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Great Old Testament Characters

Any Bible reader needs to be thoroughly familiar with the outstanding characters of Old Testament history. These great men, among them Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Nehemiah, are its soul and conscience, and their lives form fascinating links in the chronicle of human development. These were men who communed consciously with the Almighty. They caught glimpses of the divine nature and purpose. They heard God's voice when He spoke. They acted in consonance with His commands, and their actions had a strong impact on their people and on the mainstream of religious history.

The obedience of one man—Noah—to the divine command “Make thee an ark” preserved the spiritual seed of the woman of Genesis 3:15. The obedience of Abraham to the directive “Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will shew thee” started mankind on a search for truth with a new awareness of God's covenant relationship with man. Moses' compliance with God's command “Come now . . . that thou mayest bring forth my people . . . out of Egypt” resulted in a world being given the revelation of God's moral and spiritual law.

Though they reached great heights of spiritual insight and trust in God, these pioneers of faith were thoroughly human; their biographies, so clearly drawn by Old Testament writers, reveal not only their virtues but also their frailties and defects. “These characters are indeed specimen characters, models, as it were, for all time for the study of the Science of Man.”¹ They blazed a trail of faith which has quickened the pace of mankind's spiritual journey. They are our friends; and we cannot be too grateful that the strength of their faith and vision and the lessons of their lives have come down to us in our Bible.

Each character presentation contains (1) a list of the events of the man's life for quick reference; (2) a brief study of the man and his period of history; and (3) Scriptural passages that show the measure of the man. In presenting these characters in this manner, the history of the Old Testament is linked together and shows a continuous chain of growing revelation.

Gen. 2:6–5:5

*Adam: “make,” “produce,” “red,”
“ruddy,” “soil,” “ground”*

Adam, the Biblical name given first human being—according to second account of creation (Gen. 2), Adam is formed of the dust of the ground by Jehovah

Placed in the garden of Eden—forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

Lord God forms every living creature out of the ground—brings them to Adam that he may name them

Eve, Adam’s wife, is formed from Adam’s rib

The temptation—serpent deceives Eve—fall of man—serpent cursed

The seed of the woman (first promise of the Redeemer)

Mankind’s punishment

Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden

Adam’s sons: Cain and Abel—Cain slays Abel

Seth, third son, is born—“then began men to call upon the name of the Lord”

Adam’s days, 930 years

ADAM is the Scriptural name for the first human being, the person designated as the progenitor of the human race. He is identified with the fall of man, and stands, figuratively, for original sin.

Genesis sets forth two records of creation. A study of the sources reveals that they were drawn from two different documents: the first account (Gen. 1:1–2:4a) from the Priestly Code, the second (Gen. 2:4b ff.) from the Jehovistic Document. The second account “is written from the naive and primitive standpoint of legendary tradition, which dealt only with man’s reception of physical life.”² According to the first record, Elohim created; according to the second, Yahweh (Jehovah, Lord God) formed. (See pp. 145, 146.)

The name *Adam* first appears in chapter 2. It is, in the main, a collective noun pertaining to man, mankind, rather than to a single individual. Some consider this narrative of Adam an allegory; others look upon it as a literal account.

Formed by the Lord God out of “the dust of the ground,” who “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” man became a living soul. He was placed in the garden of Eden “to dress it and to keep it.” Adam was shown the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of the latter he was commanded not to eat, “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Here appears the first indication of a moral choice.

But Adam was alone. In the creation of the animal kingdom which followed there was found no “help meet for him,” so the Lord God “caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam” and from his rib He formed woman. This human pair, of the same flesh, differing from all other pairs, were one, and dwelt in Eden in a state of innocence.

The narration continues with the appearance of a talking serpent (“representing the spirit of revolt from God”³) to tempt, to deceive, and

to rob them of their innocence by the invitation to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent promised: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." They partook of the forbidden fruit; their eyes were opened, they discovered they were naked, and in fear and shame "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God." Here appears the first exercise of moral choice, of the human will to be obedient or disobedient, and the first faint stirrings of conscience.

On this sin of disobedience fell divine judgment and expulsion from paradise, but close upon this judgment came the promise of a Redeemer. This promise laid the foundation of the whole Biblical system of redemption, and gave to Adam and his posterity a hope of salvation (Gen. 3:15). "And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

All that this passage tells us is that this Redeemer will be a member of the Adamic race in need of salvation. . . . The nature of His person and work cannot be surmised by this passage and these are to appear step by step throughout the coming centuries. But we now know that He will be a member of our race, and the Biblical system will be the filling out and unfolding of this gracious promise.⁴

Adam named his wife Eve, "the mother of all living." Adam and Eve had three sons: Cain, Abel, and Seth. Cain means "a lance;" Abel means "a vapor," "a breath" (inspiration); Seth means "substituted," "appointed," "compensation." Cain, in jealousy, slew his brother Abel who had offered a more pleasing offering to Jehovah, the firstlings of his flock in contrast to Cain's fruit of the ground (see I Jn. 3:12). Eve bore another son, Seth, in whom the spiritual seed was renewed, "For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel." Seth lived to carry forward the Messianic line, for after the birth of Seth's son Enos, "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26).

Two genealogical lines are given in Genesis, one of Cain and the other of Seth. Cain's is a worldly line whose record ceases about the time of the Deluge. Salvation is to run in the line of Seth, for from this lineage was to come "the seed of the woman." In Luke's Gospel the human genealogy of Jesus is traced back to Enos, to Seth, and to Adam, showing the historical fulfillment of the original promise (see Genealogies, pp. 114, 224).

The Apostle Paul compared the first Adam to the last Adam, and contrasted the effects of the sin of Adam with the effects of the perfect obedience of Christ.

"The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven" (I Cor. 15:45, 47).

"(. . . if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:17-19).

A measure of the man

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

"Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God" (Gen. 3:8).

"I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:10).

"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12).

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:17-19).

"Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Gen. 3:23).

"If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom. . . ." (Job 31:33).

Gen. 5:28–9:29

Noah: "rest," "quiet," "comfort"

Noah, son of Lamech, a patriarch* tenth
in line of descent from Adam
through Adam's son Seth

The wickedness of the world

The Lord God purposes to destroy man
and all living creatures, "for it
repenteth me that I have made
them"

Noah, a preacher of righteousness, finds
grace

Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and
Japheth

Noah builds an ark at God's com-
mand—Noah's wife, his sons and
their wives, and two of every kind
of living creature go into the ark

The Flood—rain for forty days and forty
nights—ark rests upon Mount
Ararat—waters on earth a year and
ten days**—Noah sends forth a
dove three times

Noah and his family leave the ark—he
builds an altar and makes sacrifice
to the Lord

God's everlasting covenant established
with Noah and his seed, tokened
by a rainbow

Becomes a husbandman—plants a vine-
yard—becomes drunken—mocked
by his son Ham—Noah curses
Canaan, Ham's son—blesses Shem
and Japheth

His days, 950 years

*Patriarch: the father of a race, a family or
a tribe; a term particularly used of heads of
families in pre-Mosaic times.

**"A year of 360 days is implied in the
history of the Flood (Gn. 6–8), but no
satisfactory explanation has yet been given
of the scheme of years and chronology in
the genealogical account of antediluvian
times (Gn. 5)."⁵

NOAH

one of the patriarchs
of the pre-Mosaic period, was the son of Lamech and grandson of
Methuselah in the line of Seth, the Messianic line. He was associated with
the period of the Flood or Deluge.

The early narratives of Genesis, one of which pertains to Noah, were
woven from legends and traditions of a far-distant past enveloped in the
shadows of antiquity. These stories, recounted by word of mouth from
generation to generation around the campfires of a nomadic people, were
not set down in writing for many centuries. The story of Noah as the
hero of the Deluge is based upon ancient Babylonian legends.

It dates from at least B.C. 3000, and it would pass through a long course of
oral repetition before it reached the Hebrew form. And herein is seen the
religious value of the latter. The genius of the Hebrew race under Divine
inspiration gradually stripped it of all its crude polytheism, and made it the
vehicle of spiritual truth.⁶

The Bible states that the wickedness of man was great in the earth
but that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was "a just man
. . . and Noah walked with God." He begat three sons: Shem, Ham, and
Japheth. God said to Noah: "The end of all flesh is come before me. . . .
Make thee an ark . . . pitch it within and without with pitch . . . with
thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark,
thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of
every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort." Noah obeyed;
"according to all that God commanded him, so did he." The Deluge was
upon the face of the earth (the then-known world) for a year and ten
days (acc. to the Priestly Code, Gen. 7:11; 8:14).

The archeological findings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
verify the authenticity of the Biblical record with relation to the Flood.
Sir Charles Marston in his book *New Bible Evidence* states that attention
should be given to the evidence of the Flood, both in the cuneiform
writings of Babylonia and Assyria alluding to the Flood and in the actual
Flood deposits; that these deposits were found almost simultaneously by
Dr. Langdon's expedition at Kish near Babylon in 1928–1929 and by Dr.
Woolley excavating at Ur of the Chaldees, farther south, about half-way
between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. Dr. Woolley writes of his
discovery:

The shafts went deeper, and suddenly the character of the soil changed.
Instead of the stratified pottery and rubbish we were in perfectly clean clay,

uniform throughout, the texture of which showed that it had been laid there by water. The workmen declared that we had come to the bottom of everything, to the river silt. . . .I sent the men back to work to deepen the hole. The clean clay continued without change . . . until it had attained a thickness of a little over 8 feet. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped, and we were once more in layers of rubbish full of stone implements . . . and pottery. . . .

The great bed of clay marked, if it did not cause, a break in the continuity of history. . . .

No ordinary rising of the rivers would leave behind it anything approaching the bulk of this clay bank; 8 feet of sediment imply a very great depth of water, and the flood which deposited it must have been of a magnitude unparalleled in local history. That it was so is further proved by the fact that the clay bank marks a definite break in the continuity of the local culture; a whole civilization which existed before it is lacking above it and seems to have been submerged by the waters.

Taking into consideration all the facts, there could be no doubt that the flood of which we had thus found the only possible evidence was the Flood of Sumerian history and legend, the Flood on which is based the story of Noah.⁷

When the waters receded, the ark rested on Mount Ararat. Noah's first act, the building of an altar, was one of thanksgiving for the mercy of God in the protection and safety of himself and his family. In turn, God established His covenant with Noah and his seed (all mankind); promising that a like judgment would not be repeated and that the natural law of the seasons would be perpetuated: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." The rainbow became the token of this covenant. Noah is sometimes called the second father of the human race, for according to Scriptural history the whole earth was peopled with his descendants.

Noah became a husbandman and drank of the wine of his vineyard. Ham, entering his father's tent, found him drunken and naked, and told his brethren. Shem and Japheth looked not, but covered their father's nakedness. When Noah "awoke" from his intoxication and knew what Ham had done, he cursed Canaan (Ham's offspring) and blessed Shem and Japheth. Noah said, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."

Noah is seldom thought of as a prophet, yet his curse of Canaan foreshadowed the subjection of the Canaanites to the Israelites (descendants of Shem); and through Shem the Messianic line was to run. The blessing to Japheth foreshadowed the inclusion of the Gentiles (descendants of Japheth [Gen. 10:2-5]) in the blessings of the Messiah and his gospel.

The Apostle Peter, writing nearly twenty-five hundred years later, drew a lesson in patient trust and assurance of salvation from the life of the patriarch Noah:

" . . . when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:20, 21).

A measure of the man

"He [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed" (Gen. 5:29).

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8).

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9).

"According to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22).

"The Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1).

"Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it [the land], they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 14:14).

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

Gen. 11:27–25:10

Abraham: "father of a multitude"

Abram, son of Terah of the line of Seth—born in Ur of the Chaldees
 Marries his half sister Sarai
 Abram is called of God—God's covenant or promise of a land and a seed
 He journeys to Haran with Terah, Sarai, and Lot, his brother's son
 He journeys to Canaan, taking Sarai and Lot—builds altars at Shechem and Beth-el
 Driven by famine, he goes into Egypt—conceals his relationship to Sarai—sent out of Egypt by Pharaoh—returns to Beth-el
 Abram separates himself from Lot—God renews the promise of a land and a seed—Abram dwells at Hebron and builds an altar there
 Rescues Lot from captivity
 Abram is blessed by Melchizedek, king of Salem
 God renews the covenant—Abram is promised a son
 Sarai is barren—gives her handmaid Hagar to Abram—Hagar bears his son Ishmael
 Covenant is renewed thirteen years later—Abram's name is changed to Abraham; Sarai's to Sarah—circumcision is instituted as a token of the covenant
 Abraham is promised a son, Isaac, of Sarah—he entertains three angels
 His prayer for men of Sodom
 He sojourns in Gerar—he conceals from Abimelech his relationship to Sarah
 Isaac is born—Hagar and Ishmael expelled—Abraham's covenant with Abimelech
 The trial of Abraham's faith—the offering of Isaac
 Dwells in Beer-sheba—Sarah's death and burial
 Abraham obtains Rebekah as a wife for Isaac
 Abraham marries Keturah—she bears him six sons
 His days, 175 years

ABRAHAM (Abram) the

patriarch was the father and founder of the Hebrew nation. He is identified with the period which marked the inception of God's covenant with the Hebrews.

Abraham was in the direct line of Shem through Shem's son Arphaxad, and was thus in the natural line of the Messiah (see Genealogies, pp. 114, 224). Abram, as he was first called, was the son of Terah, born in Ur of the Chaldees. Abram married Sarai, his half sister; who was barren.

Genesis 12:1–3 records God's call to the nomad Abram and His covenant with him. How momentous was this call the centuries were to reveal. Upon his obedience lay the destiny of his race. God said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great . . . in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Abram left the moon-worshipping city of Ur and journeyed to Haran in Mesopotamia, where he lived till the death of his father. At the age of seventy-five he went to Canaan, taking with him Sarai, his nephew Lot whom he greatly loved, and vast possessions of flocks and herds. Finding famine in the land he went down into Egypt; expelled from Egypt by its Pharaoh, he came again into Canaan. There he and Lot separated. "The land was not able to bear them . . . for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together." Abram said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren." So Lot chose the plain of Jordan to the east, and Abram dwelt in Canaan at Hebron ("union," "association"). Though they parted in peace, this separation was a necessary step in the patriarch's progress, for the worldly propensities of Lot's character, as seen in Lot's subsequent history, were not to hinder the divine purpose for which Abram had been called. God's injunction, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred," had at last been fully carried out.

After the separation from Lot, God showed Abram the fullness of the land He had promised him, saying, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." (Note the prerequisite and the bestowal, "Lift up now thine eyes," and "all that thou seest.")

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews defines the ultimate purpose of Abram's call and the spiritual nature of his inheritance: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. . . . For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8,10).

When Abram was ninety-nine, God confirmed the covenant: "I am

the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. . . . As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. . . . And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee . . . all the land of Canaan" (Gen. 17:1, 4, 8). As the sign of this covenant circumcision was instituted. At this time also Abram's name was changed to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah. In the heat of the day three angels appeared to Abraham. He ran to meet them, entertained them, and these angels confirmed to Abraham and to Sarah the coming of their son.

The Noahic covenant had pertained to the family of mankind, but the covenant made with Abraham and his seed designated a people chosen out of this family of mankind, selected and set apart to forward the divine plan of redemption. (See *The Covenant between God and Men*, p. 148.)

The *covenant* (v.4) with Abraham is made the starting point of all Israel's religious history. As developed in the teachings of priest and prophet it has become one of the most fruitful of all religious ideas.⁸

The spiritual experience of Abraham and Sarah, implied in the change of names, is reflected in the promise and birth of a son, Isaac, to Sarah in her ninetieth year. Ishmael, Abraham's son by his concubine wife Hagar, was cast out at Sarah's word so that the legitimate son by promise would be the heir of the covenant (compare Gal. 4:23). Abraham was assured, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Chapter 22 of Genesis records the testing of Abraham in the offering of Isaac, a soul-searching trial of Abraham's faith. God said, "Abraham," and he answered, "Behold, here I am." And he was told, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering." Isaac was heir to the promises of the covenant, and to sacrifice this son would appear to nullify that covenant. Nevertheless Abraham's faith and loyalty endured. He "rose up early in the morning . . . and went unto the place of which God had told him"—a three-day journey to Mount Moriah. As he laid Isaac on the altar his hand was stayed by a voice from heaven, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . now I know that thou fearest [reverest] God, seeing thou hast not withheld . . . thine only son from me." His trust in God's goodness was rewarded, and his son's life was preserved. Lifting up his eyes he saw a ram caught in a thicket, and this he substituted as his sacrifice. He named the place Jehovah-jireh, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen [RV it shall be provided]." Again came the promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

As a result of the implicit faith and unswerving obedience of this patriarch his descendants became the people destined to bring forth the Messiah.

Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn. 8:56).

Paul taught that all who believe in Christ are Abraham's children and heirs of the Abrahamic covenant: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. . . . if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:16,29).

A measure of the man

"I [God] know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19).

"Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac" (Gen. 25:5).

"He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe. . . ." (Rom. 4:11).

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:20,21).

"And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb. 6:15).

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. . . . For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:9,10).

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. . . . Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17,19).

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?. . . And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Ja. 2:21,23).

Gen. 25:21–37:35; 42:1–50:13

Jacob: “heel-catcher,” “supplanter”

Israel: “having power” (as a prince)

Jacob, younger son of Isaac and Rebekah and twin brother of Esau—born near Beer-sheba

Jacob purchases valued birthright from Esau—later obtains the blessing of his father by deception—Esau threatens to slay Jacob

Jacob journeys to Padan-aram to obtain a wife—his vision at Beth-el—God confirms to him the Abrahamic covenant

He serves Laban, his uncle, seven years for his daughter Rachel—is deceived and given to wife her elder sister Leah—serves another seven years for Rachel

Jacob begets Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, of Leah; Dan and Naphtali of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid; Gad and Asher of Zilpah, Leah’s maid; Joseph of Rachel

His cunning policy and secret departure from Laban after twenty years of service

Jacob’s wrestling at Peniel—his name is changed to Israel—his friendly meeting with Esau.

Jacob’s sons avenge defilement of their sister Dinah

Jacob dwells at Beth-el—he builds an altar and God blesses him

Benjamin, Rachel’s second son, is born (Jacob’s twelfth)—Rachel dies in travail

Jacob’s favorite son, Joseph, is sold to merchants by his brethren and carried into Egypt—Jacob mourns

He twice sends his sons to Egypt because of famine in Canaan—they come before Joseph, now premier of Egypt

Jacob and his sons settle in Egypt

His blessings to his sons

He requests burial in Canaan

His days, 147 years

JACOB, a patriarch, was the second son of Isaac and Rebekah and the grandson of Abraham. He fathered the twelve tribes of Israel and was connected with the period which marked the beginning of the history of the Children of Israel.

Not only were the righteousness and great faith of his grandfather part of Jacob’s human heritage, but so also was the righteousness of his father Isaac, whose life shows an unfailing reliance on God and an obedience to the Abrahamic covenant renewed with him (Gen. 26:2–5). Isaac waited in faith for the coming of a son as his wife Rebekah remained barren for twenty years; but he entreated the Lord for her, and she conceived and bore twins, Esau the elder and Jacob the younger.

Before the birth of these children Rebekah had been told: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people . . . and the elder shall serve the younger.” This prophecy foreshadowed the rivalry between Esau and Jacob as brothers, and between their descendants as nations, Edom and Israel (Num. 20:20,21; II Sam. 8:14). Esau was “a cunning hunter, a man of the field.” Jacob was “a plain [quiet] man, dwelling in tents,” leading the life of a herdsman. “Isaac loved Esau . . . but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

The character of this patriarch is clearly portrayed, both his weaknesses and his strength, showing the inner conflict between the base desires of his nature and the inherent good. He shrewdly bought the birthright of the first-born from Esau, taking advantage of his brother’s momentary hunger (see First-born, p. 40). According to prophecy the birthright had been promised to Jacob, and would have fallen to him in a divinely natural way; but in his strong desire to possess it he went even further and employed fraudulent measures to deceive his aging father and obtain the paternal blessing which would confirm the birthright. Although Esau also received a blessing, he vowed to kill his brother.

Later Isaac confirmed the blessing to Jacob and charged him to take a wife from the daughters of Laban, his mother’s brother in Padan-aram. (Esau, at forty, had married two Hittite wives, “which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.”) Thus Jacob was sent beyond the reach of Esau’s hatred.

Journeying to Padan-aram (a region of Mesopotamia east of the Euphrates) Jacob stopped at Beth-el where he lay down to sleep. His rest was troubled, fleeing as he was from his own thoughts and from the wrath of Esau. But he was given new hope. In a vision he beheld a ladder “set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” He learned that he was not alone; that God was with him. Here at Beth-el God renewed the covenant he had made with Abraham and with Isaac.

Jacob faithfully served Laban for seven years that he might marry his younger daughter Rachel. "And they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." But on the wedding night Laban gave his elder daughter Leah to Jacob. He who had deceived now drew to himself deception. Jacob was later given Rachel, but for her he had to labor another seven years.

For twenty years Jacob served his uncle faithfully under rigorous conditions (Gen. 31:38–42), but after the birth of Joseph, his eleventh son and Rachel's first-born, he desired to return to his own country. Laban was loath to let him go because he had prospered through Jacob's labors. Only grudgingly did Laban accord Jacob his wages, but Jacob craftily multiplied his flocks and herds at Laban's expense and became wealthy. Finally, at God's command, Jacob departed with his family, fleeing secretly by night. Laban pursued, but God forbade him to harm Jacob and the two made a covenant of friendship.

"Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." Heartened, he sent messengers of reconciliation to Esau. But, still fearful of his brother's revenge, he spent a long night in prayer, and "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." In this spiritual experience his self-will yielded, his nature was changed and the true birthright became his through grace. The angel said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28). Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

"As the name was to the Hebrews the symbol or expression of the nature, the change of name is significant of the moral change in the patriarch himself; he is no longer Jacob the Supplanter, the Crafty one, the Overreacher, but Israel the Perseverer with God, who is worthy also to prevail": cp. Hos. 12:4.⁹

On the morrow the brothers were reconciled. Having seen God "face to face," he could now say to Esau, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me."

Leah gave Jacob six sons; her handmaid Zilpah gave him two; Rachel's handmaid Bilhah bore him two; and then Rachel, long barren, mothered his two favorite sons, Joseph and Benjamin (see also *The Twelve Sons of Jacob*, p. 150). These twelve sons of Jacob (Israel) headed the twelve tribes who became known as the Children of Israel or, collectively, as Israel—heirs of God's covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Nearly thirty years after his return to Canaan, and at a time when his son Joseph as prime minister governed Egypt, Jacob and his sons migrated to Egypt. Even as he went God assured him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again" (Gen. 46:3, 4).

At the close of his life Jacob blessed each of his twelve sons (see *Prophecies of Jacob to His Twelve Sons*, p. 152). The prophecy to his fourth son Judah was Messianic, designating the tribe of Judah as the one divinely chosen to bring forth the Messiah.

A measure of the man

"Jacob was a plain [ASV quiet] man. . . ." (Gen. 25:27)

"Thy brother [Jacob] came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing" (Gen. 27:35).

"Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me [Esau] these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing" (Gen. 27:36).

"Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not" (Gen. 28:16).

"Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Gen. 29:20).

"With all my power I have served your father [Laban]. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me" (Gen. 31:6,7).

"Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac . . . I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant. . . ." (Gen. 32:9,10).

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

"The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel" (Is. 9:8).

"He [the Lord] shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Is. 27:6).

Gen. 30:22–24; 37; 39–50

Joseph: “increaser,” “adding”

Son of Jacob and Rachel—born in Padan-aram—favored of his father
 Hated by his brethren—his two dreams
 Sent by Jacob to his brethren feeding their flocks at Dothan—sold by them to traveling merchants—carried into Egypt
 Sold to Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh’s guard—becomes overseer in Potiphar’s house—Potiphar’s wife, failing to entice him, causes his imprisonment
 Finds favor with the keeper of the prison—interprets dreams for the prisoners
 Two years later Joseph interprets two dreams for Pharaoh foretelling coming famine—gives Pharaoh wise counsel
 Joseph is set over Egypt by Pharaoh—marries Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, priest of On
 Fills storehouses of Egypt during seven years of plenty in preparation for seven years of famine
 His two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, are born
 He is merciful to his brethren who twice journey to Egypt to buy grain—he reveals himself to them and forgives them
 He establishes his father and the families of his brethren in the region of Goshen in northeast Egypt
 His two sons receive Jacob’s blessing
 Ephraim, the second-born, is given the first blessing
 Joseph and his brethren bury their father in Hebron
 After Jacob’s death Joseph’s brethren bow before him, still fearing his revenge, but he comforts them with assurances of kindness
 His days, 110 years

JOSEPH, a patriarch, was the son of Jacob (Israel) and Rachel. He was associated with the period of preservation of the Children of Israel in Egypt.

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, but the first son of the loved mother Rachel. “Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age,” and he gave to this favorite son a coat of many colors. “When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.” Joseph, young, innocent, and without guile, confided freely to his brothers his strange dreams—dreams which prefigured his pre-eminence among them. “And they hated him yet the more. . . .”

He was seventeen years of age when Jacob sent him to his brothers who were feeding their flocks at Shechem and at Dothan. As he drew near they conspired to kill him, but Reuben, the eldest, restrained them from shedding blood. So Joseph was cast into a pit and, during Reuben’s absence, sold for twenty pieces of silver to merchants traveling to Egypt. Dipping his coat in the blood of a kid, his brothers brought it to their father; and Jacob, believing their evil report, mourned his son as dead. Figuratively Joseph’s coat, given to him by a loving father, may be likened to the seamless robe of Christ. As Joseph was stripped of his coat of many colors by the hatred of his brethren and it was returned with blood, so did Jesus’ own nation strip him of his seamless robe and stain it with the blood of rejection and crucifixion.

Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, who soon advanced him to the position of chief steward of his house, for he saw that Joseph’s God was with him. Potiphar’s wife, attracted to Joseph, daily attempted to entice him. His refusal to yield to temptation showed his high moral standard and spiritual integrity: “There is none greater in this house than I . . . how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” But she falsely accused him, and he was thrown into prison, where he remained for two years. Yet there was no bitterness or recrimination on Joseph’s part at this injustice; rather, he turned to serving his fellow prisoners and found favor with the prison keeper.

Pharaoh had two dreams that none of the wise men of Egypt could explain. The first dream was of seven lean cows which devoured seven fat ones; the second was of seven thin ears of corn which devoured seven full ears. Hearing of Joseph’s wisdom and skill in interpreting dreams for fellow prisoners, Pharaoh sent for him. Joseph disclaimed any personal ability, saying, “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” He interpreted the two dreams as one, as foretelling seven years

of abundance to be followed by seven years of famine, and counseled Pharaoh to appoint a man to oversee the storing up of one-fifth of the crops during the plentiful years to meet the coming dearth. Pleased with this plan, Pharaoh chose Joseph to administer it, for he saw that he was “a man in whom the Spirit of God is.”

Joseph was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh. He was made ruler of all Egypt, superseded in power only by Pharaoh himself. During seven plentiful years “the earth brought forth by handfuls,” and when the famine was felt in adjacent countries only Egypt had a surplus of food to sell.

When hunger spread into Canaan, Joseph’s brothers journeyed to Egypt to buy corn; “Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.” He did not make himself known but roughly accused them of being spies and imprisoned them for three days. Then he sent them home with a supply of food (hiding their purchase money in their bags); but he held one of them (Simeon) as hostage, demanding that they bring back to him their youngest brother.

Upon their return with Benjamin, Joseph revealed his identity and all the brothers were reunited. He stilled their fear and remorse for the evil they had done him. Of a generous and tender spirit himself, he comforted them: “God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity . . . and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God” (Gen. 45:7,8). Joseph sent for his father and the families of his brethren, seventy in all, and settled them in Goshen, a tract of land east of the Nile Delta suitable for pasturage. Thus Jacob’s posterity, now known as the Children of Israel, were preserved to advance the great Messianic purpose of God. After the death of Jacob the brothers, still fearful of Joseph’s vengeance, bowed down before him to ask pardon, and again he forgave them (see Gen. 37:7). In many respects Joseph’s life is considered typical of the Messiah’s.

Joseph had two sons by his Egyptian wife Asenath, Manasseh and Ephraim. Their grandfather Jacob before his death gave each his blessing, adopting them as his own but setting Ephraim the second-born before Manasseh (prophetically declaring the pre-eminence of the tribe of Ephraim). By so doing he acknowledged Joseph as his first-born and gave him the double portion, the inheritance of the eldest. Ephraim and Manasseh headed tribes which later shared in the division of the territory in Canaan, inheriting the birthright of the house of Joseph. On the basis of this birthright the tribe of Ephraim disputed the claim of the tribe of Judah for ascendancy in Israel.

Jacob’s prophecy to Joseph showered with blessings this son who had so unfailingly placed his reliance on the providence of God: “Joseph is a fruitful bough . . . by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and . . . shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above. . . The blessings of thy father . . . shall be . . . on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren” (Gen. 49:22–26).

A measure of the man

“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand” (Gen. 39:2,3).

“The Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper . . . committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it” (Gen. 39:21,22).

“Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I [Pharaoh] be greater than thou” (Gen. 41:39,40).

“Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself. . . . (Gen. 43: 30,31)

“So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt” (Gen. 45:8).

“Joseph said unto them [his brethren], Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them” (Gen. 50:20,21).

Ex. 2–20; 24–40; Books of
Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Moses: Heb. “drawing out”
Egypt. “born”

Son of Amram and Jochebed, of tribe of Levi—hidden in bulrushes to escape the death decree of Pharaoh
Adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter—lives at Egyptian court till the age of forty
Slays an Egyptian—attempts to mediate between two of his countrymen
Flees to Midian—tends Jethro’s flocks for forty years—marries Zipporah, daughter of Jethro
God’s call to Moses at the burning bush on Mount Horeb—commissioned to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage—given two signs
Stands before Pharaoh with Aaron, his brother—his great cry—the ten plagues
Passover instituted
The Exodus—Red Sea is divided before Israelites—the people given manna—water flows from the rock—successful battle at Rephidim
At Mount Sinai Moses receives Decalogue written on two tablets of stone, also various civil and religious laws—Israel worships golden calf—Moses breaks the tablets—Decalogue given again
Tabernacle erected—tribe of Levi consecrated to priesthood—Passover becomes a commemorative institution
Israel journeys to Kades-barnea—twelve spies sent into Canaan—unfavorable report causes people to fear to enter—Israel condemned to wander forty years
Moses governs Israel forty years in the wilderness—seventy elders chosen to aid him—under God’s providence he brings Israel to Canaan’s borders
His last addresses to Israel
From Mount Nebo Moses sees the Promised Land
His days, 120 years

MOSES was the mighty lawgiver of Israel, the nation’s first great leader, statesman, and prophet. He is identified with the period of the Exodus and the Wilderness Wandering, and with the inception of the Law.

The family of Jacob which had settled in Egypt in Joseph’s day multiplied greatly during the following four centuries until their very number became a threat to the Egyptians. Fearing the strength of this Hebrew people, Pharaoh (probably Rameses II) enslaved them and made them “to serve with rigour,” and even decreed the death of all their newborn male children. At this time the child Moses was born to Amram and Jochebed of the tribe of Levi. Hidden in the bulrushes of the Nile to escape the king’s mandate, the child was rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter and adopted as her son.

Moses’ life may be divided into three periods of forty years each: forty years in Egypt, forty in Midian, and forty in the Wilderness of the Wandering.

Though he was reared in the splendor of the Egyptian court and versed in Egyptian wisdom, Moses’ heart was with his people. One day in defense of a Hebrew, he slew an Egyptian (his first effort, a human endeavor, to aid his people). The following day he tried to settle a violent quarrel between two Hebrews, but his attempt to mediate justice was rejected. Pharaoh sought to kill him, but Moses fled into Midian, east of the Gulf of Aqabah.

These two incidents prove that neither were the Israelites yet ready to go out of Egypt, nor Moses prepared to be their leader (James 1:20). It was by the staff and not the sword—by the meekness, and not the wrath of Moses that God was to accomplish that great work of deliverance.¹⁰

For forty years Moses remained in Midian. He married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian, and tended the flocks of his father-in-law. During these quiet years in the desert he attained the meekness and spiritual maturity which fitted him to undertake the great task that lay before him, that of leading his people out of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan.

God’s call came to Moses at Mount Horeb. Beholding the marvel of a bush burning with fire yet not consumed, he turned aside to see. “When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush,” and identified Himself as the God who had made His covenant with the patriarchal fathers: “I am . . . the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. . . . I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt And I am come down to deliver them. . . .” “I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people . . . out of Egypt.” Moses was doubtful of his ability but God promised, “Certainly I will be with thee.”

Then to Moses was given a fuller revelation of the nature of God than had heretofore been known. God had declared Himself to Abraham as “the Almighty,” but to Moses he declared Himself as Jehovah, as the “I AM THAT I AM,” the Self-Existent One—“The living God.” To strengthen Moses’ confidence and to provide Israel with convincing testimony of Moses’ commission, he was given two visible signs of divine power—the turning of his rod into a serpent and the healing of the leprous hand.

Moses returned to Egypt. With Aaron his brother acting as spokesman, he demanded the release of the Hebrews. Pharaoh refused, and at Moses’ word ten plagues struck at the Egyptians to force their release (see Ten Plagues, p. 149). After the tenth plague Pharaoh let them go, but immediately regretting his action he pursued them. Israel fled to the Red Sea and before Moses’ uplifted rod the sea was divided and Israel passed over on dry ground. Thus by a mighty deliverance the power of the God of Israel was manifested.

At Mount Sinai God’s covenant was renewed, this time with the nation of Israel. On the mount Moses saw God’s wondrous power and glory, and in conscious communion with Him he was given a further revelation of the divine nature in the Decalogue—the laws of His covenant, whose moral and spiritual principles laid the foundation of the religious and social life of the nation (see The Law, p. 157).

To Moses was also divinely communicated a religious system, sacrificial and ceremonial in form, one whose every institution typified and prefigured the redemptive work of Israel’s coming Messiah. A Tabernacle was erected and an Aaronic priesthood ordained (see Tabernacle, p. 159; Priesthood, p. 52).

During the next forty years of the Wilderness Wandering the great lawgiver governed Israel. Under his inspired leadership they were miraculously provided with manna from heaven and water from the rock, and disciplined to a reliance on God. He led them to the borders of Canaan where he gave his last counsels to the new generation about to enter the Promised Land. He rehearsed God’s mercies to Israel and restated the Law with its basic principles. The covenant was again ratified with the nation and the people were warned to obey God’s laws and keep themselves separate from idolatrous nations and their abominations.

With prophetic insight Moses foretold the coming of Israel’s Messiah: “I [God] will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth. . . . And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18,19; compare Jn. 1:45; Acts 3:22,23).

From the hill of Pisgah on Mount Nebo in Moab Moses saw all the Promised Land. God said, “I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.” The record closes with the tribute, “There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” This prophet appears once again in Scriptural history, being present “in glory” at the Transfiguration of Jesus (Lu. 9:30,31).

A measure of the man

“Moses was content to dwell with the man [Jethro, priest of Midian]. . . .” (Ex. 2:21)

“The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Ex. 33:11).

“When Moses came down from mount Sinai . . . Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him [God]” (Ex. 34:29).

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3).

“With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. . . .” (Num. 12:8)

“Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deut. 34:7).

“By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved” (Hos. 12:13).

“Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. . . .” (Heb. 3:5)

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:24–27).

Ex. 17:9–14; 24:13–18; 32:17; 33:11; Num. 11:28,29; 13; 14; 26:65; 27:15–23; Deut. 1:38; 3:21–28; 31:7–23; 34:9; Bk. of Joshua

Joshua: "Jehovah is salvation"

Joshua (Hoshea, Oshea) son of Nun, of tribe of Ephraim
 Commands armies of Israel at Rephidim in their first battle after the Exodus—defeats the Amalekites
 Attends Moses at Mount Sinai
 His zeal for Moses and the office of prophecy
 One of twelve tribal spies appointed by Moses to search the land of Canaan—he and Caleb alone give a good report and urge the people to take the land—preservation of these two is promised
 Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses at close of the Wilderness Wandering
 God's commands and promises to Joshua
 Joshua sends men to spy out Jericho
 Before the Ark of the Covenant the waters of Jordan are cut off—Israel crosses Jordan on dry ground into Canaan
 Rite of circumcision renewed
 The manna ceases
 Joshua, under divine direction, besieges Jericho—its walls fall
 Israel is defeated at Ai—the trespass of Achan—Ai is conquered and burned
 Joshua's league with Gibeon—five kings war against Gibeon—Joshua goes to its aid—sun and moon stand still at his word
 Joshua conquers kings of central and northern Palestine
 He divides Canaan among the tribes of Israel
 Tabernacle set up at Shiloh
 Appoints cities of refuge and Levitical cities
 His two final solemn addresses—renewal of the covenant
 His days, 110 years

JOSHUA was Moses' immediate successor and a great military hero. He was connected with the period of the conquest of Canaan and with the division of the territory among the tribes of Israel.

The early history of Joshua's life shows him to have been a man of considerable military, religious, and political stature, eminently qualified to succeed Moses. From the time of the Exodus he stood in close relationship to the great lawgiver. He was selected by Moses to command the armed forces of Israel against the Amalekites, and with the prayerful support of Moses he won a brilliant victory (Ex. 17:8–13). He was personal minister to Moses and privileged to attend him on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:13; 32:17), and had charge of the early Tent of Meeting (Ex. 33:7–11).

Moses chose him as one of the twelve tribal representatives sent from Kadesh-barnea to search out the land of Canaan. (According to Numbers 13:16 his name was changed by Moses from Oshea to Jehoshua, Joshua.)

The spies found Canaan a good land, but ten of them reported that its cities were walled, its inhabitants were giants, warlike and strong, and the whole was surrounded by hostile tribes. The people wept and determined to return to Egypt. The other two, Joshua and Caleb, urged them to be courageous and take possession of their inheritance (Num. 13; 14): "The land . . . is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us. . . . Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land . . . their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us." The people still feared to go forward and would have stoned them, but the appearance of the Shekinah glory in the Tabernacle and the divine displeasure stayed their hand. For their disobedience and lack of faith Israel was condemned to wander in the wilderness forty years, a year for each day of the forty-day search. The spies who brought back the negative report died by plague, but the lives of Joshua and Caleb were preserved; and of all the Israelites over twenty years of age numbered by Moses at Sinai these two alone were permitted to enter the Promised Land because they "wholly followed the Lord" (Num. 26:63–65; 32:12).

Toward the close of the Wandering Moses appointed Joshua his successor in solemn ceremony, putting some of his own "honour" upon him (Num. 27:20).

When Joshua assumed the leadership of Israel after the death of Moses, God gave him this promise of assurance: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." This promise was followed by His imperatives:

"Be strong and of a good courage. . . ."

"Divide for an inheritance the land. . . ."

"Observe to do according to all the law. . . ." (Josh. 1:6, 7)

Joshua's authority was confirmed and sustained from the outset by God's supporting power. Before the Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of God's presence) the waters of the Jordan were divided so that the

Israelites crossed over on dry ground.

Israel's national life in Canaan began with an act of religious dedication. Joshua caused all those born in the wilderness to be sanctified by circumcision; then the Passover was observed. And on the morrow after the people had eaten of the produce of the land, the manna that had providentially fed them in the wilderness ceased.

Joshua's whole conquest of Canaan was under divine direction. Before him lay the stronghold of Jericho, which barred their passage into the land. As Joshua pondered how best to besiege its massive walls, an angel, "the captain of the Lord's host," appeared to him and imparted the plan by which he should take the city. Obediently each day for six days the armies of Israel marched in silence around the city—first the armed men, then seven priests blowing trumpets, then priests bearing the sacred Ark of the Covenant, then more armed men. On the seventh day they compassed the city seven times; finally, at the long blast of the trumpet and the loud shout of all the people, the walls fell flat and each man walked straight into the city.

For the next twenty-four years Joshua fought the idolatrous nations within the land—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. An intrepid general, he led the armies of Israel to victory over a confederation of kings of southern Palestine and defeated an alliance of northern kings, chasing them as far north as Zidon in Phoenicia. The enemy was overcome "in the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness" (Josh. 10–12). "He left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:15).

Although the land, particularly northern Palestine, was not wholly subdued by the close of his life, Joshua divided the territory by lot among the twelve tribes, including the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim but excluding Levi. In lieu of land this priestly tribe was given forty-eight cities of which six were appointed cities of refuge (see Levitical cities, pp. 45, 54).

In his final addresses Joshua emphatically warned his nation to keep itself separate, socially and religiously, from the idolatrous Canaanites left in the land, lest they fall into apostasy and lose their heritage.

"Be ye . . . very courageous to keep and to do all . . . the law of Moses. . . . That ye come not among these nations . . . neither make mention of the name of their gods . . . neither serve them. . . . But cleave unto the Lord your God. . . . Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations . . . and shall make marriages with them. . . . Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:6–8, 12, 13).

Israel long felt the influence of Joshua's incorruptible spiritual leadership: "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua" (Josh. 24: 31).

A measure of the man

"Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God" (Ex. 24:13).

"Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit. . . ." (Num. 27:18)

"Moses . . . took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses" (Num. 27:22, 23).

"Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him. . . ." (Deut. 34:9)

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law . . . turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:7).

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh. 1:8).

"On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life" (Josh. 4:14).

"The, Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country" (Josh. 6:27).

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

SAMUEL Transition from
Judgeship to Kingship

I Sam. 1:1–13:15; 15; 16; 19:18–24; 25:1
Samuel: “heard of God”

Son of Hannah and Elkanah an Ephraimite—a child of prayer
Dedicated to the service of God—possibly a Nazarite by his mother's vow—from early childhood serves at Shiloh under Eli the high priest
The call of Samuel—he is apprised of God's judgment on Eli's house—he grows in grace—established as a prophet
Israel wars with Philistines—the Ark of the Covenant is captured—death of Eli and his sons—Ark is returned—kept at Kirjath-jearim
Samuel judges the people at Mizpah—their repentance—through his prayer Israel wins a miraculous victory over the Philistines
He dwells at Ramah—organizes bands of prophets at Ramah, Beth-el, Gilgal, Mizpah—makes yearly circuit to judge the people
When Samuel is old his sons govern corruptly—Israel demands a king—Samuel is grieved—warns Israel of the despotism an earthly king would impose
Samuel anoints Saul—Saul is made king at Gilgal
Samuel twice rebukes Saul for disobedience and prophesies his rejection
He is divinely directed to go to Bethlehem to anoint David as king in Saul's place
Samuel's home at Ramah becomes a refuge for David when he flees from Saul's wrath
Samuel's days, about 98 years

SAMUEL, the first great prophet since Moses, was the last of the judges. He was associated with the closing period of the Judges and with the transition from the judgeship to the monarchy.

To review history: following the death of Joshua came the long period of the Judges, 300 to 350 years, when the new generation of the tribes of Israel was settling itself in Canaan. Under Joshua the Israelites had sworn “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey” (Josh. 24:24); but in the years of transition from a nomadic to an agricultural way of life they adopted many Canaanitish customs and were continually attracted to forbidden heathen rites so that they became guilty of a flagrant compromise of monotheism with the polytheism of the Canaanites and border nations. The wickedness of the Israelites in communing with them resulted, intermittently, in years of servitude to the nations whose gods they worshiped. When oppression became too great to bear, Israel “cried unto the Lord,” acknowledging its sin; and each time a judge was raised up to deliver Israel from bondage.

The more important of the judges (there were fifteen in all) were Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel. Aside from the periodic ministrations of the judges there was little lawful government or national unity. Only in times of crisis did the tribes unite sufficiently to throw off the enemy yoke. The prevailing spirit of disobedience and disunity is summed up in the last verse of judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

They [the judges] were not merely deliverers of the state from a foreign yoke, but destroyers of idolatry, foes of pagan vices, promoters of the knowledge of God, of religion, and of morality; restorers of theocracy in the minds of the Hebrews, and powerful instruments of Divine Providence in the promotion of the great design of preserving the Hebrew constitution, and, by that means, of rescuing the true religion from destruction.¹¹

Samuel came when the moral and spiritual values of the nation were at low ebb and Israel had almost ceased to tend the lamp of her divine destiny. He was the son of Hannah and Elkanah, a child of prayer, dedicated to God before his birth. His mother had been barren, and she prayed, “O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt . . . give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.” Her prayer was answered, and in gratitude Hannah kept her vow. When the child was weaned she took him to the sanctuary at Shiloh, there to minister unto the Lord before Eli the high priest. “And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.”

The prophetic call came to Samuel while he was still a boy (probably about the age of twelve). The Lord appeared to him in a vision. Three times He called, "Samuel," and each time Samuel thought Eli was speaking; but when God called the fourth time Samuel, instructed by Eli, answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." The purity of his mother's motive and prayer, the steadfast keeping of her vow, his service in a priestly environment—all these factors had prepared the child's willing mind for listening. To him was revealed God's judgment on Eli's house because of the high priest's failure to restrain the immoralities and irreligious feastings of his sons at the sanctuary. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." His rise to authority as a prophet marked the recession of priestly influence as the prime moral power in Israel, bringing prophecy to the fore as the instrument by which God would communicate His will to men.

Twenty-five years later the judgment on the house of Eli was fulfilled in the death of Eli's sons by the Philistines and by the death of Eli himself. Samuel then became a judge of Israel. He assembled the people at Mizpah and exhorted them to turn from strange gods and return to the worship of Jehovah. Upon their repentance his prayer brought a miraculous victory over the Philistines and an era of peace.

With Samuel is seen for the first time the establishment of prophecy as an institution in Israel, whereby certain men, known as "sons of the prophets," gathered together in bands for prayer and spiritual communion, "men, whose hearts God had touched." These schools were located at Ramah, where Samuel lived, at Beth-el, Gilgal, and at Mizpah; Samuel made a yearly circuit to these centers to judge the people.

The prophets' service to their people cannot be overestimated, for as a theocratic nation Israel was dependent upon its seers for divine guidance. The prophets stood at the side of Israel's kings, actively participating in the government of the kingdom, making evident God's omnipotence and omnipresence by their wisdom and miracles. Their unswerving righteousness exerted a vast influence on the moral and spiritual life of the nation.

When Samuel was old he gave the government into the hands of his sons, but the people were dissatisfied with their rule; they demanded a king that they might be "like all the nations." Samuel was grieved but God said, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." He warned Israel of the danger of choosing an earthly king but yielded to their demand; and at God's direction anointed Saul, a Benjamite, as king. Before resigning his judgeship he reproved Israel for ingratitude for the deliverances it had experienced under God's kingship, yet assured the nation of God's continuing mercy if both they and the king would walk in His commandments.

When Saul was later rejected as king, Samuel went under divine direction to Bethlehem secretly to anoint David king. This great leader died at Ramah after a long life of loyalty to God and patriotic service to his nation.

A measure of the man

"For this child I [Hannah] prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition. . . . Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (I Sam. 1:27;28).

"Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod" (I Sam. 2:18).

"Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord . . . for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh. . . ." (I Sam. 3:19-21)

"Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (I Sam. 7:15).

"A man of God . . . an honorable man. . . ." (I Sam. 9:6)

"Samuel said unto all Israel . . . I am old and grayheaded . . . and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand" (I Sam. 12:1-4).

"As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you" (I Sam. 12:23,24).

DAVID

United Kingdom

I Sam. 16–31; II Sam. 1–24; I Ki.

1:1–2:11; I Chron. 11–29

David: “well-beloved”

Youngest son of Jesse of tribe of Judah—born in Bethlehem—as a youth he shepherds his father’s flocks

Anointed as future king of Israel by prophet Samuel

Called to King Saul’s court as a musician

Israel and Philistines at war—David slays Goliath

David and Saul’s son Jonathan make a covenant of friendship

David commands Saul’s armies—marries Saul’s daughter Michal

Saul’s jealousy of David’s popularity forces David to become a fugitive—David and his band of warriors are pursued by Saul—he twice spares Saul’s life

Marries Abigail, widow of Nabal

Defeats the Amalekites

Saul is defeated by Philistines—takes his own life

David becomes king of Judah, rules at Hebron seven and a half years—war between houses of David and Saul

David becomes king of all Israel—conquers Jebusite Jerusalem and makes it his capital—rules 33 years—many wars of conquest

Brings Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem—God’s covenant with David

His sin with Bath-sheba—Nathan’s parable—David’s repentance and pardon

Birth of his son Solomon

Absalom, David’s son, conspires for the throne—killed by Joab, captain of David’s army—David’s grief

David disobediently numbers the people—prepares for building of Temple

His son Adonijah and Joab conspire for the throne

Solomon is anointed king

David’s charge to Solomon

He appoints the priesthood into courses or orders

His days, 70 years

DAVID

, second ruler of Israel, was destined to become Israel’s greatest king. He was associated with the period of the United Kingdom.

David, the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, was a shepherd boy caring for his father’s sheep in the hills of Bethlehem when the prophet Samuel came, at God’s bidding, to anoint him Israel’s future king; and “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.”

His qualities of courage and trust in God were early evident. When a lion and a bear took the lambs of the flock, David delivered the lambs from their mouths and slew both the lion and the bear. His tender solicitude for the sheep was later manifested in his care of his Father’s flock of Israel which was entrusted to him (II Sam. 5:2), thus prefiguring the true Shepherd of Israel.

According to one account (I Sam. 16:14–23) David was already known to King Saul as an accomplished harpist and as a man of war when the king sent for him to serve at his court that his troubled mind might be soothed with music. According to another record (I Sam. 17:1–18:2) David was unknown to Saul until he appeared as a shepherd youth before the king’s army as it stood in battle array against the army of the Philistines. For forty days their champion, a nine-foot giant named Goliath, had paraded himself morning and evening, boastfully defying Israel’s army. Fearlessly David took up the challenge, declaring, “Thou comest to me with a sword . . . but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” Using only the weapon he had proved, a shepherd’s slingshot, he killed the Philistine giant with a single stone.

Saul set David over his armies and David became a great warrior and a national hero. He also became the king’s son-in-law, marrying his daughter Michal. But David was so loved by the people, by Saul’s son Jonathan (who had made a covenant of undying friendship with him), and by Michal that Saul feared the loss of his kingdom. In envy and fury he “became David’s enemy continually,” and repeatedly attempted to kill him, forcing David to flee.

For nearly six years David was a fugitive. Around him gathered a band of men, the distressed and the discontented. Twice during these years David had the opportunity to take Saul’s life in revenge, but he spared it, restraining his men with the words “Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?” Finally he and his warriors sought refuge from Saul’s pursuit in Philistia.

After the death of Saul, the tribe of Judah anointed David their

king. Like Joseph, he was thirty years of age when he was placed in this high position. For seven and a half years he ruled Judah with his capital at Hebron. Then the other tribes of Israel accepted his leadership and he was anointed king of all Israel. (Note the three anointings: by Samuel, by Judah, by Israel [I Sam. 16:13; II Sam. 2:4; 5:3].) Then followed an important stage in the nation's history: David conquered Jebusite Jerusalem, made it the capital, and for thirty-three years governed the United Kingdom, consolidating it and extending its borders by many wars and victories. "And David executed judgment and justice unto all his people."

One of David's earliest acts as king of all Israel was to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the capital, thus moving the seat of worship from Shiloh to Jerusalem. His placing of this sacred object in a tabernacle on Mount Zion, one of the four hills upon which the city was built, made the mount sacred to the Hebrews. Jerusalem itself became known as "the city of God," "the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." David's kingdom and reign were from the beginning identified with monotheism.

David greatly desired to build a temple for the Ark, but was stayed from so doing by the word of the prophet Nathan. However, God made a covenant with David: he was promised a posterity, a throne, and an everlasting kingdom (II Sam. 7:11-16), and comforted with the assurance that his son would build the temple to His name. It was on this Davidic covenant that Israel's later hope for a Messianic king was based. In time Paul preached, "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:23).

When David sinned in his love for Bath-sheba and caused the death of her husband Uriah, Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb awoke him to the error of his deed with respect to himself and the nation (II Sam. 11; 12). Because David so truly loved God, this sin assumed enormous proportions, a transgression that would have been ignored by one less righteous. He acknowledged, "I have sinned against the Lord" (see Ps. 51), but the child of this adulterous union was nevertheless taken from him. The "godly sorrow [which] worketh repentance to salvation" (II Cor. 7:10) was David's experience, for from the purging and spiritual growth he experienced came the fruit of greater wisdom (as evidenced in the birth of his son Solomon, who was destined to succeed him).

He who had been taken from the sheepcote and lifted to royalty to a high degree exemplified righteousness, humility, moral and spiritual courage, an unwavering reliance on God, mercy toward his enemies, and true kingship. He prayed often for divine direction: he inquired of the Lord; he sought His face that His law might be the law of Israel. He ever acknowledged God as Israel's true sovereign, a fact of which later kings lost sight.

David; who could truly sing "The Lord is my shepherd," was called "the sweet psalmist of Israel," and to him are attributed seventy-five of the hymns in the book of Psalms. A study of these reveals the character of this man who served God with his whole heart; who meditated much on God's love and goodness; and who, through his own prayerful search for God, had a profound effect on Israel. His songs of joy, praise, and thanksgiving are a part of the great literature of the world.

A measure of the man

"The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart. . . ." (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

". . . cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him" (I Sam. 16:18).

"David . . . the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (II Sam. 23:1-3).

"David . . . walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness. . . ." (I Ki. 9:4)

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Ps. 18:1, 2).

"I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34:1).

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8).

"He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance" (Ps. 78:70,71).

"Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (Jn. 7:42)

GENEALOGY FROM ADAM TO DAVID

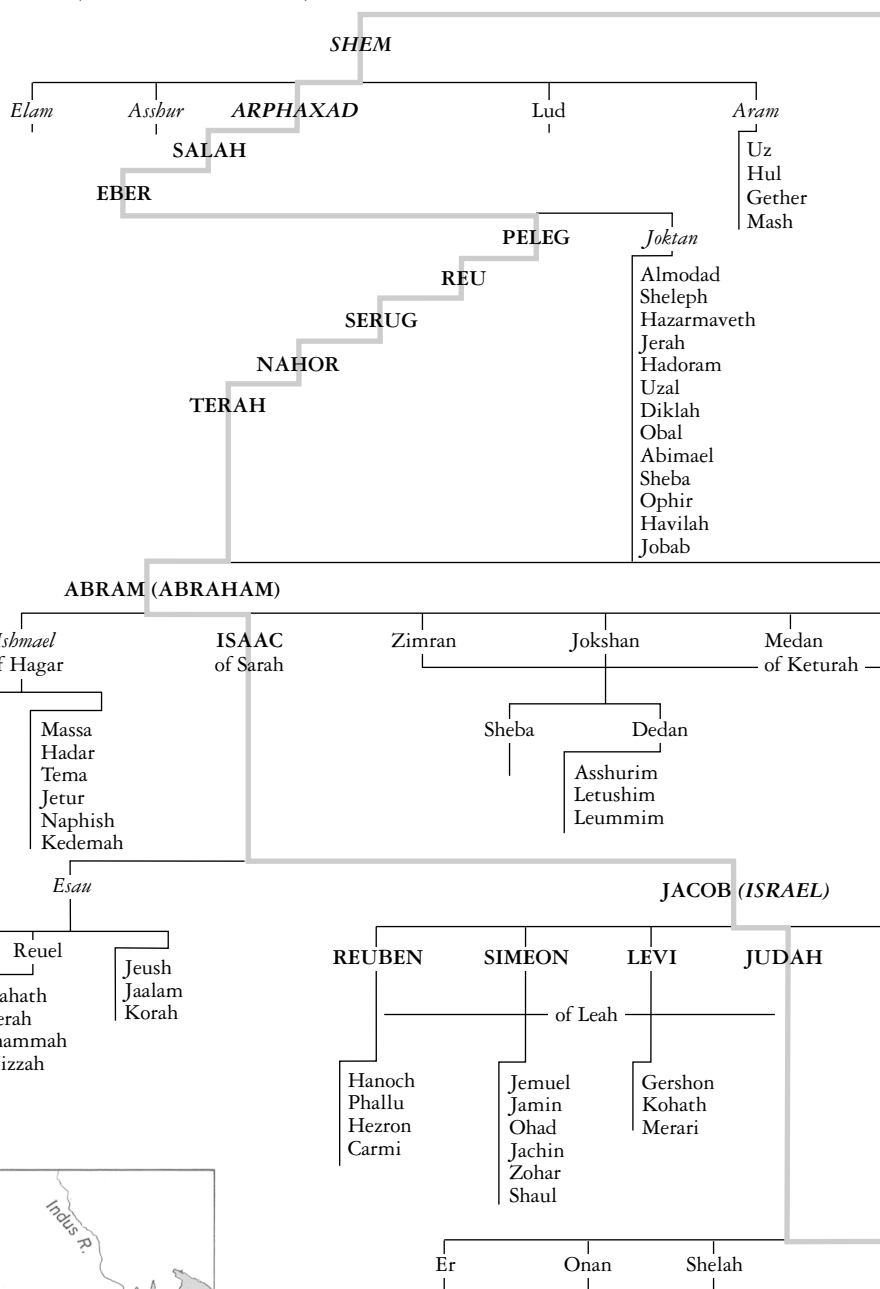
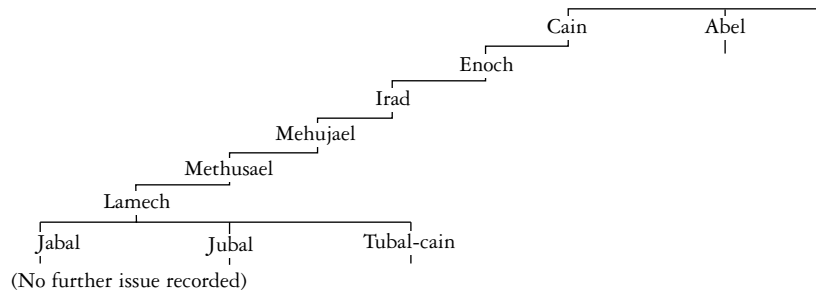
This chart—drawn from genealogical records in Genesis, Numbers, and First Chronicles—traces the Messianic line over a period of approximately 3000 years and shows the direct line of descent from Adam to David.

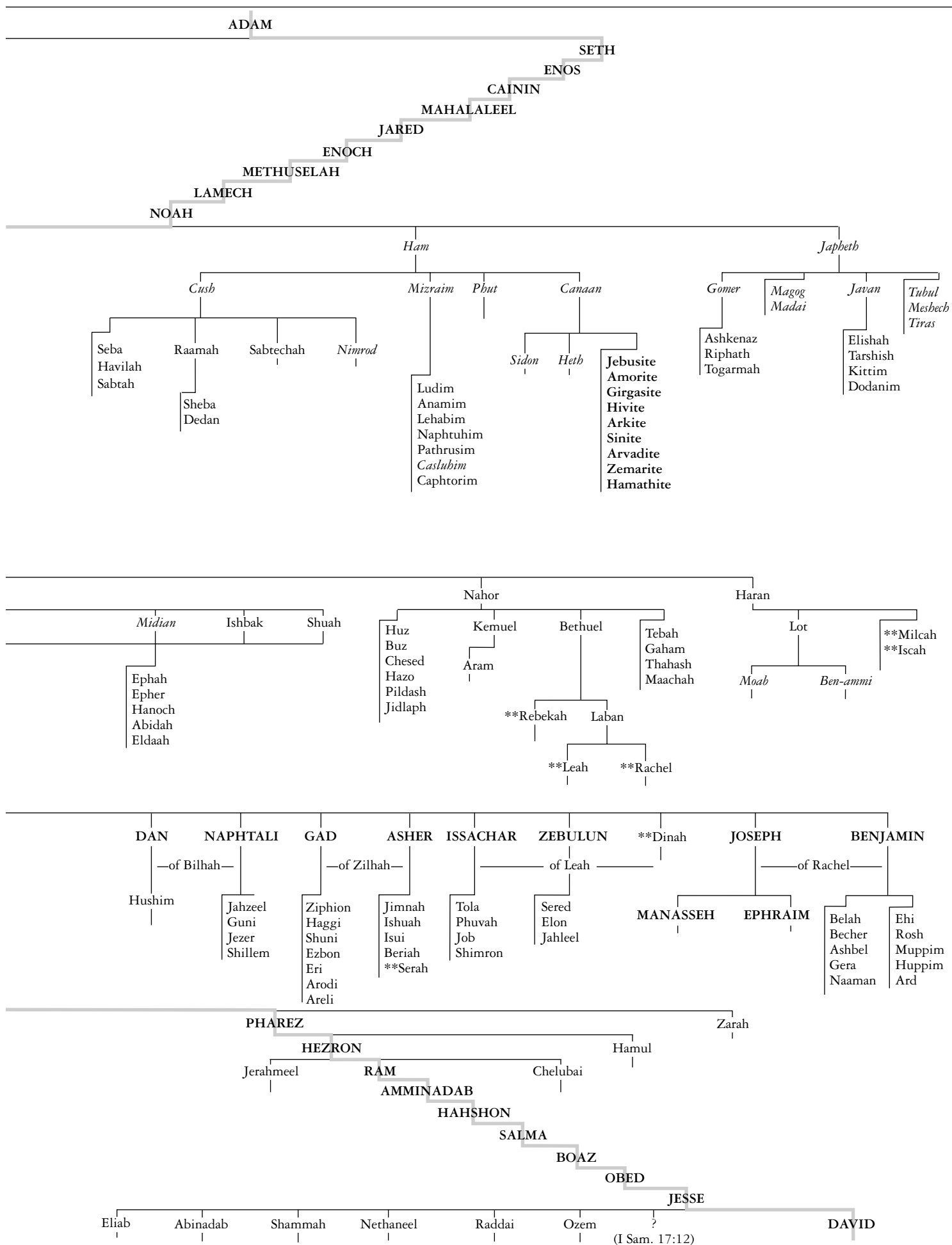
Names in *italics* designate: (1) those that correspond to ancient land divisions and peoples, or (2) Biblical progenitors of primitive nations which sprang from the immediate descendants of Noah (see box below).

— Messianic line

**Woman

Land Divisions	
SHEM (Semites)	Upper and Middle Asia
HAM (Hamites)	Africa and S.W. Arabia
JAPHETH (Gentiles).	Europe and part of Asia
ARAM	Syria, Mesopotamia
ARPHAXAD	North Assyria
ASSHUR	Assyria
CANAAN.	Canaan
CUSH.	Ethiopia
ELAM.	Persia
MIZRAIM	Egypt
NIMROD	Babylonia (Chaldea)
PHUT.	Libya
Main Tribal Origins	
Amalek	Amalekite
Ben-ammi	Ammonite
Casluhim.	Philistine
Esau	Edomite
Gomer	Cimmerian, Gaul, Celt
Heth.	Hittite
Ishmael	Ishmaelite
Jacob (Israel)	Israelite
Javan.	Ionian, Greek
Joktan.	Primitive Arab
Kenaz.	Kenezite
Madai.	Mede, Aryan (Indo-European, Indo-Iranian)
Magog	Scythian
Meshech	Moschi
Midian	Midianite
Moab.	Moabite
Sidon	Zidonian
Tiras	Thracian
Tubal	Tibareni





II Sam. 12:24,25; I Ki. 1–11; I Chron.

23:1;28;29; II Chron. 1–9

Solomon: “the peaceful”

Son of David and Bath-sheba—named Jedidiah by the prophet Nathan

Solomon is anointed king—David’s charge to Solomon

Marries Pharaoh’s daughter

He prays for an understanding heart—his wise judgment between two mothers

He fortifies and consolidates his kingdom—a reign of peace—makes foreign alliances—promotes extensive trade with other nations

His extraordinary wisdom and wealth

His preparation and building of the Temple in Jerusalem—his league with King Hiram of Tyre—dedication of the Temple

He builds palaces for himself and the queen

God renews the Davidic covenant with Solomon—warns him to eschew idolatry

Solomon builds a chain of chariot and storehouse cities—builds Israel’s first merchant fleet

The three annual feasts of Mosaic Law are observed—Solomon continues appointments of the courses of the priests and Levites according to the order established by David

Visit of the queen of Sheba

Solomon takes to himself seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines—worships their foreign gods

Judgment on his apostasy: his kingdom to be divided—adversaries Hadad and Rezon arise—Solomon seeks to kill Jeroboam because of Ahijah’s prophecy that Jeroboam, and not his own son Rehoboam, would reign over ten tribes of his kingdom

Solomon reigns 40 years

SOLOMON was the son of David and Bath-sheba. He succeeded David as king of the United Kingdom and was associated with a period of great prosperity in Israel and with the building of the Temple in Jerusalem.

David chose Solomon as his heir. Shortly before his death he gave Solomon the charge “to build an house for the sanctuary.”

Solomon’s reign of forty years may be divided into two periods: the rise of his kingdom to prominence and economic strength, and the deterioration of his own life by excessive indulgence and religious apostasy.

Solomon started his reign well. He loved the Lord and walked “in the statutes of David his father.” He made a pilgrimage to the high place at Gibeon to sacrifice and seek divine guidance. Deeply impressed by the responsibilities of kingship, he prayed humbly for an understanding heart to judge his people wisely. God answered, “Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart. . . . And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour.” The words “I have given thee” state an eternal truth—that God’s gifts are God-endowed “from the foundation of the world” (compare Ps. 8:4–6). So long as Solomon used these gifts in God’s service—and he did for many years—his nation prospered. Had Solomon fully discerned that the wisdom, riches, and honor given him were spiritual gifts, he would not have misused them later for his own glorification and self-indulgence.

His reign was one of peace, for David had subjugated Israel’s border enemies and his powerful neighbors Assyria and Egypt were at rest. He built military garrisons and storehouses throughout his kingdom and maintained a strong, well-provisioned army which included 12,000 horsemen and 1400 chariots. Unlike his predecessors he made numerous foreign alliances with nations from the Euphrates to the Nile, and extended trade and commerce to a degree never before known to Israel. Solomon owned huge copper mines and refineries in the Arabah rift near the port of Ezion-geber at the head of the Gulf of Aqabah; his merchants controlled the caravan routes between Arabia and the north; his Red Sea navy sought the gold of Ophir and the wealth of East Africa and India, and his Mediterranean fleet joined the Phoenician ships of Hiram to bring silver, tin, lead, and iron from Tarshish (Tartessus) in Spain. His control over his own subjects was strengthened by a reorganization of the land into twelve districts so he might tax the people for the support of the royal household—a reorganization that ignored tribal boundaries and tribal rights.

Part of Solomon’s vast building program was the erection of many splendid buildings, among them the Temple, a palace for himself, and another for his Egyptian wife. He inaugurated the policy of forced labor by levying the services of Israelites and non-Israelites alike by tens of thousands (I Ki. 5:13–18); this oppressive measure engendered a discontent which eventually disrupted the kingdom.

Solomon's great contribution to Israel's religious history was the building of the Temple, which established Jerusalem as the center of Israel's worship and exalted Jehovah above the Baal gods of Canaan. This magnificent structure, begun in the fourth year of his reign, took seven years to construct. "The house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." With prayerful ceremony this sanctuary was dedicated (see Temple, p. 162). A second time God appeared to Solomon, as He had at Gibeon, and renewed the Davidic Covenant, explicitly enjoining obedience to that covenant (I Ki. 9:4-7).

The wisdom of Solomon brought him great renown. "There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." Among them was the queen of Sheba. It was said of Solomon that "he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five." Of the writings ascribed to him by antiquity or written in his name there remain the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, which contain exquisite jewels of wisdom and instruction in righteousness, and which weigh the values of human life, its travail and fleeting pleasures.

As Solomon fulfilled his ambitions for the kingdom and became satiated with worldly success, he was drawn into idolatry, self-gratification, and sensuality. "He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and . . . his wives turned away his heart after other gods." He worshiped the Phoenician goddess Ashtoreth and built high places for Chemosh and Molech, gods of the Moabites and the Ammonites. His disobedience brought disaster to the kingdom (I Ki. 11:11-13):

"The Lord said . . . Forasmuch as . . . thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes . . . I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

Rehoboam, Solomon's only son by his Ammonite wife Naamah, was weak, foolish, and arrogant. Immediately after Rehoboam's accession to the throne, God's judgment on Solomon's sin was effected. The kingdom was divided, and "there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only." Later the tribe of Benjamin joined in forming the southern Kingdom of Judah (I Ki. 12:20,21).

Jesus made two indirect references to Solomon:

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Mt. 6:28,29).

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Mt. 12:42).

A measure of the man

"Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places" (I Ki. 3:3).

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad. . . . (I Ki. 3:9)

"God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt" (I Ki. 4:29, 30).

"I purpose to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name" (I Ki. 5:5).

"The Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel" (I Chron. 29:25).

"But king Solomon loved many strange women . . . women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the Lord said . . . Ye shall not go in to them. . . ." (I Ki. 11:1, 2)

"It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God. . . ." (I Ki. 11:4)

"And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord; and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father" (I Ki. 11:6).

ELIJAH Religion Raised to
a Higher Standard

I Ki. 17–19; 21:17–29; II Ki. 1:1–2:11;
II Chron. 21:12–15

Elijah: "Jehovah is God"

A Tishbite of Gilead—Prophet to Israel
Elijah prophesies against King Ahab
for his wicked reign—foretells a
drought

He flees to the brook Cherith—is fed
by ravens

God sends him to the widow of
Zarephath—he miraculously mul-
tiplies her meal and oil—raises her
son from death

After a three-year drought Elijah ap-
pears before Ahab and again re-
proves him

His challenge to the prophets of
Baal—his prayer brings fire upon
the altar—he slays the prophets of
Baal

By prayer he obtains rain

Queen Jezebel threatens his life—he
flees to Beer-sheba—his dis-
couragement in the wilderness—is
comforted by an angel—journeys
to Mount Horeb—hears the "still
small voice"

Commissioned to anoint Hazael, Jehu,
and Elisha, who are destined to
effect downfall of apostate house
of Ahab

Casts his mantle on Elisha, signifying
his appointment to the prophetic
office

Elijah denounces Ahab and Jezebel for
taking possession of Naboth's
vineyard by violence—he proph-
esies their doom—Ahab is slain
at Ramoth-gilead (I Ki. 22), Jeze-
bel eaten by dogs (II Ki. 9:30–36)

Elijah twice brings fire from heaven in
judgment against King Ahaziah—
prophesies king's death—King
Jehoram also earns Elijah's cen-
sure

Elijah, constantly companioned by
Elisha, takes leave of the sons of
the prophets at Gilgal, Beth-el,
and Jericho—divides Jordan with
his mantle and crosses over with
Elisha

His translation into heaven

ELIJAH was the first great prophet of the northern Kingdom of Israel. He is identified with the period in Hebrew history in which the prophets began to appear as dominant figures to combat widespread apostasy and raise the ethical standard of Israel's religious worship.

The social discontent generated under Solomon reached its climax at the accession of Solomon's son Rehoboam to the throne. The kingdom was split when ten of the twelve tribes revolted against Rehoboam's rule (I Ki. 12). This rift was an important event in Israel's history. The United Kingdom was divided (933/32 B.C.): the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern Kingdom of Judah, continuing loyal to the house of David; the remaining ten tribes formed the northern Kingdom of Israel. These two monarchies went on side by side for the next two centuries.

Jeroboam, first king of the Northern Kingdom, fearing the return of his subjects to Judah, where the Temple was located, deliberately established a counter-worship and a counter-priesthood idolatrous in character (I Ki. 12:26–33). He set up two golden calves as symbols of Jehovah, one in Beth-el and the other in Dan, "and this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship." For the next two hundred years Israel walked in "the sins of Jeroboam."

Ahab, seventh king of Israel, was one of its most apostate rulers (I Ki. 16:30, 31). Ahab's wife Jezebel was a Phoenician princess of Tyre, a fanatic champion of her native deity Baal, and through her influence Tyrian Baal worship with its gross immoralities was introduced into Israel. It flourished widely and threatened to smother the faint monotheism which still remained.

During this period of almost total apostasy the great prophet Elijah suddenly appeared to pronounce God's judgment on Ahab's sinful conduct: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Of his preparation and call to the prophetic office there is no record, but his words "before whom I stand" show his authorization and mark him as a chosen servant of God. From the beginning miracles accompanied his ministry.

To protect him from Ahab's wrath God commanded, "Get thee hence"; so Elijah hid himself in the wilderness by the brook Cherith, there to be fed by ravens. At God's further command, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath," he found refuge in the home of an impoverished widow. There, by a miracle of grace—the multiplying of her meal and oil—he and her household were fed during the many days of famine. Through his prayer her son was restored to life.

After three years of a most disastrous drought, Elijah was told "Go,

shew thyself unto Ahab.” Courageously he appeared before the king and denounced him for his iniquity in worshiping Baal. Elijah called for an assembly of Israel and of the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel that he might prove beyond doubt which was the true God. He questioned, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.” He challenged the 450 prophets of Baal to prepare a sacrifice and call down on their altar a sign of fire from their god. All day they called but there was no answer. Then Elijah, appealing only once to his God, was answered by a consuming fire on his altar. The people were compelled to acknowledge “The Lord, he is the God.”

Elijah commanded that all the prophets of Baal be slain, thereby incurring the implacable hatred of Jezebel. He fled for his life far south into the wilderness; but then, greatly discouraged over his failure to halt Israel’s apostasy, he desired to die. But twice an angel aroused him from sleep, saying, “Arise and eat.” Physically and spiritually sustained, he journeyed for forty days to Horeb (Sinai), the mount of God’s self-revelation to Moses. There before him on the mount were displayed the mighty forces of earth (as later before John on Patmos), “but the Lord was not in the wind . . . the earthquake . . . the fire.” After these Elijah heard “a still small voice” (Heb. “a sound of gentle stillness”)—a divine force more potent than all he had just witnessed. By this experience he also learned, as had Moses, that violence is not the divine method of combating evil.

He was not permitted to lay down his work, but told to return and press on in the assurance that his labors would not be fruitless. He was bidden to appoint Hazael king over Syria, Jehu king over Israel, and Elisha his own successor—three men later instrumental in destroying the Baal worship Elijah had discredited and struggled to exterminate (I Ki. 19:15–17).

After at least five more years of faithful service this great prophet was translated, taken up into heaven in “a chariot of fire,” an event witnessed by his successor Elisha.

It was in the wicked Antediluvian Age that Enoch was translated, an expression of God’s commendation of holiness. And now in the Prophetic Age, so far away from God, is this repetition of this great truth. . . .

That this Elijah continued to exist was abundantly established by his appearance, centuries afterwards, in the Mount of Transfiguration. There with Moses, the great representative of the Law, and Elijah the representative of the Prophets, is Jesus the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.¹²

Ardent zeal and fervor were Elijah’s prominent characteristics. He made his own high moral standard the ethical standard of the nation. He is a type of prophet for all time, as Malachi testified: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:5, 6).

The function of spiritual cleansing that Elijah typified was later seen in the ministry of John the Baptist, who came “in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord [Messiah]” (Lu. 1:17).

A measure of the man

“Now by this [raising of widow’s son] I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth” (I Ki. 17:24).

“Elijah the prophet . . . said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word” (I Ki. 18:36).

“He requested for himself that he might die; and said, it is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers” (I Ki. 19:4).

“I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away” (I Ki. 19:10).

“It came to pass, as they [Elijah and Elisha] still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (II Ki. 2:11).

“Jesus . . . said . . . Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Mt. 17:11).

At the Transfiguration: “Behold, there talked with him [Jesus Christ] two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lu. 9: 30, 31).

I Ki. 19:19–21; II Ki. 2–9; 13:14–21

Elisha: "God is my salvation"

A son of Shaphat

He is anointed by Elijah—leaves all to serve him

Witnesses Elijah's translation—takes up Elijah's mantle—receives double portion of his spirit—divides Jordan—is acknowledged Elijah's successor by the prophetic guilds

Elisha heals bitter waters of Jericho

Moab rebels against Israel—King Jehoram seeks aid of King Jehoshaphat of Judah and of king of Edom—Elisha's prayers bring water and promise of victory—Moabites smitten

Multiplies the widow's oil

Promises a son to Shunammite—raises her son from death

He renders poisoned pottage harmless—feeds a hundred men with twenty loaves—heals Naaman's leprosy—Gehazi, Elisha's servant, is smitten with leprosy at the prophet's word for coveting gain from Na-aman which Elisha had refused

Causes iron axe head to swim

Discloses to King Jehoram battle plans of Syrian king—Syrian army, sent to seize Elisha, is smitten with blindness at Elisha's word—army is led to Samaria—their sight is restored—army dismissed in peace

Samaria besieged by Syria—great famine—Elisha's life threatened by king—his prophecy of plenty fulfilled as Syrian army flees

Hazeal kills King Ben-hadad II of Syria and reigns, according to Elisha's prophecy

Elisha anoints Jehu king of Israel—Jehu accomplishes destruction of Ahab's house and the death of Jezebel

Years later Elisha prophesies to King Jehoash three victories over the Syrians

Elisha's death at 90—his bones restore a dead man to life

ELISHA, the second great prophet in the Kingdom of Israel, was Elijah's successor. His work was accomplished during a period of continued apostasy in which, nevertheless, the blessings of God's grace were manifested to Israel.

Elisha's ministry began when Elijah, at divine direction, cast his mantle upon him. The prophet had been directed, "Elisha . . . shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room" (I Ki. 19:16). Elisha was "plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth" when the call came. At once he left his work, his family and home, to minister to Elijah.

Five years or more of consecrated preparation for his calling were accorded him under the tutelage of Elijah (the latter years of Ahab's reign, those of Ahaziah's, and possibly the early years of Jehoram's). He was known as that prophet "which poured water on the hands of Elijah." Elisha also profited by the religious education afforded him through association with the schools of the prophets.

On the way to the place of his translation Elijah bade farewell to these schools. He went with Elisha from Gilgal ("circle"). He said, "Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Beth-el ['house of God']." A second time he commanded, "Tarry here . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho ['place of fragrance']." A third time Elijah said, "Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan [type of immortality]." Each time Elisha answered, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." How close the unity of purpose and rapport of thought of these two God-directed men! "And they two went on . . . they two stood by Jordan . . . they two went over on dry ground . . . they still went on, and talked."

Elijah said, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." The desire of his faithful disciple was to be worthy of inheriting the prophetic office from his great master: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." Elijah answered, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." Then occurred the glorious translation of Elijah. Elisha saw it, and received that for which he had prayed. Divesting himself of his own garments, tearing them in two pieces, he took up the mantle that had fallen to him from Elijah.

He immediately exercised the divine authority vested in him, smiting the waters of Jordan with the mantle so that its waters parted and he passed over on dry ground. The same great love that enabled Elisha to go beyond Jordan with Elijah also brought him back to shepherd Israel. The sons of the prophets at once acknowledged his right of succession. "He tarried at Jericho . . . went up from thence unto Beth-el . . . from thence to mount Carmel ['fruitful field,' 'harvest'], and . . . returned to Samaria."

Elisha labored for approximately fifty years under four of the kings of Israel: Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash. Like Elijah, he was the mouthpiece of God's will, voicing the divine displeasure at the iniquitous

conduct of secular rulers or bringing divine aid when these rulers turned to God for succor.

In the reign of Jehoram, during an invasion by the Moabites, the prophet wrought a miracle for the king and his confederates (Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom) whereby water in abundance was supplied to their thirsty armies and the Moabites were enticed into their hands (II Ki. 3:5–27).

On another occasion Elisha, through spiritual perception, aided Jehoram by warning him in advance of the battle plans of Israel's Syrian enemy. The Syrian king, learning of this, sent his army by night to capture the prophet; when Elisha's servant awoke in the morning to find the city compassed by the enemy, he feared for his master's safety. But Elisha said, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them"; he asked God to open the eyes of his servant that he might see that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about." At his word God smote the Syrian army with blindness and Elisha led them to the city of Samaria. There, at his prayer, their eyes were opened and they found themselves in the power of the king of Israel. Following the prophet's humane recommendation, the king fed his enemies and dismissed them in peace. Throughout the whole train of events Elisha acted with such wisdom and mercy that no violence ensued, and the lives of both friend and foe were preserved (II Ki. 6:8–23).

A third time he aided this king by prophesying the end of a severe famine in Samaria caused by the siege of the city by Ben-hadad's Syrian army, and through divine intervention the enemy was routed (II Ki. 6:24–7:20).

The many miracles of Elisha's ministry, all of which took place after he received the double portion of the Spirit, evidenced the grace, mercy, and goodness of God, working blessings to men in the common walks of life.

At Jericho he purified the waters of a spring;
He multiplied the widow's oil to the saving of her house;
He comforted the Shunammite woman with the promise of a son;
He raised her son from the dead;
He rendered poisoned pottage harmless;
With twenty loaves he fed a hundred men;
He healed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, but punished his own servant Gehazi for abusing his master's name;
He caused an iron axe head to float;
Elisha's bones restored a dead man to life.

Elisha fulfilled two of the commissions given Elijah at Horeb: to appoint Hazael king of Syria and to anoint Jehu king of Israel (II Ki. 8:7–13; 9:1–10). Through Hazael's wars against Israel, Israel was weakened; through Jehu the house of Ahab was totally destroyed, the wickedness of Jezebel against God's prophets was avenged, and Baal worship was exterminated in the Kingdom of Israel.

Elisha's life evidenced and foreshadowed the grace and practical love of humanity that so fully characterized the life of Jesus Christ.

A measure of the man

Elijah "found Elisha . . . who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him" (I Ki. 19:19).

"Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy [Elijah's] spirit be upon me" (II Ki. 2:9).

"Elisha saw it [Elijah's translation], and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (II Ki. 2:12).

"He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him. . . ." (II Ki. 2:13)

"When the sons of the prophets . . . saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they . . . bowed themselves to the ground before him" (II Ki. 2:15).

"Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah" (II Ki. 3:11).

"Behold now, I [the Shunammite] perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually" (II Ki. 4:9).

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (II Ki. 6:16).

When the king of Israel said to Elisha of the Syrian prisoners, "My father, shall I smite them?" Elisha answered, "Thou shalt not smite them: wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master" (II Ki. 6:21, 22).

I Ki. 15:8–24; II Chron. 14–16

Asa: “physician,” “healer”

Asa, godly king—succeeds his father Abijam (Abijah) as third king of Judah
 His reign is contemporary with the reigns of Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab, kings of Israel
 Destroys idolatry and commands Judah to seek God and to keep His law
 Strengthens his kingdom—obtains victory over the Ethiopians through prayer
 Asa and his people make a solemn covenant with God at Jerusalem—long peace
 War with Baasha of Israel
 His league with Syria—reproved for his defection
 Diseased in his feet—fails to seek God’s help—his death
 Reigns 41 years

JEHOSHAPHAT Reformation in Judah

I Ki. 15:24; 22:2–50; II Ki. 3:6–27;

II Chron. 17:1–21:1

Jehoshaphat: “Jehovah judges”

Jehoshaphat, godly king—succeeds his father Asa
 His reign contemporary with reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, kings of Israel
 He continues religious reforms of Asa—sends Levites to teach the Law in Judah
 He fortifies his cities—his kingdom prospers
 His league with Ahab to fight against Ramoth-gilead
 Reproved by the prophet Jehu for his alliance with Ahab
 Reappoints religious teachers for the people and reorganizes judiciary system
 Kingdom invaded by Ammonites and Moabites—nation fasts—miraculous victory
 Makes a league with Ahaziah to send ships to Tarshish—ships wrecked
 Reigns 25 years

ASA & JEHOSHAPHAT

were “godly” kings of the southern Kingdom of Judah. Their reigns were responsible for important periods of reformation in Judah’s history.

The United Kingdom had been divided into two kingdoms at the death of Solomon: the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel. The tribe of Judah, to which the tribe of Benjamin soon joined itself, constituted the southern kingdom.

Jacob’s prophecy, centuries earlier, had designated the tribe of Judah as the one from which the Messiah would come (Gen. 49:8–12). David was of this tribe, and God’s covenant had been renewed with David and his house. Although the Kingdom of Israel had the greater portion of territory and the majority of the population, the divinely appointed line of descent lay with the Kingdom of Judah. (It is interesting to note that through all the vicissitudes of Judah’s coming history of nearly three and a half centuries the Davidic line was never broken, while in rival Israel the line of succession was broken repeatedly.)

The religious sanction also remained with Judah. The Temple, dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, stood in Jerusalem, Judah’s capital, and the Levitical priesthood instituted by Moses was maintained in Judah; while in Israel its first king Jeroboam established a counter-worship, setting up two golden calves as symbols of Jehovah, one in Beth-el and the other in Dan, and a base unlawful priesthood (I Ki. 12:28–31).

The calf-worship of Israel never penetrated Judah but the worship of God was often corrupted by the inroads of other heathen cults. Both kingdoms went through centuries of idolatry and religious decline. Judah’s idolatry, however, never reached the total apostasy of Israel’s. Outstanding periods of reformation under Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah made a strong imprint on the nation’s life span. The goodly reigns of these kings, whereby idolatry was partially rooted out and Judah’s covenant with God renewed, gave a fresh, healthful impetus to monotheistic worship and lengthened its national life almost a century and a half beyond that of the Kingdom of Israel.

ASA was the first of the four “godly” kings, the great-grandson of Solomon and third king of Judah, reigning over forty years. “Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,” as did his forefather David. At the beginning of his reign he launched a vigorous religious reform: expelled the sodomites from the land, destroyed the idols, and even deposed his grandmother for her worship of an Asherah; but he was unable wholly to suppress worship on heathen high places (I Ki. 15:14; see High Places, p. 50). During ten years of peace he strengthened the kingdom, fortified its cities, and enlarged his army.

When a great Ethiopian army invaded Judah, Asa prayerfully relied on God for help. As he returned triumphantly from his pursuit of the enemy, the prophet Azariah warned, “The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.” He urged the king to continue his reformative

work; so Asa again purged Judah of its idols and climaxed his efforts with a solemn renewal of the ancient covenant with God.

In the latter part of his reign Asa fell from grace when he made an alliance with Ben-hadad I of Syria, seeking his help against Baasha of Israel. When the prophet Hanani rebuked him for his failure to rely on God, "Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing." In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, "yet . . . he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers. . . ."

JEHOSHAPHAT, Son of Asa, was the second of the four "godly" kings. "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim." Immediately upon his accession to the throne he began a religious revival, as had his father, to cleanse Judah of its idolatry, sodomy, groves, and high places. Moreover he sent Levites into every city to teach the people the law of the Lord. Having lifted its religious standard, Judah prospered and was at peace with neighboring nations.

Jehoshaphat even made peace with King Ahab of Israel, ending the long period of hostility which had existed between the two kingdoms. This peace was further strengthened by the marriage of his son Jehoram to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; but this alliance later proved injurious for it introduced Tyrian Baal worship into Judah. Jehoshaphat was persuaded by Ahab into an imprudent league to wrest the city of Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians. The battle was disastrous; Ahab was killed and Jehoshaphat almost lost his life. On the king's return the prophet Jehu reproved him: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

Rededicating himself to Judah's welfare, Jehoshaphat journeyed personally throughout his kingdom, reappointing teachers for religious instruction of the people. He also reorganized local courts of justice, appointing judges in every fortified city and establishing a supreme court in Jerusalem composed of priests, Levites, and elders to review cases appealed from local courts. Though his reforms were sweeping, "the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers" (II Chron. 20:33).

A crisis in Jehoshaphat's reign occurred when the Moabites and Ammonites invaded Judah (II Chron. 20). The king turned unreservedly to God and called on Judah to fast with him. He prayed, "O our God . . . we have no might against this great company . . . neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." The answer came, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." Singers to praise "the beauty of holiness" were sent before the army, and when they began to sing, the Lord caused the enemy to destroy itself.

Toward the close of his reign Jehoshaphat made a league with another wicked king of Israel (Ahaziah), an economic one to build merchant ships; but this alliance was denounced by the prophet Eliezer and its failure foretold. His reign lasted twenty-five years.

A measure of the man

"Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. . . . But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days" (I Ki. 15:11, 14).

"When Asa heard . . . the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin . . . and renewed the altar of the Lord. . . ." (II Chron. 15:8)

"Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. . . . Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars" (II Chron. 16:7, 9).

"The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; But sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel" (II Chron. 17:3, 4).

"He had riches and honour in abundance" (II Chron. 17:5).

"Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God" (II Chron. 19:3).

"He walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers" (II Chron. 20:32,33).

II Ki. 19; 20; II Chron. 26:22; 32:20–22;

Book of Isaiah

Isaiah: “Jehovah is salvation”

Son of Amoz—resides in Jerusalem

Isaiah prophesies for Kingdom of Judah during reigns of the kings Azariah (Uzziah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah

His vision of God’s glory comes to him in the last year of Uzziah’s reign—his call to preach to an unrepentant people—God’s promise of a remnant

Isaiah warns Ahaz against an alliance with Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel to fight Assyria—Syria and Israel turn against Ahaz and attack Judah (II Ki. 16:5)—Isaiah comforts Ahaz with prophecies of their downfall—foretells the Advent of the Messiah

When Ahaz turns for aid to Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, Isaiah prophesies Assyria will invade Judah

He repeatedly warns Judah of judgment for its corruption, wickedness, pride, yet comforts his people with prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom and with promise of a faithful remnant

He pronounces God’s judgment on heathen nations

Isaiah aids Hezekiah’s great religious reform

(Northern Kingdom of Israel carried captive to Assyria by Sargon in 722 B.C.)

Isaiah pronounces judgment against Sennacherib, son of Sargon, when he attempts to invade Judah—his prayers, joined with Hezekiah’s, save Jerusalem

He foretells Hezekiah’s recovery from sickness

Isaiah, hearing that Hezekiah has shown his treasures to Babylonian envoys, predicts the captivity of Judah

His labors, 40 years

ISAIAH was the first of the Major Prophets, chief among the writing prophets, and his work marked the crest of the first great wave of Hebrew prophecy.

The prophetic movement instituted by Samuel and exemplified so strikingly by Elijah and Elisha was moving toward a fuller flowering in the labors and writings of the four Major Prophets and of the twelve Minor Prophets (for their dates and books see pp. 17–19). For four centuries (ca. 800–400 B.C.) the prophets were the outstanding men of the nation, its religious leaders, true patriots, and statesmen. The divine will was voiced through them; they were God’s messengers, constantly reminding Israel of her destiny as the covenant people. By precept and living parable they exhorted the people of both the northern and southern kingdoms to a true moral repentance, foreseeing the doom of these kingdoms if they did not return to God. Their prophecies against oppressing heathen nations extended encouragement to the afflicted masses. These great seers, beholding God’s eternal order above and beyond the world of their day, divested Israel’s religion of its national character by revealing His impartial justice, and showed its principles and ethics to be universal. They knew Him as merciful, just, and righteous, the God of all nations.

Isaiah appears to have been of noble birth. He lived in Jerusalem and was an eminent statesman in the royal court (740–701 B.C.) under four of the kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah received his call to the office of prophet in early manhood, during the last year of Uzziah’s reign (Is. 6). He was accorded a transcendent vision of God’s glory and majesty that lifted him to spiritual heights. “I saw . . . the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. . . . And one [of the seraphim] cried . . . Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (compare Rev. 4:2,8).

His vision also cast him into the depths of despair: “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. . . . Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand. . . . And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Hearing God’s question “Whom shall I send?” Isaiah answered, “Here am I; send me.” This revelation of God’s holiness, sovereignty, and omnipresence became the wellspring of his life; and his utter dedication to God’s service held him in unceasing communion with “the Holy One of Israel.”

Under Uzziah and Jotham, Judah had prospered and grown fat. Ahaz inherited a kingdom outwardly strong but inwardly corrupt, riddled with vice and social evils (Is. 2:7,8; 3:14,15; 5:11,12,23). Isaiah vehemently rebuked his nation for its oppression of the poor, excessive indulgences, idolatry, formalism of worship, “vain oblations,” pronounc-

ing God's judgments on these evils.

Isaiah came at a time when the Assyrian Empire was at the height of its power and was pressing on the small neighboring states of Syria and Israel. These two sought the aid of Ahaz, but Isaiah counseled against such a confederacy and foretold the fall of Syria and Israel (Is. 7:1–9). When Ahaz made an alliance with Assyria, Isaiah prophesied its near-fatal results to Judah (II Ki. 16:5–8; Is. 8:5–12).

To Hezekiah's great reformation (see next page) Isaiah gave full support. He urged Hezekiah, as he had Ahaz, to refrain from foreign alliances, but with less success. For three years he walked half-naked and barefoot like a captive through Judah to warn the nation against reliance on Egypt and Ethiopia (Is. 20; 30; 31). In 701 B.C. Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and threatened Jerusalem. Isaiah upheld Hezekiah in this crisis and through their prayers the city was delivered (Is. 36; 37; compare 10:24–27; 14:24–27; 17:12–14; 31:8, 9), but later when Hezekiah allied himself with Babylon, Isaiah foretold Judah's captivity (Is. 39).

During these trying political times Isaiah comforted Judah with the promise of a God-sent Messiah, Immanuel (Is. 7:14; 28:6), and revealed the sublime nature of this Redeemer (Is. 9:6,7; 11:1–5). He enlarged his prophecies to predict the fall of the tyrant Assyria, to enumerate the blessings of the Messianic kingdom, to foretell the return of a faithful remnant of the covenant people and the calling of the Gentiles (Is. 10–12). At the same time he repeatedly warned Judah of judgment for its sins (Is. 1–5; 29). To strengthen the nation's faith he uttered ten "burdens" or judgments against heathen nations (Is. 13–23), and predicted the breaking up of the old world order (Is. 24–27). The righteous would be exalted in Zion and "see the king in his beauty," and "the ransomed of the Lord" would dwell in Messiah's kingdom (Is. 33; 35).

While the earlier prophecies of Isaiah look toward the captivities (Is. 1–39), his later prophecies, the work of his maturer years, look beyond the Exile to the glorious restoration of the covenant people (Is. 40–66). (Because of the change of style and theme in these latter writings, many modern scholars consider them the work of a Second Isaiah [Is. 40–55] and a Third Isaiah [Is. 56–66].) From the new standpoint the prophet saw the future as if it were present (as did John in his Apocalypse). His prophecies were full of comfort to a people whose "warfare is accomplished," whose "iniquity is pardoned." The wisdom and saving power of God are proclaimed and the restoration of Judah is assured, Cyrus being the instrument for their deliverance (Is. 40–48). God's mercy and tender love to the restored are stressed (Is. 54–59).

Isaiah foresaw the Messiah's First Advent in suffering and humiliation. Whereas he had previously spoken of Messiah's kingship, he now emphasized the Messiah's office as the "servant" of God whose mission was not alone to Israel but to the whole world (Is. 42:1–4; 49:1–10; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). He also foresaw the Messiah's Second Advent in judgment and glory (Is. 63:1–4). He painted a glowing picture of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the spiritual inheritance of Israel, and saw the glory of a new Jerusalem and of a new heaven and a new earth (Is. 60–66).

A measure of the man

"O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Is. 2:5).

"I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion" (Is. 8:17,18).

"The Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia. . . ." (Is. 20:3)

"A grievous vision is declared unto me. . . . Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it" (Is. 21:2,3).

"Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision. . . ." (Is. 22:4,5)

"O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Is. 25:1).

"With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9).

HEZEKIAH Reformation in Judah

II Ki. 18–20; II Chron. 29–32;

Is. 36–39; Jer. 26:17–19

Hezekiah: “strengthened of Jah”

Hezekiah, godly king, succeeds his father Ahaz

Begins at once to restore true religion—commands Levites to sanctify themselves and the Temple

Nation observes solemn Passover—people destroy idols throughout Judah

Hezekiah rebels against Assyria, refusing to pay tribute—builds an aqueduct to supply Jerusalem with water—makes alliances with Ethiopia and Egypt

Hezekiah’s sickness and prayer—his life is lengthened

Sennacherib of Assyria invades Judah—Hezekiah sends tribute—Sennacherib’s army threatens Jerusalem—Isaiah prophesies against Sennacherib—army miraculously smitten by a plague

Hezekiah shows his treasures to Babylonian envoys—Isaiah rebukes him and prophesies Judah’s captivity

Reigns 29 years

JOSIAH Reformation in Judah

II Ki. 21:24; 22:1–23:30;

II Chron. 34; 35

Josiah: “Jah supports”

Josiah, godly king, succeeds his wicked father Amon

In faith and piety he destroys idolatry, abominations, and witchcraft throughout Judah and Samaria—prophet Jeremiah aids in reform

Repairs the Temple—book of the law is found—fearing judgment he consults the prophetess Huldah—renews the covenant—solemn Passover observed

Opposes Pharaoh-necho of Egypt—is slain in battle at Megiddo

Reigns 31 years

HEZEKIAH & JOSIAH were the last two of the four “godly” kings who instituted important reforms in the southern Kingdom of Judah.

HEZEKIAH, son of Ahaz and thirteenth king, came to the throne (723 B.C.?) when Judah was in a deplorable state of apostasy. His father had worshiped Baalim and the gods of Syria, subjected Judah to abominable Canaanitish rites, and finally closed the doors of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Immediately upon his accession Hezekiah, aided by the prophets Isaiah and Micah, began religious reforms. “He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord,” and enjoined the Levitical priesthood to cleanse the Temple and sanctify it for its proper use. He said, “It is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel.” Eight days were needed to cleanse the sanctuary, and eight days to cleanse the outer court and restore the sacred vessels. When all this was done he called Judah to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. His proclamation was extended even to Israelitish brethren of the Northern Kingdom, and many humbled themselves, and came. The consecrating effect of its observance was felt in every corner of the kingdom; the people returned to their villages to destroy their idolatrous altars and high places. Hezekiah’s next reform extended to the reorganization of Temple service: priests and Levites were appointed in their courses (orders) and the people commanded to pay the Mosaic tithes so the priesthood might be encouraged in its religious duties. His concern for the welfare of his subjects and his persevering efforts to promote the cause of true religion rank him as one of Judah’s most righteous kings.

Under Hezekiah’s leadership Judah prospered. He regained the cities of Philistia that Ahaz had lost, and threw off the yoke of Assyria by refusing to pay Shalmaneser V the yearly tribute Ahaz had rendered to Tiglath-pileser III. (In 722 B.C. Sargon II, Shalmaneser’s successor, invaded the Kingdom of Israel and, according to Sargon’s own inscription, deported more than 27,000 of its leading citizens to Assyria [II Ki. 18:9–11].) To strengthen Judah against Assyria, Hezekiah refortified Jerusalem and built an aqueduct to bring water within its walls. He made alliances with Ethiopia and Egypt, measures that Isaiah sternly rebuked (Is. 18:1–5; 20; 30:1–5; 31:1–3).

Hezekiah’s reliance on God was manifest in his personal experience when he fell mortally ill. Turning to God (as King Asa had not), he was healed and his life lengthened by fifteen years.

Sargon’s successor, Sennacherib, after invading Judah’s border cities, marched against the capital (ca. 701 B.C.), and in a blasphemous letter demanded its surrender. Hezekiah, acknowledging God’s supremacy over all the kingdoms of the earth, prayed for deliverance. It was revealed to Isaiah that God would defend the city, and that night an “angel of the Lord” smote the Assyrian camp with death and Jerusalem was delivered.

Hezekiah erred when he showed the treasures of his kingdom to

ambassadors from Babylon. For this Isaiah rebuked him and foretold Judah's captivity in Babylon.

JOSIAH, son of Amon, was the sixteenth and last of the "godly" kings (638–608 B.C.). His grandfather Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, had ruled for fifty-five years. Manasseh had reverted to heathen abominations but, carried captive by the Assyrians and imprisoned in Babylon, he later repented and returned to Jerusalem to correct the evils of his earlier reign. Manasseh's wicked son Amon ruled only two years.

Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne; at sixteen he began to seek God diligently—he "walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." He was not quite twenty when he declared open warfare on idolatry.

At twenty-six he turned to the repair of the Temple. During the restoration the book of the law ("the legislative kernel" of our Deuteronomy, chaps. 5–26, 28; or, according to some critics, the Deuteronomic Code, chaps. 12–26) was found by Hilkiah the high priest. When Josiah heard its commandments and its curses pronounced on disobedience, he was greatly dismayed. Hoping to avert these fearful dooms, he humbly sought counsel of the prophetess Huldah and was comforted by her assurance that because of his contrition judgment would not fall on the kingdom during his lifetime.

Josiah summoned the people to Jerusalem. In solemn assembly he read aloud the book of the law and made a covenant with God to uphold its commandments and statutes, and caused the people to stand to the covenant. He then set out on a sweeping reform to bring Judah's religious worship into line with the Mosaic standard. The Temple was thoroughly cleansed of cultic practices, and idolatrous priests were removed. Josiah himself journeyed throughout Judah and even throughout Samaria (former Kingdom of Israel) and in his presence all altars were broken down, the graven images beaten into powder, and the groves (cultic poles of Asherah) cut down. So drastic were his measures that Baalism was abolished and worship at high places wholly destroyed. His labors were supported by the zeal of the prophet Jeremiah. Josiah also caused the Passover to be kept in strict conformity with Mosaic ordinances and on a scale unprecedented since the days of Samuel. For more than a decade the struggle for reform went on. It was far-reaching in its effects, for it buttressed the people in their knowledge of Mosaic Law and was to nurture spiritual religion during the coming years of exile in Babylon.

In 608 B.C., as Necho of Egypt marched his armies to war against the Assyrians, Josiah unwisely opposed their passage through Palestine and was slain at Megiddo.

The four reformatory movements in the Southern Kingdom under its godly kings and prophets, by which Judah was periodically halted in its religious lapses, preserved and sustained the seed of righteousness, while apostate Israel, whose kings gave no heed to its God-sent prophets, went unrepentant to its doom. These vital revivals explain why Judah, after a limited captivity that burned away the dross of idolatry, was given renewed opportunity to return to the land of its destiny to carry forward its Messianic mission.

A measure of the man

Hezekiah "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did" (II Ki. 18:3).

"He clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses" (II Ki. 18:6).

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. . . . Then he . . . prayed unto the Lord, saying, I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore" (II Ki. 20:1–3).

"In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered" (II Chron. 31:21).

"In the eighth year of his [Josiah's] reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images" (II Chron. 34:3).

"Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers . . . in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same" (II Chron. 34:27,28).

II Chron. 35:25; 36:12; Books of
Jeremiah and Lamentations
Jeremiah: "Jah will rise"

Son of Hilkiah (a priest of Anathoth)
Prophesies during the reigns of Josiah,
Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin,
Zedekiah
Jeremiah's call to the office of prophet
He rebukes Judah's persistent idolatry
—warns nation to repent—
preaches God's judgments on their
sins
Jeremiah takes an active part in Josiah's
great religious reformation
His life is threatened during King
Jehoiakim's reign by hostility of
people, priests, princes, and the
king himself because of his direful
predictions—foretells destruction
of Jerusalem and seventy years'
captivity of Judah in Babylon—
foretells return of a remnant
God commands Jeremiah to write his
prophecies that all Judah may
hear—in a rage King Jehoiakim
burns the roll of prophecies—roll
rewritten
(Nineveh, capital of Assyria, falls to
Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon)
Judah becomes a vassal of Nebuchad-
nezzar—first deportation of cap-
tives to Babylon
During King Jehoiachin's reign Nebu-
chadnezzar loots Jerusalem—
second deportation of captives to
Babylon
During King Zedekiah's reign Jeremiah
prophesies Chaldean victory—is
imprisoned
Jerusalem is captured by Nebuchad-
nezzar—Judah is carried captive to
Babylon (third deportation)
Jeremiah remains in Jerusalem with a
small remnant of Judah—when
they revolt against Babylonian rule
he is compelled to go with them to
Egypt—continues his labors
Prophecies over 40 years

JEREMIAH, the second of the

Major Prophets, came three-quarters of a century after Isaiah. He also was associated with the great period of Hebrew prophecy. He prophesied during the closing years of Judah's history as a monarchy, beginning under King Josiah's godly reign and continuing until after the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

The call of Jeremiah was as distinct and clear as that of Isaiah: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying . . . before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee. . . . Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer. 1:4–10).

Now knowing himself God's messenger to Judah, Jeremiah fearlessly undertook the great task of "rooting out" and "pulling down." He relentlessly exposed Judah's iniquities in defiling God's goodness. Israel had been punished for its whoredom, "Yet," said Jeremiah, "her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also" (Jer. 3:8).

His resolve to carry out his mission in spite of all opposition was strengthened by the assurance of God's presence: "I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land . . . they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee." Because he dared to declare calamitous judgments against the priests, the Temple, the people, and even Jerusalem itself, his life was repeatedly in danger. The men of his village of Anathoth plotted to kill him (Jer. 11:21). His family dealt treacherously with him (Jer. 12:6). He was persecuted by the priests and false prophets, beaten, and subjected to the humiliating indignity of imprisonment in the stocks (Jer. 26:8; 20:2). Their mockery and derision of God's word wrought agony in his soul. Jeremiah's own spirit would have failed him, but so imbued was he with the Spirit and with pitying love for his people that he wrote: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him [God], nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (20:9).

Jeremiah's prophetic voice rang even more insistently in the streets of Jerusalem against Judah's disobedience during the wicked reigns of

Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim. For twenty-three years Jeremiah had warned his nation not to provoke God to their "own hurt." Now he predicted Judah's captivity: "This whole land shall be a desolation . . . and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jer. 25:11). When he foretold the destruction of their sacred sanctuary the Temple and of Jerusalem their holy city, all rose up, crying, "Thou shalt surely die."

Assyrian power was broken when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Nineveh in 606 B.C. The same year he invaded Judah, placed it under tribute, and carried captive to Babylon King Jehoiakim and some of the nobility, including Daniel (first deportation [II Chron. 36:6; Dan. 1:2,3,6]).

Jeremiah, hindered on every side, was commanded of God to write all of his prophecies of judgment in a book in the hope that Judah would yet hear, "that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." Jeremiah dictated these prophecies to his faithful friend Baruch, who read the roll publicly on several occasions; but King Jehoiakim dishonored these by slashing and burning the roll. Under divine direction Jeremiah commanded Baruch to rewrite it and, undaunted, added "many like words" (Jer. 36).

In Jehoiachin's reign Jeremiah was a sorrowful witness to the pillaging of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar and to the second deportation (of ten thousand captives) to Babylon (597 B.C.), the king and Ezekiel among them (II Ki. 24:14,15; Ezek. 1:1,2).

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He too refused to heed Jeremiah's warnings, even casting the prophet ignominiously into a miry dungeon (Jer. 38:6-13). He rebelled against Babylon and in 586 B.C. Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar and the city was razed. Jeremiah saw the destruction of the Temple, the tragic desolation of Jerusalem, and the third and final deportation of captives to Babylon (II Ki. 25:11).

Because Jeremiah had repeatedly counseled his nation to submit to God's chastisement by the hand of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar did not harm him, but permitted him to remain with a remnant in Judah. When this remnant, discrediting his prophecy of safety in Judah, fled to Egypt, he was compelled to go with them. The record of his life closes while he was still prophesying in Egypt.

As Jeremiah had worked "to root out, and to pull down," so he also strove "to build, and to plant." Like Isaiah, he assured Judah of God's love and forgiveness, comforting them with God's gracious promises of a return from captivity, a restoration of their glory, and the coming of the Messiah, "the Branch" (Jer. 32:37-33:26).

He perceived the terrible failure of external religion to effect a genuine repentance. He saw that God's law must be written in the heart, and consequently he foretold a new covenant when men would take individual responsibility for obedience: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:31,33). The new covenant was to find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and his gospel (Heb. 8:6-13).

A measure of the man

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer. 9:1)

"But if ye [Judah] will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive" (Jer. 13:17).

"Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me. . . . O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. 15:10,15,16).

"I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me" (Jer. 20:7).

"But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail. . . ." (Jer. 20:11)

"Mine heart within me is broken because of the [false] prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness" (Jer. 23:9).

". . . the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened" (Jer. 25:3).

Book of Ezekiel

Ezekiel: "God strengthens"

Priest and prophet, son of Buzi

Ezekiel is taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar during reign of Jehoiachin (second deportation)

He resides with a colony of Jewish exiles at Tel-abib near the river Chebar

His vision of God's glory in the fifth year of his captivity—his call to preach to captive Judah—is filled with the Spirit—is commissioned as spiritual guardian of the whole house of Israel

Repeatedly by symbolic actions, dramatic imagery, and visions he preaches the rejection of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem as a consequence of Judah's iniquities

He preaches to a rebellious people—shows the exiles the true meaning of their captivity—gives them hope and prophesies the saving of a remnant

Ezekiel pronounces God's dire judgments upon the neighboring nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, and the cities of Tyre and Sidon—also a series of five judgments against Egypt

Ezekiel is recommissioned a guardian of the nation after the fall of Jerusalem—rebukes the unfaithful leaders (shepherds of Israel)

Comforts his people with prophecies of restoration and redemption

His apocalyptic vision of a holy Jerusalem and an ideal temple (chaps. 40–48)

He prophesies for 22 years

EZEKIEL was the third of the Major Prophets. He was connected with the period of Judah's Babylonian captivity.

There was a striking difference between the fall of Israel and that of Judah. Israel was dispersed, never again to be united. Judah was not scattered but as an entity was to endure a seventy-year captivity (Jer. 25:11; 29:10). The Kingdom of Israel had begun with revolt and corrupted its religious worship from its inception. Judah was to be cleansed and drawn closer to God; from Judah a righteous remnant was to be saved and restored.

Ezekiel was a priest by birth and training, and lived in Jerusalem. He had an intimate knowledge of Temple worship and had undoubtedly been influenced as a young man by the preaching of Zephaniah and Jeremiah. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. in the second deportation of captives (Ezek. 1:2; compare II Ki. 24:15). In the fifth year of his captivity he had a remarkable vision of God's glory in which he received his call to be a prophet (Ezek. 1:1–3:21).

He was told, "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me. . . son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee." A roll (book) written with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe" was given him. "So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll." Facing an obstinate people, Ezekiel was strengthened by the assurance "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces. . . . As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

For seven days he sat silent and "astonished" in the colony of Hebrew exiles at the river Chebar. At the end of this time he was further commissioned as a spiritual guardian of his people: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." It was his responsibility to warn the captives of the necessity to reform their ways and endure their chastisement. If he failed to do so, he would be held accountable for their deaths. After a fresh vision of God's glory he was instructed to preach only under divine impulsions (Ezek. 3:22–27).

Ezekiel's ministry lasted for twenty-two years (592–570 B.C.); his early preaching was contemporary with Jeremiah's. By stern and vigorous measures he endeavored to rouse the captives from their bitterness of spirit and mournful longings for their homeland. In the first six years of his ministry the whole burden of his message was God's coming judgment upon Jerusalem for apostasy. He depicted its siege and destruction by signs of the tile, prolonged lying on his side, the defiled bread, and the sharp knife, impressing upon the captives the inevitability of its fall (Ezek. 4–7). In a series of visions he foretold the sin and doom of Jerusalem (Ezek. 8–11). Lying prophets decrying the truth of Ezekiel's

warnings were reproved (Ezek. 12–14); and by the figures of a vine-branch, a wretched infant, two eagles and a vine, and a lioness' whelps, the rejection and desolation of Jerusalem were vividly portrayed (Ezek. 15–19). Ezekiel made greater use of the apocalyptic method of writing than did any other Old Testament prophet except Daniel (see *Apocalyptic Writing*, p. 490).

Ezekiel's great contribution to the development of religious thought was individual responsibility. Through God's reproof of the unjust proverb of sour grapes (Ezek. 18) he taught the personal relationship of man to God and man's moral accountability for his own conduct. A man was to be judged for his own thoughts and actions, and was not to suffer for the sins of others. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." God would mercifully pardon the wicked man who turned from his wickedness: "He shall surely live, he shall not die." Conversely, should the righteous turn away from his righteousness, "for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die."

The prophet made only one reference to his personal life. On the evening of the opening day of the siege of Jerusalem his beloved wife died. His personal grief was made subordinate to his prophetic labors as an object lesson to Judah. As he was forbidden to mourn her death, so the captives were forbidden to weep over Jerusalem; they were to accept their nation's chastisement and let their mourning be for purification (Ezek. 24).

Ezekiel was recommissioned "a watchman" after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (Ezek. 33). He was to "blow the trumpet" of warning. The same demand for a change of heart, enunciated so often before the city's fall (Ezek. 3:17–21; 18:5–29), was still imperative: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" His prophecies took on a new note of comfort. The captives were assured that if Israel were not to be spared, the heathen nations were in far graver danger (Ezek. 25–32). Ezekiel foretold the happy restoration of a spiritually regenerated remnant to their own land. By his two visions, one of the resurrection of dry bones and the other of the uniting of two sticks, the dead hope of Israel was revived, for God would again put His Spirit within His people, unite Judah and Israel, destroy the enemy armies of Gog and Magog, and establish the promised Messianic kingdom (Ezek. 36–39).

Fourteen years later, in the twenty-fifth year of his captivity, Ezekiel, while in the Spirit, envisioned an ideal community of restored people and an ideal temple with a priesthood undefiled (Ezek. 40–48). In this sanctuary the Shekinah glory was seen (Ezek. 44:4; compare 10:18; 11:23). And from this sanctuary issued life-giving waters that flowed out to heal and bless the whole world. The lofty concept of spiritual religion held by this priestly prophet contributed richly to the re-establishment and maintenance of Jewish theocratic worship after the Exile.

A measure of the man

"Now it came to pass . . . as I was among the captives . . . that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezek. 1:1).

"The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel . . . and the hand of the Lord was there upon him" (Ezek. 1:3).

"Moreover he [Lord God] said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. . . . Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness" (Ezek. 3:1,3).

"Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity . . . and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. . . . So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (Ezek. 3:10–12,14).

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezek. 3:17).

"Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. . . . So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded" (Ezek. 24:16,18).

Book of Daniel

Daniel: "God is my judge"

As a youth of noble birth he is carried captive to Babylon in the first deportation

Appointed to king's service—he and his three companions early manifest devotion to God—they refuse to eat the delicacies of the king's table—the good result

Through prayer Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream of a great image broken by a stone is revealed to Daniel—he interprets it as a prophetic vision of four world empires which are to be succeeded by the Messianic kingdom

Daniel is made ruler of province of Babylon and chief of the king's governors

(Daniel's three companions refuse to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar—they are cast into a fiery furnace—their miraculous delivery)

Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great tree—the king's madness and restoration

Daniel, at King Belshazzar's impious feast, interprets the handwriting on the wall—Belshazzar slain

Darius the Mede sets Daniel over the kingdom—the king's decree—Daniel disregards the decree—is cast into the lions' den—his miraculous deliverance

His apocalyptic vision of four beasts (kingdoms) and of the kingdom of God—vision of ram and he-goat—his prayer for restoration of Jerusalem—vision of seventy weeks—final visions to "the time of the end"

Daniel lives till at least third year of Cyrus, Persian conqueror of Babylon

DANIEL was the fourth and last of the Major Prophets. He, like Ezekiel, was associated with the period of Exile. (Some scholars assign the writing of the book of Daniel to the sixth century B.C., others to the second, ca. 164 B.C.)

Daniel, a Jewish youth of either royal or noble blood, was carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C. during the reign of Jehoiakim. He lived during the whole of the seventy years' captivity, surviving till the days of Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon.

It was a custom in Oriental nations to choose the elite among captives of war to serve in the king's court. Daniel and his three countrymen, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were among those selected to be trained as the king's attendants and taught the Aramaic-Babylonian language and mysteries of the Chaldean sages. Their names were changed to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, Babylonian names that honored the king's gods.

The first challenge to Daniel's faith came when he was commanded to eat the food served at the king's table, but he "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" with the king's meat or wine (Dan. 1). This refusal was actuated by a devout loyalty to Mosaic Law (Lev. 11). Granted permission to adhere to a simple fare of pulse (lentils) and water, he and his friends exercised this self-discipline for three years. At the end of this time they stood before the king, and none was found equal to them in appearance or health. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

Daniel's ability and wisdom were manifest when he recalled and interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar a dream the king had forgotten, one that none of his Babylonian astrologers and soothsayers was able to explain even under threat of death (Dan. 2). Being numbered among the wise men, Daniel and his companions were in danger. Through their earnest prayers the secret was revealed to Daniel. Like Joseph (Gen. 41:16), he disclaimed any wisdom of his own, declaring "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."

This was the dream: the king had seen a great and terrible image in human form, with a head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron and clay. The feet of this image were crushed by a stone "cut out without hands" from the mountainside, and the image was broken in pieces. The stone itself "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Daniel interpreted this dream as representing four world kingdoms, which would rise and fall; but beyond these he saw another, the Messianic kingdom which God would establish. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." The king acknowledged Daniel's God as "a God of gods," and promoted the seer to the position of governor of Babylon and master of the royal astrologers.

A second time Daniel interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4). The king had seen a tree of great height and majesty. An angel commanded that it be cut down, its stump bound with a metal hoop, and that it be left with the beasts of the field for seven years. The tree, Daniel explained, represented the king, who would be deprived of his reason and made to live like a beast till he knew "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Courageously Daniel urged Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sins, but after a twelve-month respite judgment fell on the Babylonian monarch for his inordinate pride. At the end of the prescribed time the king's sanity returned and he humbly acknowledged God "the King of heaven."

During the reign of Belshazzar Daniel occupied a position of honor. At an impious feast given by this ruler Daniel was called to interpret a mysterious handwriting that had appeared on the wall of the banquet room (Dan. 5). He found the writing to be a judgment on Belshazzar, predicting the end of the Babylonian Empire and the rise of the Medo-Persian. The same night Belshazzar was slain and the Babylonian Empire fell to Darius the Mede (unidentifiable in secular history).

Darius, like the preceding Babylonian kings, soon recognized Daniel's moral excellence and made him one of three high officials who supervised the princes set over the 120 satrapies of his kingdom (Dan. 6). When Darius planned to promote him further, the jealous princes plotted against Daniel. Knowing Daniel's practice of daily prayer, they induced Darius to make a royal statute, effective for thirty days, that no petition be made to any god or man except to the king himself on penalty of death. This decree failed to sway Daniel's allegiance to God; he continued to pray three times a day "as he did aforetime." Though cast into a den of lions, he was not harmed, and the following morning he was able to say, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Throughout his whole career Daniel's example of unswerving fidelity to God was a tower of strength to a captive people, a shining example of obedience and trust to future generations.

The prophetic visions accorded Daniel in the last years of the Exile (Dan. 7–12) are apocalyptic in character and may be read with profit in relation to the book of Revelation. In the symbolic vision of four great beasts and the coming of the "Son of man" who stood before the "Ancient of days," the seer depicted the rise and fall of four world empires to be succeeded by the kingdom of the people of God (Dan. 7; compare chap. 2). This prediction was further amplified by the vision of the ram, the he-goat, and the little horn, and its interpretation by the angel Gabriel (Dan. 8). Daniel saw far beyond time and deep into reality. As he prayed for the restoration of his people and of Jerusalem, Gabriel informed him that seventy weeks were decreed until the time of Messiah's coming (Dan. 9). And finally he was comforted by a vision of future events down to the end of the age—to the deliverance of God's people by His angel Michael (Dan. 10–12).

A measure of the man

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. . . . (Dan. 1:8)

"There is a man in thy {Belshazzar's} kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father . . . made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. . . ." (Dan. 5:11)

"This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him. . . ." (Dan. 6:3)

"Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Dan. 6:4).

"I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession. . . ." (Dan. 9:3, 4)

"Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard. . . ." (Dan. 10:12)

"O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened. . . ." (Dan. 10:19)

"Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13).

Ezra 1–6; Neh. 7:6–73; 12:1–9;

Book of Haggai; Zech. 4

Zerubbabel: “born at Babylon”

Zerubbabel (N.T. Zorobabel), son of Shealtiel (Salathiel)—of royal house of David—an ancestor of the Messiah

Cyrus’ proclamation brings to an end the captivity of Judah

Zerubbabel leads the first expedition from Babylon to Jerusalem, thus marking the return of the remnant and the beginning of the Restoration—the sacred vessels of the Temple, which had been taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, are carried with them

Zerubbabel rules as governor of Judah
Temple altar is set up—the foundation of the Temple laid

Adversaries (the Samaritans) hinder its building for sixteen years—by a letter of complaint to Cyrus’ successor they obtain a decree which halts the reconstruction

Zerubbabel, encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, rouses the people to resume the work

Tatnai, Persian governor of the territory west of the Euphrates, questions their right to rebuild—informed of Cyrus’ decree, he requests the new king, Darius, to have a search made for this decree in the Babylonian archives—it is found

Darius makes a new decree authorizing the rebuilding of the Temple

Four years later the Temple is completed and dedicated

ZERUBBABEL

was the leader of the first expedition of Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile. He was associated with the early period of the Restoration and the rebuilding of the Temple.

The prophets had taught that certain great empires were instruments of the divine will: by means of Assyria Israel was punished; by means of Babylon Judah was chastised; in like manner Medo-Persia became an instrument in effecting the restoration of the Jews to their own land that they might fulfill their Messianic destiny.

In 539 B.C. Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon. Isaiah had prophesied of him, “Thus saith the Lord. . . . He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Is. 44:28). A year later Cyrus issued a proclamation: “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem . . . and build the house of the Lord God of Israel” (Ezra 1:1–3).

Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel (I Chron. 3:17) and grandson of King Jehoiachin, was born in captivity. Nothing is known of his life in Babylon. Under his leadership, in 536 B.C., about 50,000 Jews, a “willing” remnant, made the return journey to Jerusalem (800 to 900 miles, four months of travel), taking with them the sacred vessels of the Temple which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away. The Messianic line—in the person of Zerubbabel—is thus seen in the Restoration (see Genealogies of Jesus Christ, p. 224).

The return of the captives is, in a way, the rebirth of the nation. . . . The prophets continually kept before the nation that the Exile would not signify the cessation, but an interruption of their national career, that they were still the chosen people of Jehovah through whom His redemptive plans would be accomplished. Micah announced that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, not in Babylon, Persia, or any other state, hence the return to their inheritance. . . . The expedition of Zerubbabel to Jerusalem is the beginning of the last stage of their career that is to issue in the crowning fact of their selection from among the nations. It is the time of preparation for the coming of the world’s Redeemer. It was necessary therefore that their religious institutions be established and central to these is the Temple, and thus for another five centuries will be foreshadowed the High Priest of the new covenant, the Lamb of God.¹³

Zerubbabel had been appointed governor of Judah by Cyrus (Hag. 1:1). Under his supervision and that of Joshua (Jeshua) the high priest, the altar of burnt offering was set up and sacrificial worship according to Mosaic Law was resumed. The second year after their return the

foundation of the Second Temple was laid (535 B.C.). Neighboring Samaritans offered to help the Jews in its construction, but their aid was refused. (These people were a mixed race, descendants of the Israelites left in the land after the fall of Israel who had intermarried with the Assyrian colonists brought into Samaria. Their religion was a mixed religion: in part the worship of Jehovah and in part the worship of idols.) Zerubbabel answered, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel." His emphatic repudiation of their services caused a schism between Samaritans and Jews that continued for centuries (Jn. 4:9).

Although the Samaritans could not change Cyrus' decree, which granted the Jews permission to rebuild their Temple, for the next sixteen years they employed every means at their command to hinder the work. Seeing the Jews were also beginning to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, they finally sent a malicious letter to Cyrus' successor (Cambyses), accusing the Jews of seditious motives, and succeeded in obtaining a decree that halted all work until the second year of King Darius.

At this critical moment in Israel's restoration history the prophets Haggai and Zechariah appeared on the scene and roused the apathetic remnant by their timely, inspired prophecies. Haggai upbraided the remnant for their negligence and procrastination: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Hag. 1:4). His message was: "I am with you, saith the Lord" (Hag. 1:13), and His promise: "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory. . . .The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (Hag. 2:7,9). The people, infused with a new spirit of dedication began again to rebuild the Temple (520 B.C.).

The Persian satrap Tatnai questioned their right to rebuild, but when he was informed of Cyrus' decree he sent a letter to King Darius requesting verification. The record was found in the royal archives. Darius not only commanded that there be no hindrance to the work, but also gave further impetus to the Jews' hopes by contributing to it from his own treasury.

The prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah strengthened the authority of Zerubbabel and Joshua, for to the prophets these two typified the Messianic hope of the nation. Haggai said, "O Zerubbabel, my servant . . . saith the Lord . . . [I] will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee" (Hag. 2:23). Zechariah declared, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. 4:6,7). In apocalyptic visions Zechariah saw Joshua placed in charge of the Temple (Zech. 3), and foresaw by the figures of the golden candlestick and the two olive trees (Zerubbabel, the Davidic prince; Joshua, the priest—precursors of the two witnesses of Rev. 11) the completion of the Temple and the restoration of spiritual worship (Zech. 4).

In a little over four years the Second Temple was finished and dedicated (515 B.C.) [see Temple p. 163]. His contribution to this work of reconstruction was so great that this Temple is often referred to as Zerubbabel's Temple.

"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zech. 4:9, 10).

"The Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel . . . and the spirit of Joshua . . . and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God. . . .(Hag. 1:14)

"Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:4).

"And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified holy things unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified them unto the children of Aaron" (Neh. 12:47).

Ezra 7–10; Neh. 8–12

Ezra: "help"

Renowned priest and scribe

Ezra is commissioned by Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) of Persia to lead a second expedition of Jewish exiles, a willing remnant, from Babylon to Jerusalem

He is given silver and gold from the king and people to buy offerings for the altar and given a letter authorizing him to draw on the royal treasury for things needful for the Temple, to setup judges to enforce religious and civil law, and to claim exemption from taxes for those in service of the Temple

Before leaving, Ezra sends out a call for Levites to join the expedition—he proclaims a fast and the Jews pray for protection and guidance—they reach Jerusalem safely after a four-month journey

On his arrival he is informed of the mixed marriages that the people, priests, and Levites have made with their idolatrous neighbors—his great grief—his prayer of confession for their sin

Assembles the people at Jerusalem to demand the correction of this violation of Mosaic Law—the people repent and annul their foreign marriages

(A thirteen-year period of silence in Ezra's history—this he may have spent in Babylon at work on the final redaction of the Pentateuch)

Ezra joins Nehemiah in Jerusalem in reformatory work—he instructs the people in the law of Moses from the Pentateuch

EZRA was the leader of the second expedition of Jews who returned to Judah from Babylonian exile. His life-work was identified with the period of the Restoration and the re-establishment of Mosaic Law.

In captivity, Judah, deprived of temple worship and suffering the loss of the beloved city of Jerusalem, turned with deeper insight to the spiritual wealth it still possessed—its heritage of the Law and of the Prophets, and its covenant history as God's people. A class of learned Jews, pious men known as *sopherim* or scribes, came into prominence toward the close of the Exile and during the early Restoration period. Formerly, scribes had been literary men who had served as kings' secretaries and historians but these sopherim were men who had become students of the Law. Dedicating themselves to preserving their nation's history and oral and written law codes, these scholars painstakingly gathered and collated all the material at hand. Thus Hebrew Scripture began to take form, and it is believed that Ezra contributed in large measure to this work.

Ezra was a priest born in Babylonian captivity, a lineal descendant of Aaron through his son Phineas. He was "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" and "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:6,10). Greatly concerned for the religious welfare of the returned remnant in Jerusalem, he received permission from the Persian king Artaxerxes in 458 B.C. to go to Jerusalem to instruct the Jews in their sacred Law (Ezra 7).

Artaxerxes commissioned him to lead a fresh band of exiles: "All they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee."

Fourteen hundred and ninety-six men with their families responded to the call, but when Ezra discovered no Levites among them, ministers needed for temple service, he would not leave until he found some willing to make the journey, and 38 Levites and 220 Nethinim (temple servants) were added to their number. With them went considerable treasure: temple vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar and freewill offerings of silver and gold from the king and his Jewish subjects. Before starting on this hazardous journey the caravan, now totaling about 7000, prayed for divine protection. "I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The

hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." Without military strength or escort, but under "the hand of [their] God" they came safely to Jerusalem (Ezra 8).

Invested by royal decree with absolute authority to appoint magistrates to judge according to Mosaic Law as well as that of the king, Ezra at once began the work of reform (Ezra 9). He was horrified to learn that during the almost eighty-year period since the first expedition mixed marriage was again being practiced in Jerusalem: "The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands. . . . For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands." To this zealous priest this affinity with strangers was a heinous sin, a flagrant violation of the Mosaic covenant which corrupted Judah's separateness and purity of worship (Ex. 34:15,16; Deut. 7:3,6). "When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished." He prayed fervently for Israel's forgiveness, blushing for the ingratitude of the remnant to the God who had so mercifully delivered them from captivity, ashamed that they had used this "little space" of "grace" for their own trespasses when it should have been to them a season of "reviving."

Those who heard Ezra's impassioned confession gave him the immediate task of correcting this evil, pledging their support. A proclamation was sent throughout Judah, calling the remnant together to make a covenant with God to put away their heathen wives and the children born of them. All assembled at Jerusalem within three days under penalty of confiscation of their property and of excommunication from the congregation. With weeping they complied with this stern measure, and within three months divorced their foreign wives (Deut. 24:1). In this way the Jewish community preserved its separateness from other peoples and protected its distinctive monotheistic religion from corrupting external influences.

The record is silent concerning the next thirteen years of Ezra's life. Whether he returned to Babylon or remained in Jerusalem is not known, but when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 B.C. Ezra became his co-worker in the reformatory movement that Nehemiah inaugurated. He appeared at the Feast of Trumpets as a leader among the priests and Levites, bringing with him the Book of the Law, which had reached its final canonical form (Five Books of Moses, Pentateuch, see p. 4). For seven days the Law was read aloud and explained to the people (Neh. 8). By demanding a stern and unswerving adherence to its principles, Ezra thus began that firm establishment of the Jewish ecclesiastical system which became so marked a feature of the next 450 years of Jewish history.

Ezra's is an austere and commanding figure, which has left a lasting impression upon the religious life of the Jewish people. Ezra is the true founder of Judaism. By investing the Law with a sanctity and influence that it had never before possessed, and making it the possession of the entire community, he endowed the Jewish people with a cohesive power which was proof against all attacks from without.¹⁴

A measure of the man

"... Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven. . . ." (Ezra 7:21)

"Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem: And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors. . . . And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me. . . ." (Ezra 7:27,28)

"At the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:5,6).

"Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God . . . he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away" (Ezra 10:6).

"Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding. . . . And he read therein . . . from the morning until midday, before the men and the women . . . and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law" (Neh. 8:2,3).

Book of Nehemiah

Nehemiah: "comforted of Jehovah"

Son of Hachaliah and brother of Hanani
Cupbearer to King Artaxerxes (Longi-
manus) of Persia

Nehemiah mourns over the affliction of
remnant in Jerusalem—his humble
prayer

Artaxerxes appoints him governor and
commissions him to rebuild the
walls of Jerusalem—he journeys to
Jerusalem with letters of authority
from the king

By night Nehemiah secretly surveys the
broken walls—rouses his people to
rebuild

Enemies, led by Sanballat, Tobiah, and
Geshem, conspire to prevent the
work

The deplorable condition of the poor—
Nehemiah causes the rich, who
were exacting exorbitant rates of
interest from the needy, to make
restitution

The wall is finished in fifty-two days

Nehemiah's religious reforms: enforce-
ment of Sabbath laws, determining
of genealogies, teaching the Law to
the people with the help of Ezra,
celebration of Feast of Tabernacles

A national fast and repentance—Judah
renews and seals the covenant with
God

By lot one man out of every ten in the
land is chosen to live in Jerusalem

Dedication of the wall—the offices of
priests and Levites appointed

Nehemiah governs twelve years

He returns to Persia—a year later
returns to Jerusalem to correct
religious abuses

Brings about many reforms to compel
obedience to Mosaic Law—purifies
the priesthood—enforces the cove-
nant's prohibition against mixed
marriages

NEHEMIAH

was a great Jewish patriot and statesman. He was identified with the period of the Restoration—with the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls and, like Ezra, with the firm establishment of the Jewish ecclesiastical system.

Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in the winter palace at Shushan in Persia. Word was brought to him that the returned remnant in Jerusalem was in great affliction and reproach, and that the city's walls were still broken down. He was plunged into a grief that lasted many days. After fasting and prayer he determined to go to Jerusalem; and he petitioned the king for permission to repair its walls and gates. His request was granted and the king appointed him governor (Tirshatha) of Judah.

He reached Jerusalem in 445 B.C. Three days after his arrival he rode secretly by night around the city to inspect its ruined walls and burned gates. Then he urged, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Willingly the people "strengthened their hands for this good work."

As Samaritan adversaries had hindered Zerubbabel in the reconstruction of the Temple, so now the Samaritans, Ammonites, and Arabians led by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem tried to prevent the fortifying of the city. At first they laughed with scorn but Nehemiah confidently declared, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us." The gates and towers were rapidly repaired and in a short time "all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." When mockery failed the adversaries united to fight against them, but Nehemiah armed his workmen and set a watch day and night. "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens . . . every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." With urgency all labored from early morning until the stars appeared at night, not putting off their clothes except for washing.

Next, Nehemiah's enemies Sanballat and Geshem tried to entice him to meet with them outside the walls, but he refused. Four times they sought him; four times he gave the same reply, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" A fifth time they tried to intimidate Nehemiah with an open letter which insinuated that he and the Jews were planning to rebel against the king. He answered, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart"; and turning to God in prayer, beseeched: "Now . . . O God, strengthen my hands." The adversaries' final attempt to stop the work was to make Nehemiah fear for his life. One of Nehemiah's own countrymen was bribed to induce him to flee for safety into the Holy Place of the Temple (a violation of the Law for a layman), but Nehemiah refused, perceiving it as the guile of the enemy.

In fifty-two days the wall was finished, and it was formally dedicated with great joy (Neh. 12:27–43). With the strengthening of Jerusalem's walls, a portion of Judah's reproach was taken away.

Even as the walls were being rebuilt Nehemiah began the work of social and religious reform, erecting in his people's hearts the greater wall of spiritual Zion, Israel's true defense. He rebuked the practice of usury; the nobles were oppressing their own countrymen, causing them to lose or mortgage their lands and homes and to sell their children into slavery for debts. He shamed the rulers into abandoning this evil, citing his own example of long service without compensation. The management and defense of Jerusalem were placed in the hands of two trusted compatriots, Hanani and Hananiah. The genealogies of the returned remnant and place of residence were recorded. Every tenth man throughout the province was chosen by lot to reside in Jerusalem to supplement the city's population and provide for its protection and growth (Neh. 7; 11). Contemporary with Nehemiah was the prophet Malachi, who raised his voice against the social and religious abuses of the day and encouraged the devout with an express promise of Messiah's coming (Mal. 3:1; 4:2).

Nehemiah's efforts to enforce obedience to Mosaic Law were aided by Ezra the scribe, who, after thirteen years of apparent absence, had returned to Jerusalem bringing with him a copy of the written Law. Nehemiah called a great public assembly on the first day of the seventh month, the Feast of Trumpets, and for seven days, from morning to midday, Ezra and the Levites read the Law to the people and interpreted it (Neh. 8). The remnant wept when they heard it; there was a moral awakening. A national fast was held at which the people publicly confessed their sins and renewed their covenant, swearing an oath and sealing it in writing to obey all the obligations of Mosaic Law—to walk in God's law, to abstain from foreign marriages, to discontinue sacrilegious buying and selling on the Sabbath, to pay the Temple tax, to bring in the required firstfruits, and to tithe to the Levites (Neh. 9; 10).

After twelve years as governor Nehemiah returned to Persia (433 B.C.). In his absence the people soon violated their covenant oath, the Sabbath and the priesthood were profaned, and mixed marriages began again; so the following year he made a second journey to Jerusalem to enforce drastic reform measures. He came armed with a new commission that gave him power to regulate every detail relating to the Jewish religion and state. He compelled the Jews to fulfill their oath, corrected the abuses of the priesthood, and banned all commercial pursuits that violated the Sabbath. With almost frenzied zeal Nehemiah impressed on the Jews the great evil of mixed marriages: "I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves." They were a separate people, set apart by God's covenant, and must so remain (Neh. 13).

From first to last Nehemiah was a man of piety and of prayer. When his work was finished Jerusalem was once more a fortified city, rebuilt and thriving, and the Mosaic ecclesiastical system of the Jewish Church was well established. The strict adherence of the covenant people to monotheism during the next four centuries prepared the way for the Advent of the Messiah.

A measure of the man

"When I heard these words . . . I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. . . ." (Neh. 1:4)

". . . there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh. 2:10).

"Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah . . . that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors . . . were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine . . . yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God" (Neh. 5:14,15).

"Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work" (Neh. 5:16).

"I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in" (Neh. 6:11).

"Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof" (Neh. 13:14).

"I . . . said unto them [merchants], Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath" (Neh. 13:21).

"Remember me, O my God, for good" (Neh. 13:31).



Airview of the ruin-mounds of Shushan (Susa), for many centuries the capital of ancient Elam and later one of the three capitals of the Persian Empire. It was the home of King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther, the scene of Daniel's vision during the reign of Belshazzar, and the site of the royal palace in which Nehemiah served as Artaxerxes' cupbearer. The pillar containing the Code of Hammurabi was discovered here in 1901–1902. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.