second visit of Nehemiah. For this occasion the

Levites and singers were assembled at Jerusalem. Two large companies of people were formed in solemn procession going in opposite directions on the wall, giving thanks as they marched along. Then when they met, they joined in a great chorus of praise and offered sacrifices, so that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off" (Neh. 12:43).

At this time, Nehemiah carried out other measures both constructive and reformatory. He saw that tithes and offerings were brought for the priests and Levites, and for the singers and porters. He ejected a foreigner who was living in the Temple chambers, and insisted that the gates of the city be closed before the Sabbath, so that there should not be any buying on that day; and finding mixed marriages once more a problem, he instituted reforms.

Before the end of this final period of Old Testament history the voice of prophecy was heard once more. It is thought that while Nehemiah was away Malachi ministered to the people, for the evils he denounced are similar to those with which Nehemiah dealt on his return to Jerusalem.

Malachi opens with a statement of God's love for the people, and then continues by showing the indifference and carelessness of the priests in connection with the offerings. Further the people are upbraided for mixed marriages and divorce and also their failure to bring their tithes into the storehouse.

Concluding his message and the word of prophecy for the Old Testament era, Malachi exhorts all to remember the law of Moses, and then proclaims the coming of Elijah the forerunner. Thus prophecy in the old dispensation leaves us at the point where the new dispensation begins.

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. The home of the exiles
2. Ezekiel's ministry
3. The fall of Babylon
4. Post-exilic prophets
5. The second Temple
6. The work of Ezra, the scribe

# Appendix

## CHRONOLOGY

Regarding the chronology of the Old Testament, there is much difference of opinion as to exact dates, but as to the periods in general most authorities are in agreement. The dates we give are to be considered for the most part as approximate, not as absolute. The major chronological divisions will be noted, and under these particular events will be dated.

- Abraham to Moses ..... 2100-1520 B.C.
- Moses to Joshua ..... 1520-1400 B.C.
  - The Exodus, 1440 B.C.
- The Conquest ..... 1400-1360 B.C.
  - The Fall of Jericho, 1400 B.C.
- The Judges ..... 1360-1050 B.C.
- The United Kingdom ..... 1050-931 B.C.
- The Northern Kingdom ..... 931-721 B.C.
- The Southern Kingdom ..... 931-586 B.C.
  - The Great Assyrian Campaign, 701 B.C.
  - Finding the Book of the Law, 621 B.C.
  - Fall of Nineveh, 612 B.C.
  - Battle of Carchemish, 606 B.C.
- The Captivity (seventy years) ..... 606-536 B.C.
  - Destruction of Jerusalem, 586 B.C.
  - Fall of Babylon, 538 B.C.
- First Return to the Close of  
Old Testament History ..... 536-432 B.C.
  - Building of Temple Resumed, 520 B.C.
  - Completion of the Temple, 516 B.C.
  - Return of Ezra, 458 B.C.
  - Visit of Nehemiah and the Walls Rebuilt, 444 B.C.
  - Second Visit of Nehemiah, 432 B.C.

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