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**A Brief Survey Of The Old Testament**  
**MOSES AND THE PROPHETS**  
**By Olive M. Winchester**

"They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." -- Luke 16:29

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**INTRODUCTION**

The manuscript for this book has been prepared at the request of the Commission on Christian Service Training of the Church of the Nazarene, and represents the first effort that has been made to provide our own textbooks for courses of the "A," or introductory level. Indeed, this is the first time that we have had a textbook dealing in an introductory way with the entire Old Testament. It has not been possible to deal exhaustively with so extensive a field of investigation, as will be recognized readily. However, within limits we feel this little volume does give a very complete panoramic view of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Dr. Olive M. Winchester, the author, requires no introduction. She is well qualified for her task by formal training and by years of study, investigation and teaching in this general field. We commend her work to our people everywhere.

J. Glenn Gould

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## 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.

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## 01 -- THE MAKING OF THE BOOKS

The voice of God speaking and calling unto man at the beginning and down through the centuries can but draw forth from us an interest. We wonder how the revelation was made known, how the records were kept and how they came to be recognized as authoritative or canonical.

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### Revealing The Message

When we come to inquire as to the method of revelation, our scripture specifically tells us that it was through various media 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 or a manifestation closely allied to what is known as the ecstatic state. But climactic in the mode of revelation is the "face to face communion." Moses was the early representative of this type. God revealed Himself to him in a direct manner with an intimacy of spiritual communion that was not vouchsafed 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 others of their movement among whom Isaiah stood as the most notable example.

Revelation thus given represents one phase, and the making of the records another in the growth of the Old Testament. In connection with the writings the element of inspiration enters. In revelation man is receptive, but in inspiration he is active. His activity, however, is directed by the Holy Spirit, as it is written, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

When Jesus referred to the revelation given which was written under divine inspiration, He used different designations from those that we employ. In the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere He speaks of the law (Matt. 5:18). This is a very frequent term. Then there is an enlargement of this title which reads, "The law and the prophets" or "Moses and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12; Luke 16:31). Finally there is another division added, "The law and the prophets and the psalms" (Luke 24:44).

Searching for a reason for these various expressions, it is to be noted that among the Jews it was customary to divide the Old Testament into three main parts, the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, the Psalms being the first book of the last division. So the Old Testament Scriptures were known under these titles in the time of Christ.

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## The Five Books Of Moses

In studying the growth of the Old Testament, naturally one turns to the five books of Moses, known to the Jews as the Law and to us often as the Pentateuch. Regarding their composition there have been two divergent theories. On the one hand is the documentary hypothesis which came on the field in the 19th century and has been held by the liberal school quite generally since that time. It maintains that the Pentateuch was composed of four different documents written at different periods during the nation's history and finally put in the present form in postexilic times. 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.

Early Narratives -- Coming to the books themselves, the first point for consideration is that the entire Book of Genesis relates to events preceding the days of Moses, and consequently the question of sources or primitive material arises. The possibilities are along two lines, oral and written, and as regards subject matter they divide themselves into the accounts of creation and the fall, the stories of the deluge and the narratives relating to the patriarchs.

Under what circumstances the account of creation was given, the Scriptures are entirely silent. That it goes back to great antiquity and probably antedates the days of Abraham is borne out by the fact that in archaeological discoveries in the regions of Babylonia and Assyria various written documents have been found that indicate that the stories of creation and the fall were current in his days. The Babylonian accounts, however, while they have points of similarity to the Bible narrative, do not compare favorably with it. The Genesis account stands transcendent in its conception of God and in its exalted description of the creative days. The evidence of inspiration is apparent. A tradition exists that the creation story came down through Noah, but there is nothing to establish this, save inferences from certain characteristics in human nature. No doubt primitive man, like the child, began early to wonder about his origin; and who can gainsay that it was possible that some revelation was made to the antediluvian world?

Concerning the stories of the deluge a striking confirmation of the fact of the flood has been rendered by archaeological research. Sir Leonard Wooley tells us that in 1928-29 in excavating the mound of the ancient city of Ur of Chaldees, after going to a considerable depth which had yielded pottery and other objects indicative of civilization, they came upon a stratum of clean 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 farther again they found pottery. As to the eight feet of clay, he concluded that this represented the deluge, and that it constituted the line between the earlier and later civilization.

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 they are inferior to our account, being polytheistic. But this difference marks our narrative as superior. As to the transmission we feel that a justifiable inference is that Abraham may have received it from some of the elders of his people and then recounted it to his descendants.

Passing on to the patriarchal narratives, we will be able to understand better the possibilities of written records if we consider the civilization existent in Ur in the days of Abraham. This city, located, as it was, 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 standards of living and the demand for the arts of civilization. These demands were met by various forms of manufacturing by which articles 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 there be a keeping of accounts, and this entailed a form of writing. That writing was known at that time has been verified by the discovery of tablets, also steel and stone inscriptions. Even clay tablets which constituted hymn books have been found.

Having been brought up in this environment, Abraham himself must have shared in some of this knowledge, the more so because the Habiru, as his people were then known, were mercenary soldiers and traders. Further, his sojourn in another center of trade and civilization such as Haran would have contributed something. Added to these facts is this further significant item, that the culture existent in Babylonia and Assyria in Abraham's day extended even to the borders of Egypt, so wherever Abraham went he must have contacted it.

Moses' Training for His Task-Turning to the other books of the Pentateuch, since writing existed so many years before the time of Moses, we have no difficulty in accepting the fact that he himself would be versed in the art. This is substantiated by the fact that he was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Being brought up at the court of Egypt one of the first things necessary for the young Moses to learn was to read and write. When his elementary training was finished, he would attend one of the universities and here among other subjects he would study law and jurisprudence, also 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 had ability to write and no doubt kept a journal of the events of his own life and the journeyings of the Children of Israel. Further, his training in law and jurisprudence would create a background in his mind which would serve as a basis for the revelation of the special laws for the Israelites given to him by Jehovah. Finally, his training in literature and poetry would give the fitness necessary for those appealing farewell discourses in the Book of Deuteronomy and for the poetic productions which are ascribed to him.

The culture of the Mosaic era, however, 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 date even earlier than the days of Moses. Here at this temple it would seem that the miners who worked in this section of the country worshipped. Then there are the Ras Shamra tablets that belong to the theological school of Ugarit in Phenicia which also are assigned to this period. Both scripts are Hebrew, but one is more cursive than the other and would lend itself more readily to continued writing. Thus it is that Moses might have known a form of writing better suited for his purpose than the Egyptian hieroglyphics.

From several points of view therefore it is possible that Moses could have written the first five books. The priestly legislation as well as the narratives could have been his, as they are given to us in the accounts, 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 might have used sources and for his own time his own records. The account of the death of Moses at the conclusion has sometimes caused trouble in the minds of individuals, 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, then afterward 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 (Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:9; 24-26).

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## The Prophets

The second major division of the Old Testament writings, as made by the Jews, is the Prophets. This has greater scope in its significance than we are accustomed to assign it. In the Jewish catalog of books it includes the historical as well as the prophetic, that is, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel (reckoned as one book), 1 and 2 Kings (also reckoned as one book), and the Prophets proper. The two were differentiated by calling the historical books the Former Prophets and the other the Latter Prophets.

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### I. Former Prophets

The reason why the historical books should be classified thus is to be found in the fact that the historical accounts of that day were written with a different purpose from ours of today. They were intended to show God's dealing with His people and to relate the events to the spiritual causes. They were not concerned primarily with history as such but with the spiritual lessons it taught. History consequently was written from the prophetic point of view and therefore the title "Former Prophets" is very applicable.

Joshua--Standing first among the Former Prophets is the Book of Joshua. We are not told specifically in Scripture as to its authorship as a whole. We do read, however, that "Joshua wrote these words in the books 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 a most legitimate inference to conclude that Joshua kept a journal of the events of the conquest and the division of the land among the tribes, and further it is possible that the book as we have it might have come from his hand, the account of his death having been added later.

Judges -- While some books give us a clue to their authorship, there are others which do not, and 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 that might be helpful especially as to the time when it might have been written. Talmudic tradition names Samuel as the author. Noting references in the book to events that locate the time, such as, "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 the days when there was a king, but was written about a time previous; and the reference to the fact that the Jebusites still possessed Jerusalem (Judges 1:21), which signifies that the book was written before the time of David, we conclude that there is much to favor the Talmudic tradition.

Another point to be considered in this connection is that Samuel was the founder of the prophetic schools, serving as the head of the original one at his own home in Ramah (1 Sam. 19:19, 20). The prophets made an outstanding contribution to the literature of the Old Testament; and not only did they give us the books with which we are familiar, but there are references to other books written by them. Furthermore, mention is made of a history written by Samuel the Seer (1 Chronicles 29:29).

Accordingly there are two factors that seem to point to Samuel as the author: the time when it was written and the reference to him as a writer of history. No doubt in writing the book he used some accounts existent that belonged to the time of the Judges. The song of Deborah would constitute one of the sources, and as the professional scribe appeared in that age (Judges 5:14), other records probably were to be found.

1 and 2 Samuel -- In connection with the Books of Samuel, it would appear at first that the question of authorship is settled by the title; but 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 1 Samuel 25:1 which was at the time when David was an outlaw in the reign of Saul, but the events narrated carry us through the reign of David; consequently it is evident that Samuel could not have written all even of the first book. The title was given in the Hebrew Bible because of Samuel's relation to the events. He was the last of the judges and the founder of the prophetic order; moreover he anointed the first two kings that the nation had, namely, Saul and David.

A point of interest to be noted is that in the Greek translation, the Books of Samuel and Kings are combined as one and called the four books of the kingdoms. That this is a natural combination is evident, for reading these books the history follows consecutively as one continuous narrative, the first Book of Kings taking up the account just where 2 Samuel left it. Accordingly it may be well to leave the question of authorship until the Books of Kings have been reviewed.

1 and 2 Kings-When the kingdom became fully organized, as it was under David, 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 (2 Samuel 8:16), but as we have already noted the professional scribe appeared in the days of the judges, therefore there may have been someone who acted in such a capacity before. In any case from the time 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" (1 Kings 11:41), "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" and "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah."

But the recorders probably were not the authors of our books as they are. Our history as given in the Bible is not history primarily, it is history with a moral purpose; historical episodes are used to illustrate moral and spiritual truth. Consequently it would seem as if someone with a 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" (1 Samuel 10:25). Then again it is stated, "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" (1 Chronicles 29:29). This last passage indicates to us that not only Samuel wrote but also Nathan and Gad and that the entire reign of David is included so that it gives us 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 Acts of Solomon," "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel," referred to seventeen times, and "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" referred to fifteen times. Who edited the book as we have it remains in oblivion, but we can safely conclude that the work was done by members of the prophetic schools.

\* \* \*

## II. Latter Prophets

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

The form of literature in this case might be compared to sermonic literature of our own day. The books give to us the messages that 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.

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; this is not essential 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 situations.

Among the major prophets Isaiah stands pre-eminent, and his writings indicate a profound depth of spiritual insight which is expressed in language majestic and sublime; but sad to say his book of prophecies has been one of the chief battle grounds of modern criticism. Its unity has been assailed. All of chapters 40 to 66 has been attributed to an unknown prophet of the exile, and other passages in chapters 1 to 35, especially 24 to 27, have been denied Isaiah. The discussion of these points becomes very involved and enters into different phases. One or two basic facts may be mentioned in passing. First, a cognition of the spirit of prophecy would help in understanding how Isaiah might have seen these visions of the future while the assumption of a naturalistic position regards this 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 rejected as coming from his hand, yet there has never been as severe an attack made as against Isaiah. That Jeremiah dictated some of his prophecies at least to Baruch is definitely stated (Jer. 36:1-4), but the messages were his own. The order of the book lacks chronological sequence more decidedly than any of the others, but the turbulence of the times may have had something to do with this, and moreover that would have been a minor matter as viewed by any collector or editor of that time.

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

The Minor Prophets -- Among the Jews the Minor Prophets were included in one book which was often known as "The Twelve." For the most part the genuineness of the individual authors is not questioned; occasionally some particular passages may be doubted, 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 of 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 in this case there probably was an interval of thirty or forty years, then the differences may easily be explained.

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## The Sacred Writings

Coming to the third division of the Hebrew Scriptures, we find it tripartite. First there are the poetical books, Psalms, Proverbs and Job; second the Megilloth, or five rolls, namely, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther, and finally the remaining books, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

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### I. Poetical Books

The poetry of the Hebrews in main may be classified under two heads, lyrical and didactic. The Psalms in general belong to the former, and Proverbs and Job to the latter.

Psalms -- When one thinks of the Psalms from the standpoint of authorship, naturally there comes to the mind instinctively the person of David. Nearly one-half have a superscription that has been accepted as indicating that he was the author. But many have questioned this, so it is well to examine the evidence for accepting David as the father of Psalmody and the author of many individual Psalms.

In reading about David, we learn that in his youth he was a skillful musician (1 Sam. 16:15-23); not only so, but it would appear that he invented instruments of music (Amos 6:5). Furthermore in his elegy over Saul and Jonathan we see that he had ability as a poet. This gift is apparent again in the lamentation over Abner (2 Sam. 3:33ff), and finds its expression in the true form of a Psalm in 2 Samuel 22. Finally he was a man upon whom the Spirit of God rested (1 Samuel 16:13), and when he was uttering his last words, these also in poetic form, he speaks 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." (2 Sam. 23:1-3). Thus it is evident that he was equipped along every line to write the Psalms.

Taking the Psalms as a whole from the standpoint of authorship, we have seventy-three assigned to David. Twelve are attributed to Asaph, who was a Levite set over the service of song (1 Chron. 6:31; 16:5, 7). (But it would appear that the superscription here refers to a guild by the name of Asaph for there are two Psalms in this collection which imply a later time than the rule of David.) Eleven Psalms are attributed to the "son of Korah." (In this case a guild is clearly implied by the nature of the designation.) As for the other Psalms that have definite authors mentioned, there is one assigned to Moses, two to Solomon, one to Heman and one to Ethan. These last two men have sometimes been considered to be the ones referred to as the assistants given to Asaph for the temple music, and others have thought that they were wise men living in the days of Solomon. As far as the authorship of the Psalms is concerned, it makes little difference which one of these views is accepted. When this number of Psalms have been assigned to their respective authors, there remain forty-nine that are anonymous. Viewing the situation as a whole it indicates that literary activity along this line was quite general in the days of David, and that many others of his time and the years following were inspired to write religious lyrics.

Proverbs -- With the conquest in the reign of David, the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital and religious center, and the literary activity in the writing of Psalms at this time, we are prepared for another similar period in the "Golden Age" of the reign of Solomon. But since Solomon did not have the religious depth of his father, we are not surprised to learn that it moves in another realm, that of the practical and prudential.

That Solomon wrote songs and proverbs is explicitly stated (1 Kings 4:32); therefore it appears that there is every justification for attributing the Book of Proverbs to him; that is, all save the last two chapters which mention Agur and Lemuel as the authors. This position is corroborated by the fact that each of the main divisions of the book claim Solomon as the author. On the other hand criticism has maintained a gradual compilation for the book, but the reasons would seem to be more subjective than otherwise.

Job -- Considering the Book of Job various opinions have arisen as regards authorship. It has been one of those books that have been moved about considerably and over far-reaching periods of time from the patriarchal age down to the exile. Naturally the conception of authorship will vary with the age to which it is assigned. The setting of the book is in the patriarchal period, and some would claim that it was written then with Job himself as the author. Others would refer it to the days of Solomon inasmuch as it moves in thought with the wisdom literature; and still others make different claims. It would seem that the first two positions mentioned present the most feasible arguments, and it is difficult to decide which may be right. With the recent knowledge

obtained regarding writing in the early days and the centers of wisdom and culture then existent, there is nothing inherently impossible that the Book of Job might represent a work coming from the days of Moses, life being patriarchal at that time; or on the other hand with the literary activity in the days of Solomon, the oral traditions regarding Job might have been incorporated at that time in the poetic narrative that we have.

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## II. 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, being designated thus because each book constituted a roll for convenient use in connection with the synagogue service on the five different festive occasions.

Song of Songs -- First among the rolls is the Song of Songs or Song of Solomon. This has been attributed to Solomon and the nature of its content seems to bear this out. The extensive knowledge of nature and the evidences of luxury accord with what we know of him. On the other hand, some regard the linguistic evidence as indicative of a late date, but this is not absolutely convincing.

Ruth -- The little Book of Ruth may very appropriately be assigned to Samuel. First, because of the time of the events narrated; it is generally accepted that they occurred in the days of the Judges, a period with which Samuel was conversant. Then, second, the book gives us a leading event in the ancestry of David, and we have learned that Samuel was especially interested in the memoirs of this king.

Lamentations -- None other than Jeremiah, "The Weeping Prophet," could fittingly be considered the author of Lamentations. In these elegaic poems he pours out his heart over the devastation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

Ecclesiastes -- In the case of Ecclesiastes, the linguistic evidence for a late date is quite strong and constitutes a real problem, so many even among the conservative scholars have rejected Solomon as the author, believing that the references which seem to indicate this were an impersonation of King Solomon. This impersonation was employed by later writers among the Jews and was generally recognized as ethically correct as the use of a pseudonym is today. To reach a definite conclusion is difficult. From the standpoint of the content Solomon more than any other had the opportunity to try out all the values of life and note the vanity of each, finding the true value alone in fearing God. In any case whatever decision is reached, the integrity of the book remains the same, the question of authorship not affecting this.

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, but we cannot assert this definitely. Moreover Ezra has been suggested as the author; this is plausible, but no positive claim can be made. The value of the book is just the same, though we do not know who wrote it, and it stands as a lesson of courage and heroism for all who read.

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### III. The Remaining Books

One more division among the Writings is left to be considered. For the purpose of a comprehensive title, this is sometimes called the remaining books and at other times the historical books.

Daniel -- For various reasons from different fields of research, the critics generally agree that the Book of Daniel belongs to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of the Jews (168 to 165 B.C.), and consequently Daniel could not have been the author. In this brief review we cannot enter into the numerous discussions, but we should note the specific reference made by Jesus (Matt. 24:15) where he mentions Daniel not as a book but as the author. Added to this is the fact that archeology has tended to confirm some of the historical data they have questioned. Then it must be remembered that the critics always work on the presupposition that accounts of events must be history written after they have occurred and could not have been prophetic, while the conservative scholar accepts the possibility of the foretelling of events.

Ezra -- Nehemiah -- Among the Jews the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were generally counted as one, but while they are related, yet because of the repetition of certain lists (Ezra 2; Nehemiah 7:6-70), they cannot have been a unit originally. In discussing the books, we note the sources first, then consider the question of authorship after we have taken up the Books of Chronicles.

As for the sources for Ezra and Nehemiah there are sections which represent personal memoirs, such as Ezra 7:27-9:15 and Nehemiah 12:27-13:31; in these sections the personal pronoun is used. Therefore we have in the first case personal memoirs, and then no doubt additional material would be found in records kept in the second temple.

Chronicles -- In connection with Chronicles there was a large collection of books at the command of the writer which are mentioned from time to time. They consist of (1) The books of the Kings of Judah and Israel (2 Chronicles 16:11; 25:26; 28:26. That this is not our Book 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 acts of David, 1 Chronicles 29:29. (3) History of Nathan the prophet, which gives information both regarding David and also Solomon. 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29. (4) History of Gad the Seer which is concerned with the acts of David, 1 Chronicles 29:29. (5) The prophecy of Ahijah, the Shilonite treating of the reign of Solomon, 2 Chronicles 9:29. (6) The Vision of Iddo the Seer, which includes Solomon, Jeroboam, Rehoboam and Abijah, 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22. (7) The histories of Shemaiah the prophet treating of the reign of Rehoboam, 2 Chronicles 12:15. (8) The history of Jehu, the son of Hanani who takes up the reign of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:34. (9) The Commentary of the Book of Kings recording facts about Joash, 2 Chronicles 24:27. (10) The Acts of Uzziah, by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, 2 Chronicles 26:22. (11) The Vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. This dealt with the reign of Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:32. (12) The words of the Seers, in which was an account of Manasseh, 2 Chronicles 33:19.

With this review, the sources for Chronicles is clearly indicated, but the author is not mentioned. In considering this question the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are usually included in the discussion because they were written either by one and the same author or school of authors. The reasons for assigning them to the same author are three: first, subject matter; second, similarity of style; and third, the evidence that they were written about the same time. As regards subject matter the Book of Ezra begins with exactly the same historical allusion 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.

The suggestion regarding authorship has been that Ezra wrote all of them. At least the Books of Chronicles and his own book would appear to have come from his hand, but if one prefers to say that Nehemiah wrote the book named for him, there is nothing against this view.

The reason for ascribing the authorship to Ezra is, first, his heritage, and secondly, his office. Considering his lineage he was a priest of the line of Aaron and consequently would be interested in the temple and its ministry; then as regards his office he was a scribe, the first of that line of scribes that 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. With all of these points the position seems to be well taken.

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### Recognized As Authoritative

We have followed the birth of each book as far as our knowledge would take us, but the writing of the books and the reception of them as Scripture constitute two different issues. Here we deal not with the origin or contents but with the question how it came to pass that these books were regarded 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 divine revelation as a whole. Small portions might have been given thus, such as the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23), and 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 under the operation of the Holy Spirit was left to respond to the presence and power of the Spirit in the records given.

\* \* \*

### I. The Books Received

The three divisions of the sacred books made by the Jews seem to indicate the order in which they were accepted. First there was the Law. This was recognized at once as coming from the hand of Jehovah, and in Joshua we have the Book of the Law mentioned; further, it was attributed to Moses and defined as "the law of God" (Joshua 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).

In connection with the other books we do not have anything so specific as with the Pentateuch, yet we find that the words of the prophets were considered as indited by the Holy Spirit, and consequently were binding; moreover to reject them brought on liability of punishment. Thus they came to have formal recognition (Dan. 9:2, 6; Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12; 2 Kings 17:13).

As for the third division we are left to inference in drawing conclusions, but it would appear to be legitimate to claim that as with the words of the prophets so with the Psalms. They bore their own testimony. The Spirit of Jehovah that spoke by David would testify to others of the validity of the message. This would be true also of the other books.

While outside of the books themselves the Old Testament does not refer to the third division, yet certain noncanonical works mention them. Of these there is the Book of Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach written in Jerusalem about 170 B.C. He makes mention of the heroes of Israel from Enoch to Nehemiah, also the Twelve Prophets. The prologue to this book was written in Egypt by his grandson about 132 B.C. In this he refers three times to the tripartite division of the Old Testament, "Law, Prophets and other books of the Fathers." Thus it is evident that in his day the threefold division of the Old Testament Scriptures existed and the books were recognized.

Then in 1 Maccabees written between 125 and 70 B.C. there are numerous references to Daniel which would indicate that this book was regarded as authoritative at that time. The writer also quotes Psalm 79.

But more important is the evidence from the New Testament which is very definite for a fixed collection of writings known as the Scriptures and for the books in the three divisions. 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.

\* \* \*

## II. The Canon Formed

Finally in connection with these Old Testament Scriptures arises the question as to when all of the books were brought together in one collection and the canon formed. According to tradition Ezra is given credit for this. Since he must have gathered many books as seen from the sources he had for Chronicles, this is not an assumption without basis. Many who do not accept the proposition in its entirety do admit that a nucleus was formed. No person of that time was better qualified for the task. He was devoted to the Scriptures and possessed an element of the prophetic spirit that would give him the cognition necessary to recognize the presence of inspiration.

While the Book of 2 Maccabees (written about 124 B.C.) is not too reliable, a statement found in 2:13 is interesting and 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 2 Maccabees 2:14 also is contributory. 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 solicitude for them afterward.

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

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### Topics for Discussion

1. The difference between revelation and inspiration.
2. The contribution of the prophetic order to Hebrew literature.
3. Evidence from archeology confirming the Scripture.
4. The development of Psalmody.
5. The formation of the canon.
6. The apocryphal books.

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## 02 -- THE HEBREW HERITAGE

Beginnings are always interesting. The breaking forth into life of a new being, the adventure of heroic people into hitherto unknown lands, all these are fraught with special interest. So much the more is this true when it pertains to the first appearance of the human race upon earth and of a nation that was to preserve for man religious traditions.

When we read the Genesis account of creation, how majestic it stands forth among the cosmologies of the nations, transcendent in its conception of God and drawing for us with master strokes the major lines in the panoramic picture of the coming into existence of the elements of matter (Gen. 1:1) which are molded and formed into different varieties, then the creation of conscious life (1:21) and finally in man self-conscious life (1:27).

\* \* \*

## The Antediluvian World

Man stood supreme at the head of creation, pure and untainted, but morally and spiritually untried; and thus if he was to have personal worth, he must be proved. There came the solicitation to evil, the yielding and the dire results. Whereupon being cast away from the presence of God, man became an outcast, a slave to fear and evil.

\* \* \*

### I. Its Civilization

Despite this moral wreckage that 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, one the fruit of the ground and the other the firstlings of the flock. As the offering from the flock had the element of shedding of blood, the type and symbol of redemption, it was received with favor, but the other was rejected. This angered Cain, and filled with the spirit of envy he killed his brother.

Thus in both instances, Adam and Eve on the one hand and Cain and Abel on the other, the beginning was not propitious. 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, yet there was no evidence of the knowledge and worship of God.

But another line appeared. Seth was given in the place of Abel. Hereupon we read that very early in their history did they call upon the name of the Lord, and Enoch, the seventh in descent, has ever stood as an example of fellowship with God.

Our Genesis narrative does not give us many facts regarding this antediluvian world. There is a brief tabulation of the patriarchs of the time, and it is interesting to note that Berosus, a Chaldean writer, gives the same number of antediluvian worthies only he calls them kings. With the few facts that can be gleaned from the excavations that penetrate below the flood strata, that is, the finding of stone implements, painted pottery and bricks of burnt clay, and also 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 structure of civilization.

\* \* \*

### II. The Deluge

Among the people of the day, two distinct classes 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 individual characteristics; but when they began to associate closely in fellowship, there was the tendency to break down 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 forth, 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 Jehovah.

There came a flood upon the earth destroying all forms of life save such as were sheltered in the ark that Noah had built at the command of Jehovah. Here he and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with their families found refuge. They took with them from among the beasts seven pairs of the clean and one pair of the unclean of each kind.

\* \* \*

## The Postdiluvian World

When the flood waters subsided, Noah and his family with the beasts of the earth came forth from the ark. A new beginning was inaugurated, and most appropriately the first act was the building of an altar unto the Lord upon which a sacrifice was offered. Jehovah looked with favor upon their worship, and gave the promise that never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood. Then upon Noah and his sons was the injunction laid that they were to multiply and replenish the earth, a command comparable to that given to the first human pair in the garden of Eden.

While this second beginning was propitious, yet so great is the proclivity 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 with his table of the nations passes in quick review a long period of time; it might have been a thousand years. The descendants of the three sons of Noah are given, and they are named with little comment.

\* \* \*

## I. Population Movements

In these early narratives two population movements may be discerned. In the first place there is Nimrod, a mighty man and noted as a hunter, who established his kingdom in the plain of Shinar, that is Southern Babylonia or what is later known as Chaldea. His rule comprised four leading cities, Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh. Then from this center Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, was founded.

Another population movement took place when a people from the east also located in this plain of Shinar. Upon arrival they purposed to build a city and also 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 enterprise, divine judgment fell upon them. Their sin appears to have been twofold, an attempt at centralizing 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 naught by confusion of tongues, and thereupon they began to scatter. It is generally accepted that the

people thus described were the Sumerians who with the Akkadians constituted the early inhabitants of this region.

\* \* \*

## II. Ur Of The Chaldees

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

We have already noted a few facts indicative of its culture, and now we would make a brief review of its religious life. Both publicly and in private religion played an essential part. The leading form of worship was that of the moon, and 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 as otherwise called "Hill of Heaven," also "Mountain of God." This was a large, mound-like structure built of brick. The architectural work was very skillfully planned so that there was not a straight line in the building. It had a color effect that was impressive especially with the groves of trees that were 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. Privately the worship of idols figured 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 which we hear about at a later date being hidden by Rachel and demanded by Laban.

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## The Patriarchs

After giving the descendants of the three sons of Noah, the 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 Chaldees leaving one son, Lot.

\* \* \*

## I. 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 came to know God. For this we do not have any definite answer. There are, however, certain possibilities to be taken into consideration. First, there might have been traditions among the Habiru. The name for God among the Habiru and among the Hebrews is somewhat similar. Of these traditions Abram may have learned. Then for every man there is the light of nature and the light of conscience. These two may have combined to stir belief in the heart of this great patriarch. Further when such light had been followed, no doubt there was vouchsafed to him some form of special revelation.

His Call -- The father of the Hebrew people appears before us receiving a call from God. While the Genesis account tells of the second call that came in Haran, Stephen (Acts 7:2) relates the first; that is, even while they lived in Ur the call came to Abram, and this probably was the reason why the family migrated to Haran. Although Terah did not share the faith of his son, he might have listened to his request to leave.

The city of Haran where the family of Terah located was situated on the trade route between Babylonia and the west. Being upon the banks of a river, it was in the center of a fertile region and thus was prosperous; moreover the fact that the trade route ran through aided in its prosperity. But like Ur of Chaldees it was idolatrous for here was worshipped the moon-god Sin, renowned as the special deity of Haran. The environs of the city consequently were not conducive to establishing a pure monotheistic faith, and moreover Abram was still with his kindred who likewise failed to afford support for Abram's belief.

His Sojournings -- With a call from God, Abram, after the death of Terah, left his kindred to go forth to the land that God would show unto him. This time there travels with him only his wife and nephew Lot, save no doubt there were household retainers. Nahor remained in Haran. The trade route led directly to the city of Damascus, and since this was the regular highway of travel, no doubt he took his journey through that city. It might be that it was at this time that he added Eliezer to his household.

Reaching the land of Canaan there was of necessity a complete readjustment of living. While the Canaanites who lived there had built cities, yet they were small and insignificant compared to those of the eastern country from whence he had come, and the civilization was much cruder. From the settled life of the city with its varied activities, Abram became a semi-nomad living in tents.

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

But since a famine swept over the land, Abram went down into Egypt. Here he became apprehensive lest the Egyptians should covet his beautiful wife and so he bade her say that she was his sister, since she was indeed a close relative. The real facts, however, became known, and Pharaoh asked him to leave the country.

After they returned to Canaan, trouble arose over pasture land between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot, and in order that there might not be strife between them, Abram gave his nephew his choice which resulted in the request for the well-watered plain of Jordan. When Lot departed for this the 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 wont he built an altar unto the Lord.

While the choice that Lot made seemed desirable, yet it had decided disadvantages. First the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, were very wicked, and Lot afterward located in Sodom. Then war broke out. Kings from the east, the very place that had been Abram's and Lot's

home, made a raid on this section of country. Fourteen years before the land in this vicinity had been placed under tribute by one of the eastern kings, but the petty sovereigns of this region had repudiated the tribute and rebelled. Consequently Cherdorlaomer with accompanying kings undertook a campaign to the west, met the forces from the cities of the plain, defeated them taking many prisoners among whom was Lot.

When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, straightway with the men of his own household and his Amorite confederates, he set forth in pursuit and came upon the enemy near Dan. He made a night attack, overcame them and took the spoil.

On the return journey a most unusual character appeared, Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God. He brought forth bread and wine for Abram's band and also blessed the patriarch while Abram gave to him a tenth.

The Promise -- Although from the first the assurance had been given unto Abram that God would make of him a great nation and in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed, yet after the foregoing events, the promise came with more specific content. At first Abram demurred, for as far as he could see, the only heir for him was Eliezer of Damascus. Thereupon Jehovah assured him that this would not be the case, but a child of his own would be his heir. Then by a mighty act of faith did he grasp the promise. Human means were used to bring about the consummation of this promise and into his household came the infant Ishmael, whose mother was Hagar, a handmaid of Sarah. But this was not the divine fulfillment. Thereupon an embassy of heavenly visitants was sent to Abram's tent to tell him that a son would be born unto him and his wife Sarah. Previous to this, however, their names had been changed, Abram to Abraham, that is, from exalted father to father of a multitude and from Sarai to Sarah which signifies princess. This Change in names was indicative of future events.

At the time of the visit of the angels the Lord also revealed to Abraham the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The patriarch interceded, but there were not sufficient righteous people within the city to save it. Only Lot and his two daughters escaped. His wife, looking back, perished.

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

But although the son had been given, yet faith was to be tried again, and the call came to Abraham 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 heart throbs as they followed along on the journey to the assigned destination, but human nature is ever the same, and we can construe them in our thought. Also we can see the ever watchful Providence that is over our lives that comes when we have reached the ultimate point in obedience. A ram was found in the thicket that was to be the substitute. No wonder Abraham called the place, "Jehovah will provide."

After a sojourn in the land of the Philistines many days, the household of Abraham returned to the oaks of Mamre. We are not told when, but in connection with the next incident we find them there. Here Sarah died. Abraham must needs buy a burying place. A very vivid picture do we have of him as he makes the contract with the sons of Heth in Hebron for the cave of Machpelah finally receiving the deed. 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, and as he was growing old and felt that he should not leave his son Isaac to marry among the daughters of Heth, he bade his trusted servant, Eliezer, that he go to Haran to obtain a wife for Isaac. Permeated with the spirit of his master, Eliezer, reaching the end of his long journey, bows in prayer as he comes to the well-side in Haran. He sees damsels approaching and requests Jehovah that the one who responds by giving both him and his camels to drink shall be the one appointed for his mission. None other than Rebekah, the daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, offered her services. Then was Eliezer invited to her home. Thereupon he made the necessary negotiations, and Rebekah returned with him to the land of Canaan.

In bequeathing his substance, although at the time of his death Abraham had a number of sons, for besides Ishmael and Isaac, sons had been born by Keturah, his second wife, yet to the others he gave only gifts but to Isaac all that he had. Moreover he sent the other sons away to the east that the racial line of Isaac might be kept pure.

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 religion and answered the call to go forth to plant this form of worship anew. Wherever he went he set up an altar, and he 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 know the concepts of the day, and his virtues stand out so distinctly that they overshadow his faults.

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## II. Isaac

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

His Sons -- To Isaac and Rebekah two sons were born, twin brothers, but one had a priority of a few minutes over the other, so consequently would be rated as the elder. The word of prophecy, however, that had been given to the mother, was "The elder shall serve the younger."

When the children had grown to manhood, one day Esau, the elder, came home from the hunt faint and hungry. Jacob, who did not care for the chase as did his brother but instead remained at home tending the flocks and herds, had on this occasion made some particularly savory red

pottage. Thereupon Esau entreated him to give him some. This afforded the opportunity for which no doubt Jacob long had sought, and he replied that he would on condition that he in turn would sell his birthright. The birthright in any family of that age meant the major share of the family possessions, but in the household of Isaac it entailed also the blessings of the promise. Yet Esau, heeding not the value of this priceless heritage, because of his hunger, sold it to his brother, confirming the same with an oath.

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 went down to the land of the Philistines. Here also Abraham had taken refuge on a like occasion besides the time he sojourned in Egypt. Moreover he had employed here the same means to conceal the true relationship of his wife as he did in Egypt. Isaac does likewise at this time, but when Abimelech found out the facts in the case, he charged that no harm should befall Isaac and his wife.

Sowing in the land, Isaac reaped a good harvest, and his wealth increased, but he encountered some difficulty with the inhabitants about water supply. Yet finally he was able to dig a well and have it uncontested. Leaving Gerar in the country of the Philistines, he came to Beersheba in the south of Judah. There Jehovah appeared to him and reassured him regarding the heritage of the promise. Then did Isaac build an altar.

His Blessings-When Isaac was old, he felt that the time had come for him to officially pass on the patriarchal blessing, and 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 intimations given her regarding the two sons, and now, when she overheard the command given by Isaac, hurriedly bade 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 fate, but must needs resign himself to a blessing far inferior in worth.

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### III. Jacob

Although Esau might have called to mind the time he had with an oath sold the birthright to his brother, yet he makes no recognition of the fact and, becoming angry, determined to kill Jacob. He would wait only until his father had passed away.

A Refugee -- When Rebekah learned what her elder son purposed to do, she suggested to Jacob that he flee to Padan-aram, her old home. To Isaac, however, she made the proposition that it would not be in keeping for Jacob to take a wife from the daughters of Heth, such as Esau had done and had caused her great annoyance, so she influenced him to send Jacob to her father's house for a wife.

While upon this journey, there was given to Jacob a 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 blessings, but it indicates that latent in his heart there were religious possibilities though for the present the natural traits of his disposition were dominant. Yet 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 and thither came Rachel with 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 by being given Leah, and then he toiled another seven years for Rachel.

After serving for his wives, Jacob bargained with Laban for flocks, becoming prosperous in the enterprise. This aroused the antipathy of Laban's sons and also occasioned the ill will of Laban himself. Moreover at this time Jehovah appeared unto Jacob and bade him return to his own land. Fearing the household of Laban, he stole away at night. Laban pursued and remonstrated with Jacob, but since he had been warned in a dream, he did not dare to lay hands upon him, so the two entered into a covenant and then parted.

In connection with the dealings of Laban with Jacob, there are many features that seem strange to us, but in recent years clay tablets have been found in northeast Iraq that belong to this period of time, and these verify many of the incidents in Jacob's life as well as that of Abraham and Isaac as in accordance with the social customs of the day. These Bible narratives reveal to us life in its different phases according to the times.

Wrestling with an Angel -- As Jacob approached his homeland, the fear of his brother began to trouble him. Esau in the meantime had moved to the south and now occupied the rocky, mountainous territory that was called Edom which had been named for him. Sending messengers to tell Esau about his sojourn in Haran and his return, word came back that he was coming to meet him. Then Jacob indeed became afraid and dividing the people, also his flocks and herds into two companies, he sought Jehovah 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 propitiate his brother, Jacob provided a generous present and sent it on before, then he went to meet him. Upon seeing Jacob Esau ran to greet him, falling upon his neck 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, so he departed and Jacob journeyed on at his leisure.

At first Jacob located at Succoth, then he moved on to Shechem. Here he bought a parcel of ground and erected an altar. Finally he prepared to go up to Bethel where God had met him when he fled from before the face of his brother. In preparation he bade his household to put away all of the foreign gods; so gathering them together they buried them under an oak at Shechem. Then arriving at Bethel Jacob built an altar also in that place. Moreover as at the first, God appeared unto Jacob and reassured him that the promised blessing should be his.

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IV. Joseph

Unto Jacob there had been born 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.

His Dreams -- The feeling of ill will thus stirred within the heart of the brothers was further enhanced by certain dreams that the young Joseph had. In the first instance he saw his sheaf in the field arising while those of his brothers did obeisance. Then again he dreamed that the sun, moon and stars did obeisance. Thus it was that his brothers hated him more and more.

In Egypt -- When Jacob sent Joseph out to the field to inquire after his brothers' welfare, they felt that this was their opportunity and plotted to kill him. But Judah made a counter proposition and suggested that they sell him to a band of Midianites who happened to be traveling that way. This was carried out, and thus Joseph was brought into Egypt.

Coming into Egypt as a slave, he was sold to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers. The favor of Jehovah was upon him and he was made overseer of Potiphar's house. But being slandered by Potiphar's wife, he was cast into prison. There also he rose to position and was given charge over the 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, but the baker was beheaded. Soon afterward Pharaoh himself had a dream, and none of the wise men could interpret it. Then the chief butler remembered his faults in not speaking to Pharaoh before about Joseph. Now, however, he tells of the young Hebrew man and his ability to interpret dreams. Thereupon Joseph was called in, and listening to the dreams, he assured Pharaoh that God would give him an answer of peace. He said that his dreams indicated that there would be seven prosperous years and seven lean years in the land and he counseled him to store supplies during the prosperous years for the time of famine that was to follow.

Preserving Life -- When Pharaoh heard the interpretation, he responded with the suggestion that there was not anyone else in Egypt in whom the spirit of God dwelt in such measure as in Joseph, and so he appointed him as second ruler of the empire that he might have charge of the yield of the crops and lay up in store during the time of plenty for the lean years.

When the famine came upon the land and upon the surrounding countries, Jacob hearing that there was grain in Egypt, suggested to his sons that they go down thither to buy bread. 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 and declared to them that he was Joseph whom they had sold unto the band of the Midianites, but they were not to fear for God had intended it for good to preserve them a remnant in the earth.

Thereupon Joseph sent for his aged father and requested that the whole household come down into Egypt for the famine was to continue for a long time. Jacob was rather hesitant; the fact that Joseph was alive seemed to him to be incredible, but finally he was persuaded and began the



journey. Reaching Beersheba, where both Abraham and Isaac had sojourned, 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 was 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 at hand, he gave his blessing to the two sons of Joseph that had been born in Egypt, making them heads of tribes and thus equal in position with his own sons. After this was concluded, he pronounced a blessing upon all his sons. As a dying request, he asked them not to bury him in Egypt but take him back to Canaan. This they fulfilled and laid him to rest in the cave of Machpelah where his forefathers had been buried.

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#### 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. The providential purpose in the sojourn in Egypt.

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#### 03 -- THE BIRTH OF A NATION

When the Israelites entered into Egypt, the rulers of that country were known as the Hyksos, a Semitic people. This made a racial bond between them and the Israelites and so accounts for the favor they showed the Hebrews. But later on the original native rulers regained control and once more sat on the throne, and thus it was that there arose a king over Egypt that knew not Joseph.

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

Finally a fear sprang up among the Egyptians because of the increasing number of the Hebrews; thus it came to pass that they made the Children of Israel to serve with rigor and also sought to put to death their male children. Accordingly the situation for the Israelites appeared hopeless.

\* \* \*

## A Leader Given

Under these times of distress Moses was born and was hid three months by his mother. Then when he had become too old to be kept in secret any longer, his mother sought to save him from the edict of the king by placing him in an ark 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 and took him for her own.

\* \* \*

## I. Early Life

Through the cunning of a mother's heart it came to pass that she herself became his nurse. Then after he was able to leave her care, he was brought up at the Egyptian court and educated in all of 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 lay in this decision.

Having made the choice Moses went out unto his brethren. Seeing an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, he slew the Egyptian. He thought his brethren would recognize that God was giving them deliverance at his hand (Acts 7:25), but they did not. Then he went out the second day and seeing two Hebrews contending he chided them; thereupon they retorted, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?"

\* \* \*

## II. Moses In Midian

When Pharaoh heard that Moses had slain an Egyptian, he sought to kill him, 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, suddenly he noted a bush burning yet not consumed. As he turned aside to note the phenomenon, the voice of God spoke to him calling and bidding 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 unto him the divine name that was ever to be the designation of the Godhead for the Hebrews. This name indicated a very fundamental fact in relation to deity. Over against the crude conceptions of that day as to the nature of the Godhead 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 life ultimate reality. "I am," this was the sublime name, rendered in our Revised Version as Jehovah.

\* \* \*

## The Exodus

Although Moses still was hesitant, yet 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 forth to meet his brother; then both of them came before the assembly of elders and related the call of God that was upon Moses.

\* \* \*

### I. Before Pharaoh

Following this a request was made to Pharaoh that he let the Children of Israel go, but his reply was, "Who is Jehovah that I should hearken unto his voice?" Thereafter there ensued 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 climactic plague in the death of the firstborn.

With the last fatal plague, Pharaoh and the people of Egypt were urgent upon the Israelites that they leave at once. In haste therefore the Children 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 also raiment.

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

\* \* \*

### II. 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, but they were hemmed in by mountains on either side. The Egyptians in the meantime had repented that they had let the children of Israel go, so Pharaoh and his armies had started out in pursuit. Dismay filled the hearts of the Israelites when they saw them, yet Moses bade them fear not, for God would deliver them. Thereupon at the breaking of the dawn, Moses stretched forth his rod and the waters were miraculously divided, allowing the Israelites to cross over dryshod. The Egyptians, however, assaying to do the same were drowned. Then did Moses and the Children of Israel join in a great song of triumph.

Onward they journeyed through the wilderness seeking to find water at the various oases. Reaching Marah, there was water, but it was bitter. Moses, however, at the command of Jehovah cast a tree into the spring, and it was restored. Then at Elim they found twelve wells. In the wilderness of Paran they began to murmur about food, and supplies of manna were sent.

Arriving at Rephidim, water was obtained by a miraculous act in the smiting of a rock. Then 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 armies on to victory while Aaron and Hur upheld the hands of Moses as he lifted high the rod of God in his hand. This they did until the going down of the sun, and Amalek was defeated. Moreover at this place another important event occurred; Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visited him and observing his attempt to administer justice for the people himself, advised him to appoint assistant judges.

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### III. At Sinai

After a journey of three months, the Children of Israel reached Mount Sinai, the appointed place to hold a feast unto Jehovah. Here the covenant relations into which they were to enter were made very explicit. The special requisite 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 Jehovah and His people was of a covenant and the fundamental requisite was obedience.

After the conditions of acceptance of the people by Jehovah had been stipulated, then came the supreme manifestation of Jehovah on the mount. Out of the midst of thunderings and lightnings sounded the voice of God, and the Ten Commandments were given, Commandments which have been fundamental in the relationship of man to God and also of man to man down through the ages.

Then through Moses as mediator was given the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20:21-23:33). 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 audience of the people.

But as yet the Israelites had no well constituted ritual of worship. At the call of God Moses went into the Mount and there received the pattern of 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 Children of Israel encamped.

While Moses was in the mount receiving the instructions for the tabernacle, there was a defection of the Israelites, a lapse into idolatry under the leadership of Aaron. For this sin a sentence of destruction was pronounced upon them by Jehovah, but through the intercession of Moses the people were spared. Moreover also because of the loyalty of the Levites on this occasion, they were dedicated to Jehovah in place of the firstborn who had thus been consecrated upon their deliverance at the time of the last plague in Egypt.

To provide the material 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; this had been the divine intention when they were told to ask the Egyptians for the tokens. Then skilled craftsmen were found to do the work, men who in all probability had learned their trade in Egypt as they served the Egyptians in various capacities. When all had been 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 sacrificial worship was established with burnt, peace and meal offerings, also sin and trespass offerings. Moreover three annual religious festive occasions were appointed.

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#### IV. From Sinai To Mount Pisgah

During this sojourn at Sinai, which was about a year, there had definitely 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 unto Abraham had thus in part received its fulfillment.

When the people had been definitely organized through the various laws given and the religious worship systematized, the command came that they were to take their march toward their ultimate destination, the land of Canaan. Some minor events occurred along the way to the stopping place at Kadesh-barnea; there was 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 of all the occurrences on their journey took place; this was the unbelief of the people after the return of the twelve spies. Ten of the spies were hopeless, 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, but 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 did Moses intercede, and the sentence was commuted to a decree that the people should wander in the wilderness until that generation had died.

For this period of wandering which lasted about thirty-nine years we have little information. It would seem that during this time idolatry predominated (Amos 5:25, 26). Historically 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, there is recounted the death of Aaron on Mount Hor. Then because the people murmured on account of the long journey around Edom, fiery serpents were sent into their midst. Yet Jehovah provided for them the brazen serpent upon whom they looked and lived.

Reaching the transjordanic land they were enabled to triumph 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 desire to obtain the rewards of unrighteousness and the surge of prophetic power represent to us the play of dual forces upon a nature. For the time being he was not able to come to a place where he could curse the people Israel, but he gained the end of his covetous spirit when he instigated 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 of the Midianites, however, which came as a consequence of this idolatrous feast, Balaam himself was slain and a host of the Midianites also.

At this time the Reubenites, Gadites and one-half of Manasseh besought the leaders that they be given the land on that side of Jordan which was rich in pasture. They desired this for 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.

Concluding his work for the Children of Israel, Moses, who had been a great legislator, a great religious leader and an intrepid servant of God, gave his farewell discourses on the plains of Moab. His first address constituted a review of the history, and his second, a review of the law, while the third had for its purpose the renewal of the covenant. In connection with this last address injunctions were given regarding the recording of the law after the entrance into the land of Canaan, moreover also the consequences of obedience and disobedience were set forth.

After these were finished, the people were called upon to renew their allegiance unto Jehovah. Thereupon a charge was given to Joshua, who had been appointed as Moses' successor, and the law was put in the holy place beside the ark. With a song of praise unto Jehovah and the pronouncement of a blessing upon the people, the work of Moses, the servant of God, was ended.

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## The Conquest

While a nation was born at the foot of Mt. Sinai, yet they remained a people without a country in possession. This portion of the promise had not yet been fulfilled. The reason was that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen. 15:16). As depicted in Scripture the religion of the Canaanites was exceedingly corrupt, and archeology 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 exterminate 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.

When Moses had concluded all of his exhortations to the people, he was bidden to go up to the top of Pisgah and view the land. After seeing it, he passed to his reward at the age of one hundred and twenty, and Joshua the son of Nun succeeded in command.

\* \* \*

## I. Before Jordan

As Joshua was encamped before Jordan, the word of Jehovah came to him with admonition and encouragement promising guidance and protection. He for his part was to be strong and courageous and to take heed that the words of the law of God did not depart out of his mouth.

Inspired by the exhortation, Joshua gave command to the people to make ready for the crossing, and in the meantime he sent out spies. Rahab who lived on the wall of Jericho received them in peace and protected them from seizure at the hands of the king of the city. She told them that the people had been seized with fear, and besought 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 preliminary announcements were given. The priests bore the ark before the people, and as they touched the river's edge, the flood-swollen waters were miraculously divided and the Israelites marched across. In the midst of the river on dry ground stood the priests until all Israel had passed over. After all the people had crossed, and the priests with the ark had reached the other side, then 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, likewise they also brought stones from the farther banks of the river and placed them in the river bed.

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.

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## II. The First Victories

Not far distant from their camp lay the city of Jericho walled by a strong fortification ten feet thick. This city must be taken before they could proceed inland. It was a formidable task. No doubt the problem weighed heavily upon the mind of Joshua. Quite likely he was viewing the fortifications when suddenly there appeared unto him a man with a drawn sword. In answer to his question whether he were friend or foe, the reply came, "Nay but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Joshua 5:14). Then Joshua was given the command that the Israelites were to march around the city once each day for six days and then on the seventh seven times. Doing as instructed, when they had compassed the walls the last time on the seventh day, the people shouted with a shout, and the priests sounded the trumpets, then did the walls of the city fall, all save the portion on which Rahab's house was built. The fall of Jericho has been attested by archaeological excavations even to the saving of Rahab's house.

The command had been given to the people that the city of Jericho was to be destroyed with all the spoil, also all the inhabitants save Rahab and her household. But one man saw a goodly Babylonish garment and some silver and gold that he desired so he seized them and hid them. Thus it was that when they went to attack Ai, they were defeated for they had disobeyed the command of the Lord. Betaking himself to prayer to inquire the cause of the defeat, the word of Jehovah came to Joshua that there was a devoted thing among them. The guilty party was sought out

and met the penalty in being stoned with stones. The deed rated as a military offense and the punishment took on the nature of court martial. After the sentence of the offender, then another attack was made on the city of Ai, this time directly and also by ambush, and it fell into the hand of the Israelites.

When the capture of the city of Ai had been completed, then the command which Moses gave, namely, that an altar was to be erected and the law read, was observed. Half of the people stood in front of Mt. Gerizim and half in front of Mt. Ebal, but the natural acoustics of the valley were such that all could hear the words of the law. This constituted the establishment of the worship of Jehovah as the official worship of the land, the setting up of the family altar, so to speak, in the new home.

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### III. The Southern Campaign

With these first victories the initial stage of the conquest was finished, but the major campaigns were to follow. The first was in the south.

In this campaign the decisive battle was that of Bethhoron. The issue was brought on by the deceit of the Gibeonites who did work wily and induced the Children of Israel to make a covenant with them. Then the local kings joined in an alliance against Gibeon and encamped against it. Whereupon the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua for help. Encouraged by a word of assurance from Jehovah, Joshua made the attack, one of those surprise attacks which were characteristic of Joshua. Falling upon the enemy, he slew many and turned the rest to rout. Pursuing them a distance of four miles to the upper village of Beth-horon, he followed on down to the lower village three miles farther. This descent was fraught with danger for there were sheets of smooth rock, also jagged rocks and loose stones. It was as they were going down over this rough road that a hailstorm overtook them killing many of the enemy, and also it was at this time that we have that long day in answer to Joshua's prayer.

In the battle of Beth-horon the five kings who had made the league were taken and then each one of the cities in the south was besieged and captured. This made Joshua master of the southern portion of Canaan.

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### IV. The Northern Campaign

While the Israelites had conquered the south, yet since this was not so thickly populated, being a hill country, and because it was not possible 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 made by these northern kings against him, and the battle was joined at the waters of Merom. Again a message of encouragement came from Jehovah, and strengthened by this he made the attack. Once more the enemy was completely defeated and flight ensued; the Israelites followed slaying the



enemy as they went along. The city of Hazor that was the head of the kingdoms was destroyed, but the rest of the cities were left for the Israelites to inhabit.

Concerning the fear that the inhabitants of Canaan had when the Israelites made an invasion, it is interesting to note that among the finds of archaeological research, certain tablets known as the Tel el-Amarna letters have been discovered which reveal to us that these kings 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 suzerainty over the land.

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### 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 that Joshua and his forces were masters. The exterminating 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, there was need for the division of the land. So Eleazar, the priest, Joshua and the heads of the fathers' houses (Josh. 14:1) assembled for this purpose. Already two and one-half tribes had been provided for on the east of Jordan; now the rest were to receive their allotment. Between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean were located Simeon and Judah. The central part was given to the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, Dan and one-half of Manasseh. Then the northern part was given to Issachar, Zebulum, Naphtali and Asher.

Caleb, one of the faithful spies, made request for the city of Hebron. Since this city was so closely connected with Abraham and others of their forefathers, it would have seemed more appropriate that Joshua the great leader of the people should have inherited it, but Caleb's desire was granted, and 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 this became the religious center. Then the Levites were given forty-eight cities for their possession.

Since all had been accomplished according to agreement, 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 Israelites thought it was an altar for idol worship and protested, but hearing the truth of the matter, accepted it.

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### Joshua's Farewell

After all had been concluded, Joshua retired to his home in the hill country and for some eighteen years appears to have lived quietly there leaving the management to each local tribe and

its heads. Then when he was old, he called for the elders, the officers and the judges. Recounting before them all that Jehovah had done, he gave a charge to keep the law of Moses and warned them against idolatry. Thereafter all the tribes were gathered together and to them he related the wonders that God had wrought in their behalf, then concluded with an exhortation and a challenge to serve Jehovah. Accepting the challenge, the people entered into a covenant that Jehovah should be their God, and as an attestation of this covenant Joshua wrote the record in a book and set up a stone as a memorial. Thus closed the work of this great military leader who had triumphed over the enemies and had established the people in a land of their own.

\* \* \*

### 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 remained 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 a semi-nomadic people, keepers of flocks and herds, they were to become an agricultural and urban people, tilling the soil and carrying on trade and commerce. Then second 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.

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### I. Indifference Of The Tribes

At the opening of the Book of Judges there is recounted a number of desultory attempts to drive out the inhabitants. Among these are several victories. The capture of the town of Bezek, the lower city of Jerusalem and Debir indicates advance; moreover Judah's conquest of three cities of the Philistines is important. But with these victories the courage of the people seems to have waned for the most part, and the different tribes made no effort to drive out the native inhabitants.

The cause of the inertia of the Israelites is clearly 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 unto Jehovah, he sent them deliverers, but repeatedly did they return to idol worship.

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### II. Deliverance By The Judges

Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar -- The first oppression came from the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. For eight years he held the Children of Israel in servitude, then when they cried unto the Lord, Othniel was sent to deliver them.

The second oppressor was a king nearby. The Moabites allied with themselves the Ammonites and the Amalekites who advanced far enough into the land to take Jericho. But Ehud single handed and alone slew Eglon, the king of Moab, with a dagger, in his own palace. Then returning home he blew the trumpet in Ephraim and called upon 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, but again a man single handed, Shamgar by name, slew six hundred, and thus the foe was conquered. Once more was Israel saved.

Deborah and Barak -- From the north came the fourth oppression. Jabin, king of Canaan, whose capital was Hazor, under the command of his captain, Sisera, gathered together a large army equipped with nine hundred chariots.

At this time there was in the hill country of Ephraim a woman who was a prophetess of such ability that the Children of Israel came to her for judgment. In this crisis she called unto Barak of Kedesh-naphtali, telling him that the charge was laid upon him by Jehovah to join 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 of Beth-horon the breaking of a storm turned the battle in favor of the Israelites. Torrents of rain poured down and thus the River Kishon became swollen; the chariots were useless. Thereupon did Sisera flee to the tent of Jael the Kenite, only to find death at the hand of this woman. Thus was the host of the army of Jabin subdued.

Gideon and His Band -- The next to make an attack upon the much harassed Israelites were the Midianites, a semi-nomadic class of people who swept in on the country from the east. They came especially at harvest time and devastated the grain crops going as far south as Gaza in the land of the Philistines.

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

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

Gideon, to make sure that he was not mistaken in his call, put forth other tests by means of a fleece; then convinced, he assembled his army. But the word of Jehovah came to him that he had too many, so by diverse means 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 their camp, overthrowing it. This gave him further courage. Thereupon arranging his band of three hundred around about the Midianites at the beginning of the middle watch, he gave word to them to blow the trumpet and break the pitchers, which had torches within. The Midianites and Amalekites, thinking that a great host had come out against them, fled precipitately.

Then a pursuit followed with many of the tribes round about joining. The men of Ephraim at the call of Gideon took the fords of Jordan, seizing the princes, Oreb and Zeeb. Gideon followed after Zebah and Zalmunna, finally capturing them.

This victory over the Midianites was so outstanding that the Children of Israel would have made Gideon king had he been willing to accept; 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 it resulted in his destruction and that of many of the people.

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 anomaly. He had been brought up in the 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 his mother was a sinful woman.

When the Ammonites oppressed the people of Gilead, they sent for Jephthah; he on the other hand demanded from them that they promise him 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; for upon returning home, his only daughter met him, and according to the vow that he made before he went into battle, he must offer her in sacrifice. Loyalty to his vow motivated him to carry it to its fulfillment.

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

Samson and the Philistines -- Again intervening judges are mentioned, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, but their exploits are not recounted. All we know is that two of them had large families. It has been conjectured that these were men of wealth placed in office and that they conducted the affairs acceptably.

Following in the historical account comes the story of Samson. This time the oppressing nation was the Philistines. In the days of Joshua they had been confined to their own territory, but

during the chaotic times 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 according to the command of this heavenly visitant dedicated him as a Nazarite from his birth. Very early did he give evidence of divine favor, and the Spirit of God moved upon him. Growing to manhood, he performed various feats of strength. The first one was the slaying of a lion by pure manual force. From this incident he propounded a riddle at his wedding feast, and when the Philistines through his wife solved the riddle, he went forth 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. Furthermore, one day he seized the jawbone of an ass and killed a thousand men. Entering into Gaza, one of their cities, he carried away the gates. Thus single-handed did he triumph over the foe.

But while Samson could accomplish such feats, he had one special weakness-his susceptibility to the influence of women. In consequence he was enticed to tell the real source of his strength, and with this disclosure 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 then cast him into prison.

But when a feast day for the Philistines arrived upon which they were to have a great sacrifice to the grain god Dagon, they assembled in great numbers in the temple. As a source of merriment on this occasion, they had Samson brought forth. In the meantime during his imprisonment Samson's hair, the token of his power, had grown again. Then when he came forth, he besought 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 slew more Philistines in his death than in his life.

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### III. Contrasting Religious Pictures

We have already noted the degeneration 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 fusion of the two is given in the account of Micah and his gods. He stole some money from his mother and then restored it. Thereupon she dedicated it unto Jehovah to make a graven image. Moreover Micah had a house of gods, and at first he consecrated one of his sons to be a priest; then when a Levite came by, he employed him, feeling sure that Jehovah would bless him now that he had a Levite for a priest. But soon afterward the Danites passed that way and robbed Micah of both god and priest.

In contrast to the picture thus drawn is the account of the simple sincere piety set forth in the Book of Ruth. Here we have related 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.

Eli, the Priest Judge -- Before leaving this period of the Judges, two more should be noted. First is Eli who was both judge and priest. Eli himself was a pious man, but he could not restrain his profligate sons, which fact brought 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 surely it would defend them, but it proved to be a vain hope. 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 house of their god, Dagon. But here and wherever they located it, it became a source of trouble, so finally they decided to return it. Sending it away on a cart, it reached Kirjath-jearim where it remained in the house of Abinadab for twenty-one years.

Samuel, the Prophet Judge-But in the midst of this civil and religious confusion God was raising up a man. The child Samuel was given in answer to prayer, and as soon as possible was brought to minister at the tabernacle. Here he had received a vision of the doom of Eli's house. Since Eli demanded it, he revealed it to him.

The favor of the Lord rested upon Samuel as he grew to young manhood, and all Israel recognized that a prophet had been given unto 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 the strange gods, the Baalim and the Aseroth and meet him at Mizpah. This they did confessing their sins and repenting.

But when the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled together, they went up against them. They were discomfited, however, by the peals of thunder that broke forth, and began to flee. Whereupon the Israelites set out in pursuit and slew many. This victory was so complete that the Philistines restored the cities that they had taken from the Israelites previously.

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

Thus did the period of the Judges come to a close. It was a time of lawlessness and general corruption, yet there were some very devout worshipers of Jehovah in these dark days. The lawlessness was due primarily to the fact that the people for the most part forsook Jehovah and secondarily because they were in a transitional stage of government. The ideal set for them was a theocracy, but they came far short, and over against this form of government, they would have one that was formed by man.

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## 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.

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## 04 -- LIKE THE NATIONS

While the objection to the sons of Samuel was the ostensible reason why they asked for a king, yet there is considerable probability that there was a feeling on the part of many of the Israelites that they should have a constituted form of government. The elders of the people were in favor of 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. A unique form of government was the divine ideal for them, a theocracy wherein Jehovah would raise up leaders by His own appointment instead of my means of an established inheritance. It might have been that these leaders would have come from the prophetic order, chosen on the basis of their loyalty to the worship of Jehovah. But the cry of the people was for a king that they might be like the nations around about them. This demand they made in spite of the fact that they were warned that in having a king they would suffer oppression.

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## Saul, The Military Chieftain

Samuel sent all the people away who had come to his home at Ramah to make a request for a king, and he waited for divine direction as to further action. He had served the people not only as prophet and judge, but also, under the disorganized religious conditions, he had acted as priest; and it was in connection with this function that he established the contact with the future king.

A seemingly trivial incident brought about the anointing of Saul. The beasts of burden belonging to his father having been lost, he set forth with a servant accompanying him in the search. Failing to find them, the servant suggested that they consult the seer who lived in that

vicinity. Making inquiries, they were told that the seer on that very day was to be present in that particular city to bless the sacrifice of the people.

Samuel had received an intimation 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 together they communed on the housetop. Then the next morning as Saul was leaving, Samuel anointed him to be king over Israel. To strengthen the fact that this anointing was by divine appointment Samuel mentioned to him certain signs to be fulfilled on the way home.

Thereafter, calling all the people together at Mizpah, the place where they had assembled once before on an important occasion, an official selection of Saul by lot was made. Then Samuel presented to the people as their king the man whom Jehovah had chosen for them. Moreover Samuel himself wrote the manner of the kingdom in a book for their future use.

While the king had been elected he was not yet inducted into office. This came about through an act of prowess on his part. The Ammonites became aggressive against Jabesh-gilead across Jordan and, consenting to make a covenant only on reprehensible conditions, the inhabitants asked for seven days respite during which time they sent word to Saul in Gibeah. Straightway he rallied both Judah and Israel to the defense by rather drastic measures, but he obtained a response; and going forth against the Ammonites, he overcame them in an overwhelming victory. Then Samuel sent word throughout the country calling the people to Gilgal, and there amid great rejoicing Saul was officially made king.

Since the task of providing a leader for the people had been completed Samuel retired from political activity, yet 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 Jehovah.

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## I. Achievements

When Saul came into power there were two major problems. One was the need of a standing army ready for emergencies, and the other was the fact that right in the heart of the country the Philistines had set up their camps.

In the repulsion of the Ammonites Saul had been able to gather a large force, but as had been the case throughout all the period of the Judges, it was only a temporary measure to meet the special exigency. 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.

As far as the Philistines were concerned, they had the advantage over the Israelites in every way. They were a fierce, warlike people with a strong, well equipped military organization. Moreover they had skilled smiths and armorers. The Israelites had now become essentially an agricultural people and lacked well-trained men and equipment.



In attacking the Philistine foe, Jonathan smote a garrison in Michmash. This was regarded by them as a revolt against their suzerainty over the land, which they had maintained for a considerable period. In consequence they assembled a large army, with chariots and horsemen as an additional military force. The Israelites, terrified, deserted in many cases and the rest followed their king with trembling. Then Jonathan in another daring feat a second time attacked a garrison. The result was that the whole Philistine army was seized with panic and fleeing retreated to their own country.

Following this great success, Saul fought against 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. Moreover he carried on a successful campaign against the Amalekites.

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## II. Failure And Rejection

It is very natural to wonder why a man so humble and modest as Saul in his youth and so successful in many ways closed his life in such moral defeat. In seeking for the reasons, there might be noted in the first place his inheritance. He seems to have had latent in his nature the fierce passion of the Benjamites which certain external stimuli brought to the foreground. Then second it would appear that position and authority exposed him to certain temptations which otherwise might not have beset him. When his ambition was imperiled, envy with all of its cruel accompaniments arose. Moreover, there did not seem to be in his makeup any powers of self-control. He lacked in judgment and in a sensitive conscience. Finally, he became a pathological case with attacks of melancholy bordering on insanity. All these characteristics entered into his tragic fall.

Certain external circumstances brought out the undesirable tendencies in Saul's nature. First there was his rejection when Saul in haste assumed the functions of the priesthood and offered sacrifice; then came the second rejection when he did not obey the command to slay the Amalekites utterly; and 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 unto those who had familiar spirits and thereupon received his sentence of doom.

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## David, The Religious Organizer

After the second sentence of rejection had been pronounced upon Saul, the command of Jehovah came to 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. A goodly heritage had David, a descendant through Jesse of the devout Ruth and Boaz. This spirit of devotion passed on to the third generation and appears even in youth in the person of David.

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## I. Member Of Saul's Court

Because of the attacks of frenzy that beset King Saul, a skillful player was sought to soothe him, and young David was brought to court. At this time the Philistines had rallied themselves from the previous defeat and desired to join battle by championship. Daily their giant Goliath came forth and uttered defiance to the armies of Israel. David, who evidently had returned home after a brief stay at court, came up to visit his brothers in the army. Here he heard the challenge and wished to accept it.

With some stones from the brook and his shepherd's sling, he hurled the giant to the ground and then, seizing Goliath's own sword, decapitated him.

The praise of the people called forth by the slaying of the giant so aroused King Saul that he became insanely jealous of David from that day forth. Twice he attempted to slay him with his spear when he played before him, and failing in this he tried to betray him into the hands of the Philistines. Finally David became a fugitive and sought refuge in various parts of the country; but Saul hunted him "like a partridge" from place to place. Consequently David, concluding that he would not be safe in his own land, sought refuge with the Philistines and dwelt at Ziklag.

Then came the fateful battle with the Philistines in which Saul and his sons were slain. A runner bore the tidings to David at his place of sojourn expecting no doubt a reward, but instead he was sternly rebuked for laying hands upon the king. Moreover, as for David, with a magnanimous spirit, he poured forth his grief in an elegy of literary beauty.

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## II. Organization Of The Kingdom

Upon the death of Saul, David became king over Judah at Hebron, and with the revolt of Abner from Ishbosheth, 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. To begin with there was no capital, so David made it his first task to establish one. He took from the Jebusites the upper city of Jerusalem which hitherto had been impregnable. Here he built for himself a city, contracting with Hiram, king of Tyre, for the lumber and workmen.

Naturally the Philistines, who had been a foe for so long and had defeated the armies of Israel so recently, upon hearing that David had become king gathered their forces and made an attack. But they were repulsed. Later, when they repeated the attack, they met with a like fate.

But the chief burden that lay upon the king's heart was the religious disorganization of the nation. The ark was in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim, and the tabernacle had been moved from Shiloh to Nob, then to Gibeon, where the altar of burnt offering was also located. Under such conditions the people, with their sacred objects separated and the regular forms of worship disrupted, very frequently offered sacrifices on high places.

Assembling a company of chosen men together David sought to bring up the ark to Jerusalem. Because of the negligence in the observance of ritualistic requirements, the first attempt

proved unsuccessful but in the second attempt with great rejoicing they reached Jerusalem with the ark. David would have built a temple on Mount Zion, but being a man of war, he was restrained by Jehovah. 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 a house for Jehovah, he did organize the religious worship throughout. Of the thirty-eight thousand Levites he assigned twenty-four thousand to the work of the house of Jehovah, six thousand to be officers and judges, four thousand to be doorkeepers and four thousand to praise Jehovah. These were divided into courses, and those who were in the musical division were under the direction of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun (1 Chronicles 23 to 27).

Music in Worship -- The employment of music in connection with worship was introduced by David. While the rites of sacrifice were established by Moses, there had not been any music. It had become, however, a prominent feature among the prophetic guilds (1 Samuel 10:5).

For the instrumental music there were the stringed, wind and percussion instruments. It is supposed that the worship began with a concert of harps, followed by vocal and instrumental music. Thereupon there were interludes played by the instruments alone. Occasionally the congregation responded by Amen or Hallelujah, but there was no congregational singing.

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

The Psalms -- Not only did David introduce music in worship, he himself was the founder of Psalmody. The impulse thus given not only stirred others of his own time, but was felt down across the years. Although many of the Psalms were not for liturgical use, the great majority were, and these Psalms constituted the hymn book of the Old Testament Church.

When we speak of the Psalms as forming a hymn book, we must bear in mind that they vary somewhat from hymns as we know them 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 didactic and in others historical, penitential and imprecatory. Further, there are Psalms of praise very much like anthems, and then there are Psalms that deal with special themes, such as the Messianic.

The poetry is principally lyric and thus has to do with the subjective feelings under the various experiences of life. For this reason the Psalms have always made an appeal to human hearts, for, as has been said, they are "the mirror of the soul."

How they came to be arranged in the five books as we have them is shrouded in darkness, but no doubt David himself had a personal collection of his own Psalms and others that were written were preserved by either their own authors or by the musical guilds. Certain groups of Psalms were formed, such as the Hallel (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. Finally someone incorporated these groups into the form that we have them in our Bible.

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. For this he is held in remembrance not only by Old Testament saints, but also throughout the Christian Church.

Judicial -- The work of organization, however, did not cease with the religious worship, it extended to other phases of his government. He had a more complete court than Saul. David himself held the position of chief justice. Then there was the royal scribe who took the place occupied today by the secretary of state. Another officer was the recorder whose task it was to keep a chronicle of events. Further, there were two leading military officers, the captain of the host and the captain of the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were six hundred in number and constituted David's bodyguard. Besides 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 might be added to the court, as when David would show kindness to Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1-13). In this last case, however, the individual was more of a guest than an officer.

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### III. Conquests And Reverses

While the work of organization was carried on within the kingdom that it might function properly, there arose the need to protect his people from outlying foes. Consequently he made an attack upon the Philistines which resulted in a victory so complete that they gave David no further trouble. Then it was necessary to subjugate the Moabites and Edomites in the southern region. Further, Zobah and the Syrians in the north felt the hand of conquest and the Ammonites on the east were brought low. With these various victories the borders of the kingdom were extended so that the territory possessed was several times larger than that originally claimed by the twelve tribes.

Outstanding victories had been won, and the nation had every prospect before it, but in connection with the conquest of the Ammonites there had been committed a great sin on the part of the king. From the standard of Oriental royal morals, his acts were permissible, but not in the light of Hebrew traditions and religion. The sin met with a just reproof and David humbled himself in true penitence before Jehovah.

In the last days of David's reign various internal troubles arose. These were more or less an out-breaking of underlying conditions. First in the minds of some of the house of Saul a feeling still lingered, expressed on one occasion by Shimei. Then there was the ever overbearing captain of the host, Joab. These however were minor as compared with the resultant 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. Then further trouble was brought upon the nation when David put his reliance on numbers instead of trusting in Jehovah.

Thus the reign of David, like his personal life, had its points of weakness as well as strength, but weighing them together in the balance the good wrought for the kingdom far exceeds

the unfortunate evils. David truly was a great king and sought ever to foster and maintain the worship of Jehovah.

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## Solomon, The Builder

With the outbreak of the conspiracy of Adonijah, Nathan urged Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, to go in before David and bring to his attention the promise that he had made previously that Solomon should succeed him; then Nathan himself confirmed the fact to the king that Adonijah was even then holding a feast and was being proclaimed king. Thereupon David gave command that Solomon should be anointed at once. When this was done and the news noised abroad, the conspirators dispersed with fear and Adonijah fled to the altar for protection and would not leave until he had received from Solomon an oath that he would not slay him.

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### I. Internal Relations Of The Monarchy

As David was about to die, he gave a charge to the young king exhorting him to walk in the ways of Jehovah his God; then would the hand of the Lord be upon him for good. Moreover he also gave command concerning certain men that 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. Moreover, Adonijah himself, because of a further act which indicated that his ambition for the kingship was still active, met death at the king's command.

Early in his reign Solomon went to the great high place at Gibeon to offer sacrifice. Here Jehovah appeared unto him, giving him the opportunity to ask whatever he might desire. Riches and long life lay out before him as possibilities of choice, but instead he sought for wisdom. This wisdom no doubt was not the truly spiritual wisdom, for his life does not seem to have sounded the depths 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, divine 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 they ate at the king's table. These included the chief priest who ministered at the temple, the two secretaries of state, the recorder, the captain of the host and captain of the bodyguard (Greek translation). Then there were the twelve officers over the twelve districts into which the country was divided for the purpose of levies and taxes. Over the twelve officers was a superintendent and over the palace was a chamberlain or steward. Further, there were the two royal priests, Zadok and Abiathar and the king's friend.

While these filled the offices of state, yet there were a great many retainers at court and with the polygamous households of that day it has been estimated that the number all told ran into

the thousands who were fed at Solomon's table. From the twelve different districts supplies were brought and the amount required for each day was immense.

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## II. Buildings

One of the most significant enterprises in the reign of Solomon was that of construction work and pre-eminent among his buildings stood the temple. While the general plan both for the building and the furniture was based on that of the tabernacle, yet 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. Cedar wood was brought from Lebanon, and expert craftsmen from Tyre wrought the bronze.

Next to the temple was the king's palace with a harem for his Egyptian queen. Then below that going toward the south was the throne hall where Solomon sat in state on a throne of ivory adjudicating as the supreme judge of the people. Between this and the House of Lebanon were two halls; one was a porch, known as the porch of the pillars, and the other was enclosed, cedar wood being used. The magnificence displayed in all of these buildings was more characteristic of the Oriental courts of the day than the simplicity of the Hebrew people.

When the work for the temple was completed, the ark was brought in and a great dedicatory feast was held. Solomon's prayer on this occasion represents spiritual conception and feeling, such as was befitting a king of Israel. Then, as once before, the Lord appeared unto 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 not fail an heir to sit upon the throne of the kingdom.

The passion that Solomon had for construction work extended to other lines of endeavor. He made gardens in Jerusalem, obtaining a water supply for these in part by the perennial springs on the temple mount, and in part by water brought from large pools through aqueducts. He planted vineyards and orchards. Moreover it would seem that he built for himself a summer home in Lebanon (1 Kings 9:19).

But not everything that Solomon built was for his own personal use. He thought of national defense. He built Millo; that is, he so fortified the city wall that Jerusalem became impregnable. Moreover he built a chain of forts throughout his domain in strategic places. Further, he built store cities and cities to accommodate his military force of chariots and horsemen. Then he built cities for trade and commerce. Thus many and varied were his building enterprises.

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## III. Foreign Relations Of The Monarchy

In connection with the foreign relations of the monarchy, the dominant element was trade and commerce. This was carried on with different countries. First to be considered is Phenicia, a

country that had acquired great wealth in trade with other countries and especially through the imports coming 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. For twenty years this exchange of commodities continued.

Another country that Solomon had commercial relations with was Egypt. To assure a friendly alliance he had married early in his reign an Egyptian wife, daughter of Pharaoh, and she stood pre-eminent among his wives. His principal articles of trade with Egypt were chariots and horses. He not only brought these for his own use, which was considerable, but he seems also to have acquired them and then sold them to the Hittites and Arameans.

For other luxuries of life the means of supply came through maritime commerce with Ophir. Here again Hiram, king of Tyre, became valuable to him for he helped him in building the ships that were to sail from Ezion-geber to bring gold from Ophir. This indicated that they were traveling as far as India; moreover, the commodities brought back bear out this fact, for ivory, apes and peacocks were among the imports.

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

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#### IV. Cultural Developments

In connection with the visit of the queen of Sheba, she was not only impressed with the splendor and magnificence of Solomon's court, but also with his wisdom. She came to prove him with hard questions, and he answered them all.

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

As David was the founder of Psalmody and the inspiration of that type of literature, in like manner Solomon was related to wisdom literature. Thereafter the wise man became an important factor in the life of the people. At the gates of the city he was often to be found giving instruction to all who would listen to his counsel (Prov. 1:21; Eccl. 10:12; Jer. 18:18).

Wisdom, however, was used among the Hebrews with greater range than we are accustomed to employ the term. At times it was personified and regarded as divine, yet more frequently it remained on the human plane. Here it might be either theoretical or practical, but generally it was practical. Further, in the practical sphere its scope was considerable. It included craftsmanship; deductions from observing life, or, in other words, what might be denominated discretion or prudence; and more particularly the knowledge and understanding of virtue, that is, ethics.

Proverbs -- Representing the Solomonic culture, the Book of Proverbs stands pre-eminent. 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. Moreover 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 considerable continuity of thought and the literary form frequently assumes that of the sonnet.

The rest of the book consists principally of proverbs expressed in a distich, very often with the second line in contrast with the first. These are, however, interspersed with a number of epigrams, and in the sayings of Agur there is a riddling element with a peculiar form known as the number sonnet, while the words of King Lemuel, which have as their theme the virtuous woman, fall into 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 that 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. Then there are reiterating themes, such as the danger of pride, the sins of the tongue and more than any other is the unfortunate state of the fool set forth, the fool in this case being one without wisdom, not one by constitution.

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

Ecclesiastes -- Closely related to Solomonic culture in a number of ways is the Book of Ecclesiastes. The approach to life's problems is carried on 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.

There is a testing of the various apparent values in life, such as wisdom, riches, honor, and all are found wanting. Moreover in the different surveys which the author made of life, many perplexities arose. He observed that the wise man and the fool both met the same fate (2:14-17), that wickedness often stood in the place of judgment (3:16f), and that the righteous man and the wicked frequently fared alike (8:14), and folly was elevated to dignity, that oppressions abounded and that skill aroused envy; these with numerous others troubled him.

While for a time it would seem as if the writer would 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 let the mind be borne on 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) doing the work that falls to his lot (9:7-10). Moreover the most important duty is to fear God and keep His commandments.

Job -- As the Book of Job belongs to 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 theological tenet of the day, namely, that rewards



are meted out in this life and consequently a righteous man will be prosperous and a wicked man shall suffer the fate of adversity.

In view of this theological postulate the friends of Job charged him with sin when they saw the sore evils that befell him. Job, however, being conscious that he had not rashly denied Jehovah, even though he was sorely beset and mentally bewildered, steadfastly maintained his innocence.

Thus through three cycles of speeches the battle raged, each side unrelentingly holding its position. Finally forth from the whirlwind Jehovah spoke 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. Furthermore unto Job was given twice as much as he had had before the many calamities came upon him.

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## V. 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 was great prosperity and a striking development 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.

Oriental Policy -- Fundamental in Solomon's method of government and underlying the specific weaknesses that developed was his Oriental policy. He sought to be like the nations around 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 the many imports the Hebrews became acquainted with new phases of self-indulgence and, from a nation of humble peasants, they 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 nobler class could share its enchantment. On the other hand, the poorer people were reduced to practical serfdom. The heavy taxes brought many to penury and further, there was the practice of forced labor. This was another defect in Solomon's rule.

Solomon had acquired from his father great resources; these his father had accumulated by energy and hard work. But Solomon spent them lavishly and also the great sums that he himself obtained through mining which he carried on at Ezion-geber and from trade and commerce. These resources were augmented by heavy taxes. But his lavish expenditures consumed them all, and he left to his successors a discontented people and a depleted economic situation. His Oriental policy had been his undoing.

Not only was this policy economically fatal, but also spiritually. His marriages with many foreign women brought into the land all forms of idolatry, and thus, while the worship of Jehovah was carried on with great magnificence, the groundwork was being laid for the worship of idols

which so persistently asserted itself at periodic intervals throughout the remaining history of the nation.

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

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#### 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.

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#### 05 -- A KINGDOM DIVIDED

When Solomon died and his son, Rehoboam, came to the throne, the people requested 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 hauteur saying that whereas his father had chastised them with whips, he would chastise them with scorpions.

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#### Ephraim, "Joined To His Idols"

The leader of the popular assembly that made the appeal to Rehoboam was Jeroboam who previously because of his ability had been in charge under Solomon of the work of the house of Joseph, but when a prophet had intimated to him that he would be ruler over ten tribes after the death of the king and the fact thereof had reached the attention of Solomon, he had been obliged to flee, taking refuge in Egypt. Learning that Solomon had died he returned again to his home and came as leader of the people on this occasion. When the reply from Rehoboam was made known to the populace, the ten tribes disclaimed any inheritance in the house of David and seceded.

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## I. Religious Worship

With the Hebrew people there was a dual bond that held them together, the national and religious. Jeroboam realized that if there were not some form of religious worship instituted in his kingdom, he would lack one powerful uniting element; and moreover if they went up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice, the kingdom would return 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, and Bethel on the south. Furthermore, he made priests from among the people who were not of the tribe of Levi, and appointed a feast in the eighth month like the feast of the Passover in the first month in Judea.

While the worship of the golden calves was symbolic, the calves being images not idols, yet in time it became idolatrous. This evil beginning at the founding of the northern kingdom ever continued unto its end. No king ever departed from the sins of Jeroboam. They may have added thereto, but they never instituted a reform.

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## II. From Jeroboam To Omri

Founded by secession 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 were his sins.

Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, had reigned but two years, when he was conspired against by Baasha who usurped the throne and destroyed all the seed royal. His own reign extended for a period of twenty-four years during which time he was constantly in war with Judah. His son Elah reigned two years and was killed by Zimri. But Zimri, another usurper, ruled for only seven days.

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## III. The House Of Omri

When Zimri seized the throne, the army was besieging Gibbethon, a city of the Philistines, and they straightway made Omri, the captain of the host, king. Another division of the people chose Tibni, but those with Omri prevailed.

In the twelve years that Omri reigned over Israel, there are three things to be noted. The most important act was the purchase of the hill of Samaria and the establishment of the capital there. Hitherto the nation had had no particular capital. The king's own home city served as such. Now a central and well fortified place was henceforth to be the leading city.

Then came his wars. The Moabite stone tells of the oppression of Moab by Omri. On the other hand from an incidental reference (1 Kings 20:34) it can be inferred that he had war with the

Syrians and was obliged to make certain concessions to them in the way of cities in the land of Israel and streets in Samaria for Aramean traders.

Finally, just what is the import of the "statutes of Omri" (Micah 6:16) should be considered. This is somewhat uncertain, but it has been concluded that he reduced the worship of the golden calves to a regular formal system and demanded obedience on the part of all. The writer of Kings tells us that he did evil above all those before him. He does not intimate that it was a new form of evil, but would seem to suggest that it was an intensifying of evil already existent.

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

Like Solomon Ahab had a passion for building. He constructed a temple for the Tyrian 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 founded cities also.

The ability of Ahab consisted more especially in the capacity of a military leader. He met the Syrians and put them to rout, not only once but twice. But when the Syrian king sued for clemency, he granted it. This has been looked upon as another political move to consolidate the petty kingdoms against the powerful Assyrian nation, but the act met with prophetic disapproval.

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

The onward sweep of Baal worship in the kingdom was not to continue unchallenged. Forth from Gilead across Jordan came a stern, intrepid figure, Elijah the Tishbite. Appearing before Ahab, in the name of Jehovah he announced that there would not be "rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1). Then at the command of Jehovah he sought seclusion at the brook Cherith. When the brook dried up, he found refuge with the widow of Zarephath. After many days he came forth and met Obadiah who was going through the land searching for water. Through Obadiah Elijah sent a message to the king and then went to meet him himself. Coming into the presence of Ahab, he proclaimed that this evil had come because of the sin of Baal worship and challenged the prophets of Baal to meet him on Mount Carmel.

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

But Jezebel, the wicked queen, was not to be defeated thus; and although the rain broke on the famine stricken land in abundance, she pursued Elijah relentlessly, threatening to take his life as he had the prophets of Baal. He fled to Mount Horeb and hid in a cave, being disheartened over the issue. The word of the Lord, however, came unto him with encouragement and commissioned him to go forth and journey to Syria anointing Hazael as king over that country and Jehu as king over Israel while Elisha was to be anointed as prophet to succeed himself.

While hitherto in the relationships between the northern and southern kingdoms there had been enmity, Ahab established a new policy and entered into a friendly alliance with Jehoshaphat. When the king of Judah paid a royal visit to the north, Ahab suggested that they unitedly go to battle against Ramoth-gilead which was still in the hands of the Syrians. Jehoshaphat was somewhat reluctant. He would not listen at all to the four hundred prophets that Ahab called, but inquired whether there was not another prophet, a prophet of Jehovah. Micaiah came, but his message did not betoken good for Ahab. Nevertheless the kings went forth to battle; but it was the last for the Israelite king, for he was mortally wounded.

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 and meeting different issues, his ministry was more of a pastoral type.

Elisha first appears when he was accompanying Elijah as the latter was about to complete his work. Then returning after his master had ascended into heaven, he smote the waters of Jordan and they receded at his command. His various works indicate a heart solicitous for the welfare of the people. He healed the waters that caused the land of the city to miscarry. He multiplied the widow's oil and raised the Shunammite's son. He healed the deadly pottage for a school of the prophets and fed a hundred men. Then there was the notable instance of the healing of Naaman. Moreover another school of the prophets received his help when they were undertaking a building project, for a man lost his axe head in the water and Elisha made the iron to swim.

In connection with the life of Elisha there are a number of references to the schools of the prophets as we have noted. This order had been founded by Samuel when the priestly line had become decadent. Samuel himself had been head of 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 besought him, he replied that not only would there be a supply of water, but moreover they would triumph over the Moabites. Then another time the Israelites were in distress for the Syrians were invading the land and Samaria was being besieged until the famine was sore in the city. The king, distraught in the situation, threatened the life of Elisha, but from the prophet came the calm reply that on the morrow supplies would abound. The invading Syrians fell into a panic and fled leaving everything. Whereupon the Israelites went out and plundered the camp. Thus in both instances did Elisha's prophecy come true.

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## II. Dynasty Of Jehu

Two of the commands given unto Elijah while he was in the cave of Horeb had never been carried out, and his successor Elisha was the inheritor of these commands as well as the prophetic spirit of his master. The first of these was the anointing of Hazael, king of Damascus, and the second Jehu king of Israel. The first Elisha performed himself, but the second he deputized a prophet to perform.

Jehu -- In the succession of Jehu to the throne it was again a case of the captain of the host rising in 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 the ominous denunciation. From that position he had risen until he was head of the army and was leading the forces in the siege of Ramoth-gilead; Jehoram, the king, having returned to Jezreel to be healed of wounds that he had received in battle.

When Jehu was anointed, the army straightway gave their allegiance, but in instituting a revolt he used only a small bodyguard. Riding to Jezreel, before he could reach the gates of the city, Jehoram and king Ahaziah of Judah, who was visiting him, came forth 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 undaunted Jezebel. At his command the eunuchs threw her down, and she was trampled under foot. The rest of the family of Ahab met death at the hands of the elders who had brought them up in Samaria. This also was instigated by Jehu. Likewise did he slay the nobles of Judea, the brothers of Ahaziah, who were coming to visit the royal household of Jehoram.

But the destruction of the seed royal was not Jehu's only gruesome work of purgation. He gave command 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. Then bidding the soldiers to take care that no worshiper of Jehovah was present, the sacrifices were offered, and thereupon the house was surrounded, and all the worshipers of Baal slain. Because of this expurgation of the land of Baal worship, Jehu received the promise that his sons should reign to the fourth generation.

As for 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 we learn regarding further foreign connections. He paid tribute to the king of Assyria, evidently thinking that this was the most advantageous way to keep off the invader.

Jehu's Sons -- During the reign of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, the attacks of Syria continued, then came a respite. The sacred narrative does not tell us how this came to pass, but we learn from profane history that the Assyrian monarch had made an invasion into Syria making the king subject to him. Then under Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, further successes were gained by Israel, and the cities that had previously been ceded to Syria were returned.

With the Syrians thus brought into subjection, the way was opened for further conquest under Jeroboam, the following king. He restored the borders of Israel from the entrance into Hamath to the Dead Sea, thus releasing the territory east of Jordan from its long standing subjugation to Syria.

In the narrative of Kings, the account of the reign of Jeroboam is very brief, but turning to the Prophet Amos who, though a native of Judah, prophesied in Israel, we find 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 hearken and bade him go back to Judah and there eat bread, that is, obtain his living. He was not to prophesy at Bethel, the king's sanctuary.

While Jeroboam the second had a long reign of forty-one years, yet 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.

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## V. Disintegration

With the close of the dynasty of Jehu the kingdom fell into the hand of one military adventurer after another. Shallum, having smitten Zechariah, reigned only one month, and he in turn was slain by Menahem.

The fact that Menahem retained the rule for ten years and handed on the kingdom to his son was due to several reasons. First the hereditary enemy on the north, Syria, had been weakened by an Assyrian invasion. Then Menahem sought to placate Pul, a later monarch who had usurped the dominion in Assyria, by paying him tribute. Furthermore, in his own kingdom Menahem ruled with an iron hand, and even though he had to levy a tax to pay the necessary tribute, yet he was able to hold the reins of government even over the lawless soldiery. His son, Pekahiah, however, ruled only two years and was conspired against by Pekah.

During the reign of Pekah, the Assyrian invader made heavy inroads into the kingdom. He annexed the land of Galilee and the territory east of the Jordan, taking the people captive to Assyria so that the dominion was now reduced to the central portion around Samaria.

Pekah having fallen prey to the conspiracy of Hoshea, the latter ruled in his stead. When the Assyrian monarch came against the land, Hoshea succeeded in buying him off by payment of tribute, but a little later he entered into a league with Egypt. So when Shalmaneser, the next ruler on the throne of Assyria, became cognizant of this, he made an invasion, took Hoshea prisoner, and besieged Samaria. At the end of the three years the city was taken, and the Israelites were carried

into captivity. Moreover from Assyria people were brought to colonize the land, and thus a mongrel population grew up in central Palestine.

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 later days we have the message of Jonah to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and the warnings of Hosea to Israel. This last prophet, with his own heart broken by tragic home conditions, the more readily understood the yearning of Jehovah for His people. He delineates the moral and social conditions of the time, the sordid intemperance, the breaking of faith, stealing and killing. He denounces their trust in alliances with Assyria and then Egypt. He pours out his heart in entreaty that they may return unto Jehovah.

So intense was Hosea's sorrow for the iniquities 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."

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#### Judah, A Lamp Always For David

While the northern kingdom had an ever changing kaleidoscope of dynasties, the southern maintained a son of the house of David on the throne according to the word of Jehovah spoken by Ahijah, "That David my servant may have a lamp always before me in Jerusalem" (1 Kings 11:36, R.V.). On the other hand there was a changing attitude in religious policy. From the days of Solomon, when along with the worship of Jehovah the rites for foreign gods were introduced, two parties were existent at court; one in favor of the true worship and the other inclined to idolatry. Whichever party succeeded in obtaining influence over the king determined the trend of that particular reign.

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#### I. Rehoboam And His Son

After the ten tribes had seceded, Rehoboam sought to unite the kingdom once again by declaring war against Israel, but this met with reproof from the Prophet Shemaiah, so he desisted. Thereupon he began to fortify his own country, building cities for defense in Judah, storing the strongholds with military forces and food supplies, also placing military equipment in every city.

From the religious standpoint the kingdom was strengthened in that from the northern tribes the priests and Levites, who had been displaced from service by the appointment of priests from the laity, resorted to Judah and Jerusalem. So likewise did all who desired to seek Jehovah. Yet as the days went by, Rehoboam indulged more and more in idolatrous worship, and many of the people followed in this respect.



After several years of peace, Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against the land with a large host. Seizing the fortified cities, he drew near to Jerusalem. Thereupon the Prophet Shemaiah admonished the king that it was because they had forsaken Jehovah, that this evil had befallen them. Then Rehoboam and the people humbled themselves and they were granted some deliverance, but the treasures of the house of Jehovah and of the king's house were taken.

When Abijah became king upon the death of his father, he opened war against Jeroboam. It has been conjectured that he had in mind once more uniting the kingdom as Rehoboam had sought to do. While he was victorious in the battle, yet he seemed to have accomplished only a weakening of his northern rival.

Both Rehoboam and his son reflected the evils that came in through the many heathen wives that Solomon had. 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.

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## II. Two Religious Reformers

With the coming of Asa to the throne of David, a monarch of another type had assumed control. He began a thorough reformation, removing the various forms of idolatrous worship and calling upon the people to seek Jehovah.

Not only did he fortify the nation religiously, he also strengthened it from a military standpoint by building fortified cities and organizing a large army. All this he did during a long period of peace that prevailed 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 the land with a huge host. Then did Asa cry unto the Lord, and deliverance was granted; moreover the inhabitants of Judah took away much booty.

Being encouraged by Azariah the prophet after this victory, Asa made another campaign against the idolatrous abominations. Gathering the people from Judah and Benjamin, being joined also by some from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon, they made a sacrifice unto the Lord from the booty that had been taken. Furthermore they entered into a covenant to seek Jehovah "with all their heart and with all their soul." In this second campaign against idolatry, he removed the queen mother, Maachah, who had been the evil genius of the two former reigns.

At this time Baasha, the reigning king of Israel, adopted a new policy against his southern neighbor. The move was to shut off commerce and trade by closing the highway at Ramah. Instead of relying upon Jehovah as he had done previously, Asa sought help from Benhadad, king of Damascus, and this Syrian king true to the attitude of Syria at all times, namely, one of hostility to Israel, availed himself of the opportunity to attack some of her cities, so she left off building Ramah. Asa on the other hand received a worthy reproof from the Prophet Hanani, but instead of humbling himself, he became angry and shut the seer up in prison. Furthermore he oppressed some

of the people. Thus a king who had so 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 to advance the worship of Jehovah by taking away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah, but by sending princes and Levites through all the cities of Judah to teach the law unto the people. Because he sought Jehovah, his kingdom was established, and he was blessed with riches and honor.

As had been the policy of his predecessors, he maintained a strong military position. He not only placed forces in the fortified cities that were regularly thus garrisoned, but he was especially careful to man the disputed frontier towns on the north. This last move seemed to indicate that he was somewhat apprehensive regarding Israel. Moreover in Jerusalem he kept a large army.

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

Feeling no doubt that from a political standpoint an alliance with Israel was more advantageous than an attitude of enmity, he paid a visit to Ahab in Samaria. It was on this occasion that he went up to battle at Ramoth-gilead and nearly lost his life. For this alliance he was reproved by Hanani, the prophet. Receiving the rebuke in meekness, however, he turned his attention again to the furthering of the worship of Jehovah among the people.

In the improvements which he made, Jehoshaphat established a new form of administration of justice. Throughout the land in the fortified cities he appointed judges and at Jerusalem he had a final court of appeal. The judges in the outlying districts appear to have been laymen, but the court at Jerusalem was composite, consisting of Levites, priests and heads of the fathers' houses. 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 children of Mt. Seir in an attack upon Judah. This was the only aggression from outside forces. Jehoshaphat took the matter to Jehovah in prayer and received an assurance through Jehaziel that victory would be theirs even without fighting. With songs of praise and rejoicing they went forth to the camp of the enemy and reaching a place of vantage where they could view the battle lines, they discovered that only dead men were there. The enemy had fought among themselves and slain many. So great was the booty taken that it required three days to carry it away.

Once more Jehoshaphat joined in alliance with the king of Israel. This time he entered into a compact with Ahaziah to make ships to go to Tarshish. Again the word of the prophet came in rebuke, and moreover the ships were destroyed.

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

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### III. Baal Worship In The Land

According to the policy so often followed by Oriental monarchs, Jehoram upon coming into power, slew all his brothers that he might not have a competitor. Then religiously he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, because, as the chronicler charges, "He had Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab to wife." Further he sought 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 for Baal, that afterward was destroyed by the people in the reign of Joash, was built. Because of these transgressions Elijah the prophet sent him a warning that an evil disease would befall him.

Various misfortunes overtook Jehoram. The Edomites and Libnah revolted, and the Philistines and Arabians made an attack. Then according to the word of the prophet, he became the victim of a sore disease.

When Jehoram died, his youngest son, Ahaziah, was made king, for the Arabians had come into the land and had slain all of the others. Like his father he was under the influence of the domineering Athaliah and in consequence walked in the ways of the house of Ahab. His reign, however, was brief. Going to Jezreel to visit Jehoram, the king of the northern kingdom, he was slain by the indomitable Jehu.

Thereupon when both her husband and son were dead, Athaliah herself seized control slaying, as she thought, all of the seed royal. But a daughter of the king stole away an infant son and 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 dedicated things "did they bestow upon the Baalim."

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### IV. The Temple Restored

When Jehoiada felt that the time had come to bring the inhabitants of Judea back again under the Davidic line, he consulted first with the soldiery, then the Levites, and finally the head of the fathers' houses. They made a covenant with the priest, whereupon Jehoiada disclosed his plan for the coronation. It was to take place at the time the courses were changed on the Sabbath.

With the sounding forth of the proclamation, "Long live the king," at the coronation services, Athaliah in her palace heard the rejoicing and came hurriedly to the temple. Whereupon seeing what had taken place, she cried out, "Treason! Treason!" They would not slay her within the temple precincts, but as soon as she reached the gate of the king's house, they fell upon her.

Jehoiada straightway made a covenant with the people that they should serve Jehovah, and the first expression of that allegiance was the destruction of the temple of Baal. Thus was brought to an end the worship of this heathen god in Judea.

The next step in the religious work of reformation was the reinstatement of the regular sacrifices with the appropriate musical services. Moreover extensive repairs were undertaken in connection with the temple, and equipment for its services in the way of vessels of silver was replenished.

Throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada King Joash served Jehovah, but when this loyal priest died, the princes came unto the king and by their persuasive words induced him to turn to idolatry. So complete was his defection that although Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, came with a word of admonition, he would not hearken, but gave command that he be stoned even within the temple court.

Not only was there this sad blot upon Joash' reign, but adverses followed. The Syrians came up to Jerusalem and despoiled it. Finally his own servants conspired against him and slew him.

The son of Joash, Amaziah, like his father was rather complex in his religious attitude. He heeded the word of the prophet which bade him not to take the military contingent from Israel in his battle against Mount Seir; but after the victory, he did obeisance to the gods of that country.

Another fatal mistake on the part of Amaziah was his rash act in making war with Israel. As a result he lost the treasures of the house of God and of the king's house.

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## V. In The Days Of A Great Statesman Prophet

While in the period that follows there were kings that ranked as high as ever sat on the throne of Judea, yet one figure towered above them all -- 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, then during the reign of Jotham, he carried on his prophetic work. When Ahaz was face to face with an invasion from the north, Isaiah made his debut as a statesman, and finally in the reign of Hezekiah, he stood forth stalwart and true to his God and to his nation at the time of the western Assyrian campaign.

With the coming of Uzziah to the throne of Israel, Judah rose to a place of prominence among the petty principalities of the Mediterranean coast. Hitherto Israel had been in the ascendancy of the two Hebrew kingdoms; but, although at this time Jeroboam the second was reigning in the north and thus that kingdom was at its peak in wealth and extent, Judah also ranked high. Edom was conquered, and the port of Elath on the Red Sea restored. 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 upon the high places. Nevertheless, since Uzziah did set himself to seek Jehovah, God made him to prosper.

Within his kingdom he made many improvements. He built 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 hewing out cisterns and fostering husbandry.

While there were many points of strength, yet certain weaknesses appeared. In the first place he assumed the prerogative of the priests, and for this he was smitten with leprosy so that his son had to act as regent. Then certain economic evils spread abroad. 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 depicted to us in the first chapters of Isaiah's prophecies. Jotham made the Ammonites tributary and within his own country he fortified cities in the mountains and built towers in the forests. At 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 stood face to face with this combination of kings in the north, and evidently he felt he must look well to the water supply; for it was as he was going forth to the conduit of the upper pool that Isaiah met him. The prophet laid down the principle of trust in Jehovah in this hour of distress, but Ahaz would not be committed.

Religiously Ahaz stands in contrast to his two predecessors. As one writer describes the conditions, "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 disasters. He was overcome by the Syrians and the Israelites. Then the Edomites and Philistines invaded his country. This induced him to seek aid from the Assyrians taking treasures out of the temple, his own palace and those of the princes; but the Assyrians helped him not.

When Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz, he reopened the house of Jehovah, cleansing it and rededicating it. Thereupon he kept a Passover Feast. This institution had been neglected down through the history. There is no written record of the keeping of the Passover since the one that was 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 worship, the priests and Levites ministering according to their courses. Further, he commanded the people to bring portions for the priest and Levites and to this command he received a most hearty response.

Besides the dominating influence of Isaiah in all these reform movements there was also a younger contemporary of that prophet, 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 expropriation of the peasant holders from their lands, the perversion of justice and the moral corruption.

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

The great foreign event of his 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 bade his people to trust in Jehovah, but the dissolute nobles in Jerusalem would not hearken and persisted in making a covenant. Sennacherib advanced and encamped at Lachish, sending his messengers to the very gates of Jerusalem. Both the king and Isaiah gave themselves to prayer and most miraculously were they delivered.

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

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## VI. Idolatry Again

When Manasseh came into power, there was a complete reversal regarding religious policy. The party favoring idolatrous worship was once more in the ascendancy. "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 that there was 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. Thereupon he was allowed to return to Jerusalem and he removed the idols and altars from the temple and bade the people seek Jehovah.

The reign of Amon, son of Manasseh, was brief, devoted to idolatry, and met an untimely end. The transgressions of his father, though repented of, left their heritage to the son.

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## VII. The Final Reform

With the death of Amon, a young child of eight became heir to the throne. No doubt it was a providence for the kingdom that Amon did not live longer, for his corrupt tendencies might have been transmitted to his son. It is quite possible that it was through his mother's influence that Josiah began to seek Jehovah as he became king. Then four years later he initiated an attack upon the

idoltrous forms of worship. Further in the eighteenth year of his reign he undertook the repairing of the house of Jehovah.

Besides the influence of his mother there were other pious spirits of the day who may have shared in the religious guidance of the young king, such as Hilkiah, the high priest, Shaphan the scribe and Huldah the prophetess. Moreover more particularly were there the well known prophets of the period. Early the messages of Zephaniah would bear 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" (Zeph. 3:3, 4).

In the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, coming thus before the repairing of the house of Jehovah, Jeremiah received his call to be a prophet. Consequently the early chapters of his prophecies, which are filled with reproaches because the people have forsaken Jehovah and abound in entreaty to return unto God, belong to this time. While 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 that the young king had undertaken.

In repairing the temple the Book of the Law was found. When it was read before the king, he became troubled lest the words of wrath upon disobedience come to pass. But when the prophetess was consulted, she made reply that since the king had humbled himself, the vials of wrath would not be outpoured in his day, though they would surely follow in due season. Then did the king assemble the elders of the people at Jerusalem and he read the law to them. Moreover he made a covenant with them to walk in the commandments of the Lord. He also kept a great Passover Feast.

A period of thirteen years of silence follows in the account of Josiah's reign, then he appears as the antagonist of the king of Egypt. This latter king evidently was journeying along the coast route toward Carchemish where he intended to join forces with the Babylonians. He had no quarrel with the king of Judah and sought to dissuade him from coming to battle. But Josiah, for some reason which is not made known, though possibly because he feared lest his own people would be endangered, engaged in battle, was wounded and carried home to Jerusalem to die.

There was great mourning for this righteous king; especially did Jeremiah mourn, as did also all the singing men and singing women chanting their dirges. No other king among those who sat upon the throne of Judah had defended the worship of Jehovah more valiantly than he.

Before leaving this period we should note the presence 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 considerable prophetic activity.

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## VIII. 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 straightway placed Jehoahaz on the throne. Why they chose the second son, we are not told. But Necho, the king of Egypt, feeling that he was the 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. From him a heavy tribute was demanded by the king of Egypt, and for a while, with the payment of the tribute, all went well politically, but not so religiously. Early in the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah proclaimed that unless they repented of the existent evils, the house of Jehovah would come to the same fate as did the place of worship at Shiloh. Some of the leaders of the people among the princes, priests and prophets would have put Jeremiah to death for this statement, but certain of the elders interceded for him and his life was spared.

On another occasion, Jeremiah being in prison and consequently not being able to go forth, wrote his admonitions on a roll and sent them by Baruch. These were read before the princes; and when the king heard about them, 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 besides Jeremiah lived at this time -- 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 Jehovah came to him that the Babylonians would be the instruments in Jehovah's hands to punish the people, but he wondered how God in His providence could use this wicked and rapacious nation. Yet when the reply came that ultimately judgment would also fall on them, he rose in faith over the perplexities of his mind and rejoiced in the Lord.

Once more a Babylonian army crossed to the west and joined battle with the Egyptians at Carchemish. The Egyptians were put to rout. Then the petty kingdoms on the western front were forced to give tribute to Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar, the commander of the army, was called home because of the death of his father and was detained some time setting in order his royal household. Therefore some of these kings revolted, Jehoiakim taking the lead. After seeking to subdue them by other means, Nebuchadnezzar came, seized Jehoiakim and carried him captive to Babylon. At this time Daniel and his companions were also taken captive, as well as treasures from the house of Jehovah (Daniel 1:1-3).

Jehoiachin, the 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. It included the royal household, seven thousand warriors and a thousand craftsmen and smiths. Moreover there was a further plundering of the house of Jehovah, and treasure was taken from the king's house.

Thereupon Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah, the third son of Josiah, king. During his reign Jeremiah became a very prominent person. There were two factions in Jerusalem. He 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 (Jer. 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. Straightway Nebuchadnezzar 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 them not to be deceived, for the Babylonian army would come again. But the princes were wroth with him. They felt that their position relative to the Chaldean power had now been vindicated, and 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 Jehovah, to which Jeremiah gave the warning, as he had done before, that he would be taken captive to Babylon. Jeremiah besought the king not to return him to the dungeon, so he was left in the court of the guard. The princes, however, feeling that he was breaking down the morale of the people by his insistence that captivity was inevitable, demanded that he go back, thereupon Zedekiah, weakly yielding, allowed them to put him in "the dungeon of Malchijah, the king's son, that was in the court of the guard" (Jer. 38:6, R.V.). But when one of the eunuchs of the king's house interceded, the king had him brought forth.

True to the prophecy of Jeremiah the King of Babylon returned to besiege Jerusalem. The famine in the city became great, and driven to desperation the army and the king sought to escape by making a breach in the walls, but the Chaldeans pursued, overtaking the king in the plains of Jericho. Thereupon the sentence of judgment followed; his sons were slain in his presence, his eyes were put out, and he was bound in fetters and taken to Babylon. Moreover the walls of the city were broken down, and Jerusalem was left as an heap. The inhabitants were taken away captive. Even in the whole land of Judea only the poorest were left, and these were not taken that there might be some 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 depicts to us in the Book of Lamentations.

With the fall of the city of Jerusalem the Hebrew people ceased to be a nation. Out of bondage had they come; and with the blessing of Jehovah upon them they had built up a kingdom that the nations had looked upon with wonder when it was at its height. But forgetting God who had brought them forth, they worshipped 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).

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## 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.

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## 06 -- RISING FROM CAPTIVITY

While the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed and the nation had ceased to be, still the Hebrew people remained with all of their traditions. Many of them might forget, but others remembered Zion and the promise that they should dwell again within its walls.

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### The Remnant In Judea

When all the work of despoiling the city and the land had been completed, and the band of captives was ready to march, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, at the command of Nebuchadnezzar, released Jeremiah, telling him that he might choose whether he would go to Babylon or remain in Judea under Gedaliah, the governor that had been appointed. Jeremiah chose to remain.

Entering upon his office, Gedaliah comforted the people exhorting them not to fear the Chaldeans but to serve the king. He would protect them. Then Jewish refugees from Moab, Ammon and Edom returned. He established headquarters at Mizpah and bade the people dwell in the cities that they had chosen and gather the harvest.

But a conspiracy instigated by the king of Ammon was formed against Gedaliah, and although warned concerning it, he did not credit the report. So falling a prey to Ishmael, the accomplice of the king, he was slain. Moreover Ishmael carried away captive all of the people that were in Mizpah. Then, however, Johanan, one of the captains of the forces, heard of the evil wrought by Ishmael and, making an attack, delivered the people.

Thereupon the people became afraid to live in Judea and they came to Jeremiah that he might inquire for them of Jehovah suggesting that they considered that they would be safer if they should go down into Egypt. Receiving word from Jehovah, Jeremiah told them that if they would remain in the land, they would be secure, but if they should go to Egypt, famine and the sword would follow them. Despite the fact that they had pledged themselves that they would do whatever Jehovah said, they charged Jeremiah that he had spoken falsely, and set their faces to go to Egypt. So Johanan and all the people took their journey thither.

Once again the word of the Lord came to them 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 would they be consumed, and thither 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 had fallen on 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. Moreover he made a special contribution to spiritual religion in his delineation of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

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## In A Foreign Land

While there is no comprehensive account of the captives by the waters of Babylon, from narratives of individual lives and incidental references, we can reconstruct somewhat the conditions. Life appears to have followed its normal trend with the varying vicissitudes that ever attend it.

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## I. The Priest Prophet

A unique and prominent figure in the early days of captivity was Ezekiel, the priest prophet. He had grown up in Jerusalem at the time when Jeremiah was the leading prophetic spirit and no doubt was influenced by his teachings and his life. Then he was carried away captive with many others of high standing in the reign of Jehoiachin, and a colony seems to have been formed at the River Chebar in Babylon. Here it was that 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 impending disaster because of the sins and iniquities of the people, Ezekiel was reiterating the same in Babylon. He used object lessons in the form of symbolical-typical acts to vitalize the truth. We see him portraying the city of Jerusalem on a tile and then laying siege to it. Then he foretold her desolation. To him was vouchsafed a vision of the abominations wrought in Jerusalem and he announced the punishment that was to come in consequence. He was bidden to prepare his stuff for moving as one would in the time of siege and

he was to eat his bread with fear and quaking. He pronounces a woe upon the false prophets who disclaimed the danger and instead prophesied peace. Further he announced Babylon as the divine agent against Judah.

As regards 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).

Over against Ezekiel's announcement of impending catastrophe upon his own people because of their iniquities, he looked out into the future and beheld the restoration. The mountains of Israel were to be blessed and within the heart of the people would be a new spirit which would cause them to walk in the statutes of the Lord. Though they should lie as a valley of dry bones, yet would they be resuscitated, and the Spirit of the Lord would dwell in them. Central in this revelation 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. This time they were related to the temple. First he saw the gateway into the outer court, then the one into the inner court and thereafter the temple itself. Moreover he beheld the glory of the Lord coming from the east, and the divine presence filling the house. Further the ordinances for the house of Jehovah were revealed to him; that is, the laws concerning the priesthood, the feasts to be observed and the daily offerings. Finally he saw a stream of living water issuing from the temple, growing deeper and deeper and bringing life wherever it went. Then his vision concluded with the tribes restored to the land.

Being a member of the priestly order Ezekiel, in viewing the dispensation of spiritual life, saw it 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.

As with the other prophets Isaiah's thought took on a Messianic form. Jeremiah envisioned a "Righteous Branch" who would be king and like Ezekiel 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 Jehovah (4:2-6), and the child called on one occasion Immanuel (8:8) and on another "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6) Moreover there was the "Shoot out of the stock of Jesse" filled with wisdom and understanding (11:1-16). Finally transcendent above all stood the Suffering Servant, a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" who "was wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities" (Ch. 53).

It is, however, in the delineation of the age that was to come that the concepts of state appear in Isaiah more particularly than in the Messianic passages which are personal. "Zion, the city of beauty and peace," filled his thought. Transported down across the years in vision he

speaks from the standpoint of the captivity. To those thus separated from their native home he brings a word of consolation and comfort, "the glory of the Lord is to be revealed," Jehovah supreme in majesty and power is to come as "a mighty one." The idols that they have served are a vain thing. Now are Jehovah's people to be "a crown of beauty" and a royal diadem in the hand of their God. Moreover 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" (Isaiah 62:12).

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## II. Among The People

While there were some points of similarity between the captivity in Babylon and the bondage of Egypt, yet in many ways they were different. In both cases they lived in a community of their own, in Egypt in the land of Goshen and at Babylon 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 was likewise being done at the close of the days of bondage, yet, while the Hebrews probably assisted, they were not under taskmasters, and there is no allusion to persecution.

As instructed by Jeremiah the captive 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 again to Jerusalem.

Religiously they varied. Some no doubt continued their idolatrous practices. Tradition states 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 enunciated the principle of individualism in religion over against this complaint. Others inclined to mock at the prophetic warnings, and with haughtiness remarked, "Is he not a speaker of parables?" (Ezek. 20:49). Then again they sat disconsolate when asked to sing, replying, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:4). On the other hand there were those who, although they could not worship at the temple and offer sacrificial rites, 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.

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## III. In King's Palaces

While the great majority of the Jews in captivity passed their lives in the ordinary manner of the day, yet there were some who rose to positions of trust and power. There was Daniel, who, with his three friends, refused to drink of the wine and eat the dainties provided by the king, but excelled in wisdom above all of his magicians. He interpreted the king's dream when all of these failed, and thus it came to pass that the king made him 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. Further Daniel interpreted the vision of the tree for Nebuchadnezzar and the handwriting on the wall for the ill-fated Belshazzar. While through the plot of the satraps he was cast into the den of lions in the reign of Darius, yet being brought forth unharmed, he prospered through the rest of his reign and continued until the year of King Cyrus.

Then there was Esther, the queen, who interceded for her people and received the answer that the Jews would be allowed 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 the Jews rose to prominence among their captors and they were respected by the different sovereigns of the time. The genius of the Jew could not be hid, and wherever he went it shone forth.

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## Rebuilding Jerusalem

When Babylon, the glory of the Chaldean's pride, fell, the policy regarding subject peoples was changed. Since the days of Assyrian rule, the conqueror had taken the subjugated people and transported them to his own country where they lived in captivity. But when Cyrus the Persian came into power, he gave permission to the captive groups that they might return to their own land. In the case of the Jews, he not only gave permission, but he also returned the vessels of silver and gold that had been taken out of the house of the Lord.

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### I. The Temple Restored

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

Of those who did return one part were nationalists who no doubt had hopes that through the Prince Zerubbabel, a descendant of the royal house, who was now their leader, there might be a restoration of their nation; and the other part consisted of priests whose interest was the

re-establishing of the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, the city of Zion, the holy city, where for generations they had gathered at her altars to honor their God.

When their destination was reached, the heads of the fathers' houses made an offering to the Lord. Then when the seventh month arrived, they set up the altar and observed the Feast of Tabernacles. Whereupon for the building of the temple they sought for skilled labor and timber from their Phenician neighbors as they had done in the days of Solomon, but from their own company they selected Levites to have oversight of the work. When the foundation was laid, a great service of rejoicing was held.

Through hindrances at the hands of the people of the surrounding country the project was thwarted for a period of sixteen years. This long delay created indifference, and religious enthusiasm died out. Then in the fall at the feast of the new moon when many were assembled together 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 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. Moreover Zechariah's ministry with its stirring messages continued for several years thus constituting a source of inspiration as the work of rebuilding went on.

Under the impetus aroused by these prophets, Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest, began the work; but at the same time the governors beyond the river came and inquired who had given them a decree to build the house of God. Upon obtaining the information they wrote the same to King Darius who made search and found the decree that had originally been issued by Cyrus. Accordingly he sent word to these governors to let the work alone and furthermore whatever the elders of the Jews needed, they were to supply it from the king's tribute. Consequently after a period of four years the house of Jehovah was finished and dedicated. This again was occasion for great rejoicing.

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

The leader on this second occasion was Ezra, 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 and porters; then Levites and Nethinim were added later. The king and counselors not only gave official permission but also contributed toward an offering unto the temple which was increased through the freewill offerings of the people.

On the journey danger from bandits arose so Ezra proclaimed a fast and took precautions in dividing the treasure among twelve of the chief priests and ten helpers. Then they gave themselves

to prayer and fasting. Thereupon they continued on their way and arrived safely in Jerusalem. Straightway they offered upon the altar burnt offerings and sin offerings.

While Ezra had come under the appointment of the king, yet there had been no specification as to what his office was to be; his work was connected especially with the law of his God which "was in his hand." But upon his arrival at Jerusalem, those in charge there seemed to have recognized him as director of the affairs of the people.

After several months of residence, the princes came unto Ezra and related to him that the people had intermarried with the Canaanites and other foreign people. (This consciousness of wrong had been awakened, as suggested by one writer, through the circulation of copies of the law that Ezra had brought from Babylon). Not only had the people in general committed this sin, but even the rulers and priests were involved.

Greatly shocked by the situation Ezra sat confounded until the time of the evening sacrifice, then gave himself to prayer confessing the sins of the people. In the meantime a very great company had gathered around him weeping. Whereupon when he had finished his prayer, one from the group stood forth acknowledging the transgression and suggested that they make a covenant with their God to put away their foreign wives. Then Ezra demanded that the priests, Levites and all Israel swear that they would do according to this word. Moreover a proclamation was issued that there was to be a general assembly of the people within three days, and if anyone failed to appear, his property was to be confiscated, and he was to be excommunicated.

As was commanded the people gathered at the appointed time, but the situation was too complicated to handle, so they chose princes who were 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 who were offenders, the four priests implicated were required to acknowledge their sin by making a trespass offering of a ram.

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## II. The Walls Rebuilt

A considerable period elapses before we hear of Ezra again, and we do not know what he was doing in the meantime. The supposition has been made that he returned to Babylon and there employed himself with his studies or was in the service of the 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 the palace, there was a young man who was cupbearer to the king, who received word through his brother that the city of Jerusalem was still in sore plight, the walls still a mass of debris as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar. Being troubled by the situation he made his prayer unto the Lord his God. The burden upon his heart left its traces upon his countenance, and when he came before the king, the monarch inquired the cause of his distress. Upon learning the reason, the king commissioned Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, appointing him as governor, also giving him letters to the provincial governors and a military escort for the journey.



After a brief respite following his arrival at the city, 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, however, revealed to him that the material for constructing the walls was to be found in the ruins, and the special need was for men.

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

But when the task was well started, the non-Jewish people around about came to fight against Jerusalem. This discouraged many of the workmen; so Nehemiah armed part of his men, and from that time on half wrought in the work and half held spears and swords.

With all of these difficulties to face, internal troubles of another nature arose. The people complained unto Nehemiah about the heavy demands made by the rulers. They had been forced to mortgage their houses, fields and vineyards, and moreover sell their daughters into bondage. Then Nehemiah protested against the rulers for the usury that they had exacted. As for himself from the time that 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 that had been sold into bondage. Whereupon through his reproof the rulers restored the houses and fields.

The enemies of the Jews, failing by direct attack to carry out their purpose to hinder the building of the walls, sought next by various forms of intrigue to ensnare Nehemiah, but through prayer and sagacity he was able always to avoid the pitfalls set for him. Thus it was that when the walls were finished, which required only fifty-two days, the nations around about feared for they perceived that the hand of God was upon the Jews.

After this task was accomplished, Nehemiah returned to the court of Persia leaving Hanani, his brother, and Hananiah, the governor of the palace, in charge of the city. He gave special direction for a watch over the city, for the number of the inhabitants 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 being assembled, asked Ezra to read to them the law. Finding written therein the ordinance for the Feast of Tabernacles for this month, they brought from the mountain olive branches and made for themselves booths, moreover they read from the book of the law each day of this feast. Then on the twenty-fourth day of the month which was a special fast day, they read again and with contrite heart confessed their sins. Moreover they made a covenant to keep the law of their God making mention of particular articles as those relating to mixed marriages, Sabbath observance, the Sabbatical year, the poll tax for the temple, the wood offering, the firstfruits, the firstborn and the tithes.

The next special event was the dedication of the walls. While these had been finished some 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).

Besides the outstanding feat of rebuilding the walls, Nehemiah carried out some other measures constructive on the one hand and reformatory on the other. He took care that tithes and offerings were brought for the priests and Levites, also 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 trafficking on that day; and finding mixed marriages once more existent, he instituted a purging. These tasks brought the work of Nehemiah to an end; heroically had he carried out his mission and amid many dangers and difficulties had brought it to a completion.

Before concluding this final period of Old Testament history, however, once more prophetic messages are to be heard. It has been conjectured that it was while Nehemiah was away that Malachi ministered to the people, for the evils denounced are similar to those reformed in the closing days of Nehemiah's work.

His prophecy opens with an assertion of God's love for the people and then continues by depicting 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 the tithes.

Thereupon concluding his message and the word of prophecy for the era of the Old Testament, Malachi gives the exhortation to remember the law of Moses and then proclaims the coming of Elijah the forerunner. Thus does prophecy in the old dispensation leave us at the point where the new dispensation opens.

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#### 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.

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## APPENDIX -- CHRONOLOGY

Regarding the Chronology as related to the Old Testament, there is Considerable diversity of Opinion respecting the exact dates, but as to the periods in general authorities are in agreement. The dates we are giving 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.

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.  
Fall of Jericho, 1400 B.C.  
The Judges 1360-1095 B.C.  
The United Kingdom 1095-940 B.C.  
The Northern Kingdom 940-721 B.C.  
The Southern Kingdom 940-586 B.C.  
The Great Assyrian Campaign, 701 B.C.  
Finding the Book of the Law, 621 B.C.  
Fall of Nineveh, 606 B.C.  
The Captivity 586-536 B.C.  
Fall of Babylon, 538 B.C.  
First Return to the close of Old Testament History 536-432 B.C.  
Rebuilding 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, 445 B.C.  
Second visit of Nehemiah, 432 B.C.

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THE END