
a *Grace Notes* course

Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

History 519

Grace Notes

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VII_07 - Uzziah (Tenth), Jotham (Eleventh), and Ahaz, (Twelfth) King of Judah. Zachariah (Fifteenth), Shallum (Sixteenth), Menahem (Seventeenth), Pekahiah (Eighteenth), Pekah, (Nineteenth) King of Israel

2 Kings 15:8 to 16:18; 2 Chronicles 27, 28

While the kingdom of Judah was enjoying a brief period of prosperity, that of Israel was rapidly nearing its final overthrow. The deep-seated and wide corruption in the land afforded facilities for a succession of revolutions, in which one or another political or military adventurer occupied the throne for a brief period. In the thirteen or fourteen years between the death of Jeroboam II. and that of Uzziah, the northern kingdom saw no less than four kings (2 Kings 15:8-27), of whom each was removed by violence. In the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, Jeroboam II was succeeded by his son Zachariah, the fourth and last monarch of the line of Jehu.

Holy Scripture here specially marks the fulfillment of Divine prediction (2 Kings 10:30), in the continuance of this dynasty "unto the fourth generation." Of his brief reign, which lasted only six months, we read that it was characterized by continuance in the sins of Jeroboam. A conspiracy by one Shallum,¹ not otherwise known, issued, not in the private assassination, but in the public murder of the king.

So terribly had all bonds of society been loosened. The regicide occupied the throne for only one month. Menahem, whom Josephus describes as the general of Zachariah, advanced against Shallum from Tirzah, the ancient royal residence, and slew the usurper.

The assumption of the crown by Menahem seems to have met some resistance. At any rate, we read of an expedition of Menahem against a place called Tiphshah ("a ford"²), which had refused to

open its gates to him. The town and its surrounding district were taken, and Menahem took horrible vengeance on the population.³ The reign of Menahem, which, as regards religion, resembled that of his predecessors, lasted ten years. But it may truly be characterized as the beginning of the end. For with it commenced the acknowledged dependence of the northern kingdom upon Assyria, of which the ultimate outcome was the fall of Samaria and the deportation of Israel into the land of the conqueror.

Leaving aside, for reasons already indicated, questions of chronology, the Assyrian monuments enable us more clearly to understand the Biblical account of the relations between Menahem and his eastern suzerain (2 Kings 15:19, 20). Thus we learn that after a period of decadence which may account for the independent progress of Jeroboam II., perhaps even for the occupation of Tiphshah by Menahem, a military adventurer of the name of Pul, apparently sprung from the lower orders, seized the crown of Assyria, and assumed the title of Tiglath-pileser II.⁴

The first monarch of that name, five centuries earlier, had founded the power of Assyria, which was now to be re-established. In the very year of his accession he vanquished and impaled the king of Babylon, and henceforth himself assumed that title. Two years later he turned his armies to the west, and after a siege of three years took the Syrian city Arpad, in the neighborhood of Hamath, and not far from Damascus⁵ (comp. Isaiah 10:9, 36:19; 2 Kings 18:34; Jeremiah 49:23).

Without following his further military expeditions it may suffice to state that three years later (in the eighth year of his reign), he is described on the monuments as receiving the tribute of Menahem of Israel, among those of other vassal kings. The

¹ Josephus (Ant. 9. 11, 1) describes him as "a friend" of the king.

² It seems doubtful whether this was the Tiphshah of Solomon (1 Kings 4:24), which lay on the banks of the Euphrates. The name, which means "a ford," is so general that it may have attached to other places. At the same time it should be remembered that about that period Assyria had fallen into a state of great weakness.

³ Such horrors were not unheard of on the part of Israel though only too common in heathen warfare (2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 13:16; Amos 1:13).

⁴ The identity of the Biblical Pul with Tiglath-pileser II. has, we believe, been lately proved beyond the possibility of doubt.

⁵ About three hours north of Aleppo. Its possession did not, however, become permanent till the time of Sennacherib.

shattering of the power of the Syrian confederacy and the occupation of Hamath fully explain the Biblical notice of the advance of Pul or Tiglath-pileser II. into the northern kingdom. His progress was for the time arrested by the submission of Menahem, and his payment of an annual tribute of 1,000 talents of silver, or about 375,000 pounds, which the king of Israel levied by a tax of 50 shekels, or about 6 pounds 5 shillings, on all the wealthier inhabitants of his realm. This would imply that there were 60,000 contributors to this tax, a large figure, indicating at the same time the wide prosperity of the country, and the extent of the burden which the tribute must have laid on the people. On these hard conditions Menahem was "confirmed" in "the kingdom" by the Assyrian conqueror ⁶ Menahem was succeeded in the kingdom by his son Pekahiah, whose reign, of a character similar to that of his father, ⁷ lasted only two years. He fell the victim of another military conspiracy headed by Pekah, the son of Remaliah, probably one of the captains of the king's bodyguard.

As we interpret the narrative (2 Kings 15:25), the king of Israel had surrounded himself with a bodyguard, such as that which of old had been formed by King David. The name of Pekahiah's father: "Menahem, the son of Gadi" (2 Kings 15:17), seems to indicate that he was descended from the tribe of Gad. It is therefore the more likely that this bodyguard had been raised from among his countrymen the Gileadites - those brave highlanders on the other side of Jordan who were famed as warriors (comp. Judges 11:1; 1 Chronicles 26:31). Thus the LXX. - perhaps after an old tradition - render, instead of "the Gileadites" of the Hebrew text, the 400, which reminds us of David's famous 600 (2 Samuel 15:18). This bodyguard we suppose to have been under the command of three captains, one of whom was Pekah, the leader of the rebellion. The other two: "Argob," so named from the trans-

Jordanic district of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:4), and "Arieh," "the lion" (comp. 1 Chronicles 12:8), fell, probably in defending the king. As we read it, Pekah, with fifty of the Gilead guard, pursued the king into the castle, or fortified part of his palace at Samaria, and there slew him and his adherents. The crime vividly illustrates the condition of public feeling and morals as described by the prophet Hosea (4:1, 2). The murderer of his master was not only allowed to seize the crown, but retained it during a period of thirty years.

This revolution had taken place in the last (the fifty-second) year of Uzziah. He was succeeded in Judah by his son Jotham, in the second year of Pekah, the son of Remaliah. Jotham was twenty-five years old when he ascended the throne, and his reign is said to have extended over sixteen years. But whether this period is to be reckoned from his co-regency (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:21), or from his sole rule, it is impossible to determine. And in this may lie one of the reasons of the difficulties of this chronology.

The reign of Jotham was prosperous, and only clouded towards its close. Both religiously and politically it was strictly a continuation of that of Uzziah, whose co-regent, or at least administrator, Jotham had been. According to the fuller account in the Book of Chronicles (2 Chronicles 27.), Jotham maintained in his official capacity the worship of Jehovah in His Temple, wisely abstaining, however, from imitating his father's attempted intrusion into the functions of the priesthood. Among the people the former corrupt forms of religion were still continued, and had to be tolerated. Naturally this corruption would increase in the course of time. Among the undertakings of the former reign, the fortifications of Jerusalem, the inward defense of the country, and its trans-Jordanic enlargement, were carried forward. As regards the first of these, the wall which defended Ophel, the southern declivity of the Temple-mount, was further built.

At the same time the sacred house itself was beautified by the rebuilding of the "higher" [or upper] gate on the north side of the Temple, where the terrace runs from which it derived its name. The "higher gate" opened from the "upper" [or inner] court - that of the priests - into the lower,

⁶ The account which we have given is confirmed by the reference to, "the burden" or tribute of "the king of princes" the king of Assyria, Hosea 8:10. Some writers have regarded this event as forming the subject of the prophecy in Amos 7:1-3.

⁷ According to Josephus he "followed the barbarity of his father" (Ant. ix. 11, 1).

which was that of the people (2 Kings 21:5; 23:12; 2 Chronicles 33:5). Each of these two courts was bounded by a wall. Probably the general ingress into the Temple was by the outer northern gate.⁸ Thence the worshippers would pass through the lower, outer, or people's court to the second wall⁹ that bounded the inner, upper, or priest's court, which extended around the Temple house.

Thus the worshippers, or at least those who brought sacrifices, would have to enter by this northern gate which Jotham rebuilt. As the inner or upper court lay on a higher level, we find that in the Temple of Ezekiel eight steps are said to lead up to it (Ezekiel 40:31, 34, 37), and such was probably also the case in the Temple of Solomon. Close to this "higher gate" - at the right hand, as you entered it - the chest for the collection of money for the Temple repairs had been placed by Jehoiada (2 Kings 12:9). Lastly, from its designation by Ezekiel (8:5), as "the gate of the altar," we infer that it formed the common access for those who offered sacrifices. Its later name of "new gate" was due to its reconstruction by Jotham, while the passages in which it is mentioned indicate that this was the place where the princes and priests were wont to communicate with the people assembled in the outer court (Jeremiah 26:10; 36:10).

Nor were the operations of Jotham confined to Jerusalem. "And cities he built in Mount Judah [the hill country], and in the forests [or thickets, where towns could not be built], castles [forts], and towns [no doubt for security]." To complete the record of that reign we add that the expedition of the previous reign against Ammon was resumed, and the Ammonites were forced to pay an annual tribute, not only of the produce of their fertile lands (10,000 Kor¹⁰ of wheat and as many

of barley), but of a hundred talents of silver, or about. 37,500 pounds. But, as the sacred text implies (2 Chronicles 27:5), this tribute was only paid during three years.

In the fourth, probably the last year of Jotham's reign, it ceased, no doubt in consequence of the Syro-Israelitish league against Judah, which was apparently joined by the neighboring tribes who had hitherto been subject to Uzziah and Jotham. Lastly, of the internal condition of the country, of its prosperity, wealth, and commerce, but also of its luxury and its sins, a vivid picture has been left in those prophecies of warning judgment which form the opening chapters of the Book of Isaiah (chap. 1:5-6.).

Jotham himself only witnessed the approach of the calamities which were so soon to befall Judah. In the northern kingdom Pekah must have found himself in the midst of turbulent elements. Even if he had not to defend his crown against another pretender,¹¹ the disorganized condition of the country, the necessity of keeping the people engaged in undertakings that would divert them from domestic affairs, as well as the obvious desirableness of forming foreign alliances to support his throne - perhaps even more ambitious plans - must have made the thirty years¹² of this military usurper a period of sore trouble in Israel.

We catch only glimpses of it at the close of Jotham's reign. But our scanty information is to some extent supplemented by the Assyrian records. Holy Scripture simply informs us that "in those days Jehovah began to send against Judah Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah" (2 Kings 15:37).

It is a majestic and truly prophetic mode of viewing events, thus to recognize in such a league as that of Rezin and Pekah the divinely-appointed

⁸ There were four gates opening from the outer, or bounding, wall of the Temple: north, south, east, and west, (comp. the watchposts of the Levites, 1 Chronicles 26:14-18. But Bishop Haneberg (Relig., Alterth. p. 226, 4) infers that there were six gates - that is, two (not one) respectively in the south and west. In the Temple of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40:6-16, 20-22, 24-27) only three gates are mentioned: North, East, and South.

⁹ For this wall see 1 Kings 6:36; 7:12.

¹⁰ The Kor (more anciently designated Homer or rather Chomer)= ten Ephah - thirty Seah=100 Omer or Issaron

("tenth," viz. of an Ephah)= 180 Qabh (bq;). According to the Rabbis the Qabh held = twenty-four egg shells. Roughly speaking, the Kor would be less than "a quarter."

¹¹ Some writers have supposed that there was such during the first period after the revolution headed by Pekah.

¹² One year contemporarily with Uzziah; sixteen years contemporarily with Jotham; twelve years contemporarily with Ahaz = twenty-nine, or, allowing for the mode of reckoning years: thirty years.

judgment upon Judah. It is to pass from the secondary and visible causes of an event straight to Him Who over-rules all, and Who with Divine skill weaves the threads that man has spun into the web and woof of His dealings. In point of fact, the Syro-Israelitish league against Judah ultimately embraced not only the Ammonites, who refused to continue their tribute, but also the Edomites, the Philistines, and all the southern tribes lately reduced to subjection (2 Chronicles 28:17, 18).

As already stated, Jotham only witnessed the commencement of this great struggle, or else he was sufficiently strong still to keep in check what at first were probably only marauding expeditions. It was otherwise when his weak and wicked son Ahaz ascended the throne, in the seventeenth year of Pekah, the son of Remaliah (2 Kings 16:1). He was probably twenty-five years of age ¹³ when he succeeded his father.

The sixteen years of his reign were in every sense most disastrous for Judah. As throughout this history, it is emphatically indicated that just as former successes had come from the help of the Lord, so now the real cause of Judah's reverses lay in their apostasy from God. From the first, and throughout, Ahaz "did not the right in the sight of the Lord." Nor should we omit to mark how the sacred text when describing each successive reign in Judah brings its religious character into comparison with that of David. This, not only because he was the founder of the dynasty, nor even because in him centered the Divine promise to the royal house of Judah, but from the strictly theocratic character of his public administration, which should have been the type for that of all his successors, even as Jeroboam's became that for the kings of Israel.

It is impossible to determine whether the varied idolatry described in 2 Chronicles 28:3, 4, characterized the beginning of Ahaz's reign, or

was only gradually introduced during its course. More probably the latter was the case; and as the success of Syria was the avowed motive for introducing its gods into Judah, so that of Israel formed at least the pretext for walking "in the ways of the kings of Israel" (2 Chronicles 28:2). Indeed, there is not a single aspect from which the character of the king could have commanded either respect or sympathy. Unbelieving as regards the Lord and His power (Isaiah 7:11-13), he was nevertheless ready to adopt the most abject superstitions. By making "molten images for Baalim," he not only followed in the ways of the house of Ahab (1 Kings 16:32; 2 Kings 1:2; 3:2), but adopted the rites then practiced in Israel (Hosea 2:13; 13:1). Connected with these was the service of Moloch [or more correctly, Molech], who was only another form of Baal (comp. Jeremiah 19:3-6; 32:35). Alike, in the service of the one and the other, human sacrifices were offered: for which, indeed, Baal himself was supposed to have given a precedent.

But this was to revive the old Canaanitish and Phoenician worship, with all its abominations and all its defilements. The valley of Gihon, which bounds Jerusalem on the west, descends at its southern extremity into that of Hinnom, which in turn joins at the ancient royal gardens the valley of Kidron, that runs along the eastern declivity of the Holy City. There, at the junction of the valleys of Hinnom and Kidron, in these gardens, was Topheth - "the spitting out," or place of abomination - where an Ahaz, a Manasseh, and an Amon, sacrificed their sons and daughters to Baal-Moloch, and burnt incense to foul idols. Truly was Hinnom "moaning," and rightly was its name Gehinnom [valley of Hinnom - Gehenna], adopted as that for the place of final suffering.

And it is one of those strange coincidences that the hill which rises on the south side of this spot was that "potter's field," the "field of blood," which Judas bought with the wages of his betrayal, and where with his own hands he executed judgment on himself. History is full of such coincidences, as men call them; nor can we forget in this connection that it was on the boundary-line between the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz that Rome

¹³ So, in 2 Chronicles 28:1, according to the reading of some Codd., supported by the LXX. and the Syr. The correctness of this reading appears from a comparison with 2 Chronicles 29:1. For if Ahaz had, after sixteen years' reign, died at the age of thirty-six, and his son succeeded him at the age of twenty-five, Ahaz must have been wedded when only ten years old. Similarly, we have to correct in 2 Kings 16:2 the numeral 20 into 25.

was founded (in 752 B.C.), which was destined to execute final judgment on apostate Israel.

Nor was this all. Not only did Ahaz burn incense in that accursed place where he offered his own son ¹⁴ as a burnt sacrifice to Baal-Moloch, but a similar idolatrous worship was offered on the high places, ¹⁵ on the hills, and under every green tree (2 Chronicles 28:4; 2 Kings 16:4).

Thus, in regard to form - the many sanctuaries in opposition to the one place of worship - as well as to substance and spirit, there was direct contrariety to the institutions of the Old Testament. Indeed, it may not be without use here to mark that in the surroundings of Israel, exclusive unity of worship in one central temple, as against many sanctuaries, was absolutely necessary if a pure monotheism was to be preserved and the introduction of heathen rites to be avoided.

But the idolatry introduced by Ahaz was to be carried to all its sequences. A despotic edict of the king, while at Damascus, in singular contrast to the weakness displayed towards his foreign

enemies, ordered a new altar for the Temple after the pattern sent to Jerusalem of one, no doubt devoted to an Assyrian deity, which he had seen in Damascus and approved. He was obeyed by a servile high-priest. When Ahaz returned to his capital sacrifices were offered by him on the new altar, ¹⁶ probably thankofferings for his safe arrival.

This was only the beginning of other changes. It seems not unlikely that the king introduced in connection with the new altar the worship of the gods of Damascus (2 Chronicles 28:23, in connection with ver. 24). Certain it is that an exclusive place was assigned to it. Apparently Urijah, the priest, had originally set it at the rear of the old altar of burnt-offering, which stood "before the Lord," that is, "before the house," in other words, fronting the entrance into the sanctuary. But as this would have indicated the inferiority of the new altar, the king, on his return from Damascus, brought the two altars into juxtaposition. In the words of the sacred text (2 Kings 16:14): "And the altar, the brazen [one] ¹⁷ a which [was] before Jehovah he brought near [placed in juxtaposition], from before the house [the sanctuary], from between the altar [the new Damascus altar] and the house of Jehovah, and he put it at the side of the altar [the new Damascus altar], northwards."

The meaning of this is that the brazen altar, which had hitherto faced the entrance to the sanctuary, eastwards, was now removed to the north side of the new altar, so that the latter became the principal, nay, the sole sacrificial altar. Accordingly, by command of the king, all sacrificial worship ¹⁸ was now celebrated at this

¹⁴ In 2 Kings 16:3 only one son is mentioned as passed through the fire. This seems the more likely (comp. 2 Kings 3:27; 21:6), and the plural in Chronicles is probably only a generalization. When in 2 Kings we read that he "made his son pass through the fire," this may be either a technical expression, or it may refer to one of the original ideas or purposes of these sacrifices: that of lustration by fire. And possibly the practice may not always have been the same, and hence the original expression retained. But from the parallel passage in Chronicles there cannot be a doubt that, in this instance, as in those afterwards recorded, the unhappy victim was literally burnt. That those "passed through the fire" were really burnt, appears from a comparison of Jeremiah 32:35 with 7:31, and of Ezekiel 16:21 with 23:37. On the question whether the children were only passed through the fire or burnt in it the Rabbis have expressed different opinions. In Yalkut on Jeremiah 7:31, (ii. p. 61. col. d.) we have a realistic description of the brass figure of Moloch, hollow and filled with fire, with an ox's head and human arms into which the children were laid. This seems to agree with the account of the Carthaginian rite (Diodor. Sic. 20. 14). Into the large literature on the subject this is not the place to enter. To the present writer it has often seemed more learned than clear. For our purpose it is more important to notice that, according to Psalm 106:37, Ezekiel 16:20, the victims seem to have been first slain and then burnt. It would thus be a terrible counterpart of the Old Test. burnt sacrifices. Josephus (Ant. ix. 12, 1) also states that Ahaz had actually burnt his son.

¹⁵ The "high places" were those on which there was a sanctuary or chapel (...) - "the hills," those on which only an altar was reared.

¹⁶ It does not, however, necessarily follow that Ahaz himself offered the sacrifices in the sense of discharging priestly functions although 2 Kings 16:13 seems rather to lead up to this.

¹⁷ The old altar of burnt offering, so called in contradistinction to the "golden altar" of incense in the Holy Place.

¹⁸ In the mention of the daily morning-sacrifice, the meat-offering is omitted; in that of the evening sacrifice, the burnt offering. But in both cases special mention was not required, since every burnt sacrifice had its meat-offering (Numbers 7:87; 15:2-12); while the evening sacrifice smoked all night on the

new heathen altar, the disposal of the old altar being left for further consideration.

The new place of sacrifice rendered other changes in the Temple furniture almost necessary. The old altar of burnt-offering was ten cubits, or about fifteen feet high (2 Chronicles 4:1). Hence there was an ascent to it, and a circuit around, on which the ministering priests stood. As the pieces of the sacrifice laid on the altar had to be washed, the "ten lavers of brass" for this purpose, which surrounded the altar, were placed on high "bases" or rather stands, so that the officiating priests could wash the sacrificial pieces without coming down from the circuit of the altar. The side pieces which formed the body of these stands were of brass, richly ornamented alternately with figures of lions and oxen with wreaths underneath them, and cherubim (comp. 1 Kings 7:27-40). For the new altar such high stands were no longer required, and accordingly Ahaz "broke away the sidepieces of the stands" [A. V. "cut off the borders of the bases"]. Similarly he lowered "the sea," by removing it from the pedestal of the "brazen oxen," and placing it on "a base of stone." Possibly the king may also have been influenced by a desire to make other use of these valuable pieces of Temple furniture than that for which they had been originally designed. At any rate they remained in the Temple till a later period (comp. Jeremiah 52:17-20).

It is more difficult to understand the import of the changes which King Ahaz made "on account of the king of Assyria" in "the covered Sabbath place," and "the entrance of the king, the outer one" (2 Kings 16:18). In our ignorance of the precise purpose or locality of these we can only offer such suggestions as seem in accordance with the language of the original. We conjecture that "the covered Sabbath place," or stand, "which they had built" - viz., since Solomonic times - was probably a place opening into the inner or priest's court, occupied by the king and his court when attending the services on Sabbaths and feast days. Connected with it would be a private "entrance" to this stand from, or through, the "outer" court (comp. Ezekiel 46:1, 2). We further conjecture that

altar (Leviticus 6:12, 13), so that its consummation could not be witnessed by the worshippers.

in view of a possible visit of, or in deference to, the king of Assyria, Ahaz now "turned the covered Sabbath place and the entrance of the king, the outer one, to the house of Jehovah," that is, that he removed both into the sanctuary itself, probably within the porch. We regard it as a further part of these alterations when, in 2 Chronicles 28:24, by the side of the notice, that Ahaz "broke up the vessels of the house of God," we find it stated that he "shut up the doors of the house of Jehovah." This implies that the services within the Holy Place were now wholly discontinued. Thus the worship would be confined to the sacrificial services at the new altar; while the transference into the Temple porch of the king's stand and of the entry to it, would not only bring them close to the new altar, but also assign to them a more prominent and elevated position than that previously occupied. We can readily understand that all such changes in the worship of Judah, and the pre-eminent position in it assigned to the king, would be in accordance with the views, the practice, and the wishes of the king of Assyria, however contrary to the spirit and the institutions of the Mosaic law.

After this we do not wonder to read that Ahaz "made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem," nor yet that "in every several city of Judah he made high places [bamoth] to burn incense unto other gods" (2 Chronicles 28:24, 25). What influence all this must have had on a people already given to idolatry will readily be perceived. Indeed, Holy Scripture only gives us a general indication of the baneful changes made in the public religious institutions of the country. Of the king's private bearing in this respect, we only catch occasional glimpses, such, for example, as in the significant later reference to "the altars" which he had reared "on the roof" of the Aliyah¹⁹ or "upper chamber" in the Temple, no doubt for the Assyrian worship of the stars (Jeremiah 19:13; Zephaniah 1:5).

¹⁹ It has been surmised that this Aliyah had been constructed by Ahaz on one of the buildings in the Temple court (for the latter comp. Jeremiah 35:4). But may it not have been on the Aliyah over the Holy and Most Holy Places (1 Kings 6:17-20), and may there not be some connection between this also and the change in the king's Sabbath-stand, and in his entry to it?

VII_08 - Ahaz, (Twelfth) King, of Judah. Pekah (Nineteenth), Hoshea, (Twentieth) King of Israel

2 Kings 15:29, 30; 16; 2 Chronicles 28

A religious change so complete as that which has been described might seem incredible if it had been sudden, or we were left in ignorance of its deeper causes. In truth, it was no less than a systematic attempt to substitute a complicated heathenism for the religion of the Old Testament. If its institutions had any deeper spiritual import, everything in them must have been symbolic. Hence, every alteration would necessarily destroy the symmetry, the harmony, and with them the meaning of all. To substitute for the altar of burnt-offering one after the heathen pattern was not only to infringe on the Divinely prescribed order, but to destroy its symbolism. More than this, it was to interfere with, and in a sense to subvert, the institution of sacrifices, which formed the central part in the religion of Israel. Again, to close the doors of the Holy and Most Holy Places was to abolish what set forth Israel's fellowship with their Lord, His gracious acceptance of them, and His communication of pardon, light, and life.

The temple of Ahaz was no longer that of Jehovah, and the attempt to attach the old services to the new altar would only aggravate the sin, while it exhibited the folly of the king.

Even more strange seems the mixture of heathen rites which it was sought to introduce by the side of the perverted Temple ritual. It consisted of the worship of the Syrian deities, of Baalim, of Ashtoreth,²⁰ of the host of heaven, and of Molech - in short, it combined Syrian, Phoenician, and Assyrian idolatry.²¹

Yet in all this Ahaz found a servile instrument in the high priest Urijah (2 Kings 16:11-16).

Assuredly the prophet's description of Israel's "watchmen" as "ignorant," "dumb dogs - loving to slumber," "greedy dogs," "insatiable shepherds," only bent on gain and steeped in vice, was true to

²⁰ This is implied in the reference to the worship "under every green tree" in 2 Chronicles 28:4.

²¹ It is only right to say that in Assyrian worship there is not a trace of human sacrifices.

the letter (Isaiah 56:10-12). And with this corresponds the same prophet's account of the moral and religious condition of the people (Isaiah 2:6-9; 5:7-23). In view of this, King Ahaz can only be regarded as the outcome of his time and the representative of his people. Accordingly the judgments announced in these prophecies of Isaiah read only as the logical sequence of the state of matters.

The account of these judgments comes to us equally from the Books of Kings and Chronicles, which here supplement one another, and especially from the prophecies of Isaiah, which in chapter 7 give the most vivid description of the condition of things. The Syro-Israelitish league had been formed at the close of the reign of Jotham (2 Kings 15:37), although its full effects only appeared when Ahaz acceded to the throne. In its development the confederacy embraced also the Edomites and Philistines, although probably at a later period - in all likelihood after the early victories of the Syrian and Israelitish armies (2 Chronicles 28:17, 18). The purpose of the two chief allies is easily understood. No doubt it was the desire of Syria and Israel, which Tiglath-pileser had so deeply humbled, to shake off the yoke of Assyria. And as, after a period of decadence, the Assyrian power had only lately been restored by the usurper Pul, a hope may have been cherished that a powerful league might huff Tiglath-pileser from his throne. But for this object it was necessary first to secure themselves against any danger from the south, especially as there is some indication in the Assyrian inscriptions of a connection existing between Judah and Assyria since the days of Uzziah.

In point of fact, the expedition was rather against Ahaz than against Judah,²² and we are distinctly informed that it was the purpose of the allies to depose the house of David, and to place on the throne of Judah a person of low origin, "the son of

²² The personal character of the war appears not only in such expressions as 2 Kings 16:5: "They besieged Ahaz," but to an attentive reader throughout the whole account of it, both in Kings and Chronicles.

Tabheel," whose name indicates his Syrian descent²³ (Isaiah 7:6).

It is only when realizing this purpose of making a full end of the house of David, with all the Messianic promises and hopes bound up with it, that we fully understand how it evoked, in the case of Ahaz, that most full and personal Messianic prediction of "the Virgin's Son" (Isaiah 7:14). Not only would their plan not "come to pass" (Isaiah 7:7), but looking beyond the unbelief and the provocations of an Ahaz (Isaiah 7:13), the Divine promise would stand fast. "The house of David" could not fail. For beyond the present was the final goal of promised salvation in Immanuel the Virgin-born And this was God's answer to the challenge of Rezin and of the son of Remaliah - His "sign" as against their plans: a majestic declaration also of His object in maintaining "the house of David," even when represented by an Ahaz. And when the hour of judgment came, it would be not by placing a Syrian king on the throne of David, but by carrying prince and people into a banishment which would open a new - the last - period of Israel's God-destined history.

But as tidings of the "confederacy," with its avowed purpose of taking all the strongholds and cities which commanded the defenses of Judah, and of setting up another king, reached "the house of David," in the poetic language of Isaiah, Ahaz' "heart shook, and the hearts of his people, as the trees of the forest shake before the wind" (Isaiah 7:2).

And in truth the success of the allies was such as to account for such feelings - at least on the part of an unbelieving and craven king. Joining together the narratives in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, we have first, in 2 Kings 16:5, a general account of the war - its purpose, beginning, and final failure. To this is added, in the next verse, a notice of the expedition of Rezin, in which he "restored Elath to Edom," when "the

Edomites came to Elath," and continued to occupy it to the time of the writer. This brief account is supplemented in 2 Chronicles 28:5.

There we read of a twofold success of the allies - that achieved by Rezin, in consequence of which a great multitude of captives were carried to Damascus and a victory gained by Pekah. In all probability Rezin marched from Damascus through the trans-Jordanic territory straight into the south of Judah, extending his march as far as the latest conquest of Judah, Elath. This was now restored to Edom.

Syria alone could scarcely have held such an isolated post, nor could it have been left in the rear in the hands of Judaeans. On the other hand, its restoration to Edom explains their active participation in the league (2 Chronicles 28:17). The text leaves it somewhat doubtful whether Rezin actually fought a pitched battle against a Judaeans army, such as was evidently won by Pekah (2 Chronicles 28:6), or else the "smiting" of the Syrians spoken of in ver. 5 only referred in a more general sense to the losses inflicted on Judah by Rezin. As it is not likely that an army of Judah could have been opposed to Rezin, while another was dispatched against Pekah, we adopt the latter view.

While Rezin thus ravaged the south, Pekah attacked Israel from the north. In a pitched battle, no fewer than 120,000 Judaeans fell in one day.²⁴

Among the slain were Maaseiah, a royal prince, Azrikam, "prince of the palace" - probably its chief official, or major-domo - and Elkanah, "the second to the king" probably the chief of the royal council (comp. Esther 10:3). It is not easy to arrange the succession of events. But we conjecture that after the losses inflicted by Rezin in the south, and the bloody victory gained by

²³ We gather that he was of low origin, from the contemptuous designation, "the son of Tabheel" - like "the son of Remaliah." Probably he was a Syrian captain. Tabheel (in pausa, Tabheal) = "good is God" in Aram, a name kindred to Tabrimmon. But it is a mistake to suppose that it occurs in another form (Itibil or Tibil) on an Assyrian tablet. It is also the name of a Persian official in Ezra 4:7.

²⁴ Although this number seems somewhat large, and, indeed, like that of the 200,000 captives taken to Samaria (2 Chronicles 28:8), is evidently "a round number," yet we must bear in mind the size of the Judaeans army (300,000 under Amaziah, 2 Chronicles 25:5; 307,500 under Uzziah, 26:13); further, the bitter feeling prevailing in Israel (2 Chronicles 28:9); and lastly, that, as Canon Rawlinson reminds us (Speaker's Comment, ad. loc.), as large, and even larger, losses are recorded in profane history (thus the Armenians lost at Tigranocerta 150,000 out of 260,000).

Pekah in the north, the two armies marched upon Jerusalem, (2 Kings 16:5), with the object of deposing Ahaz. But from the strength of its late fortifications the undertaking failed of success. It was when Ahaz was thus pressed to the uttermost, and the Edomites and Philistines had actively joined the hostile alliance (2 Chronicles 28:17, 18), that two events of the gravest political and theocratic importance occurred. The first of these was the resolve of the king to appeal to Assyria for help, with abject submission to its ruler. The second was the appearance, the message, and the warnings of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7; 8). As we understand it, their inability to take Jerusalem, and the knowledge that Ahaz had resolved to appeal to Tiglath-pileser, induced the kings of Syria and Israel to return to their capitals. Rezin carried probably at that time his captives to Damascus; while the Israelitish army laid the country waste, and took not only much spoil, but no less than 200,000 captives, mostly women and children ("sons and daughters") - as the sacred text significantly marks, to show the unprecedented enormity of the crime 'of their brethren' (2 Chronicles 28:8). Their ultimate fate will be told in the sequel.

We pass now to the second event referred to. While the fate of Judah was trembling in the balance, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to go with his son, Shear Yashub to meet the king "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, at the highway of the fuller's field" (Isaiah 7:3).

If this "upper pool" was (as seems most likely) the present Birket-el-Mamilla, the "dragon well" of Nehemiah 2:13, and "serpent's pool" of Josephus (War; V. 3, 2), it lay in the north-west of the city. The "pool," which is only a reservoir for rain-water, is partly hewn in the rock and lined with stone. From its eastern side an outlet channel or "conduit" opened, winding somewhat to the south of the Jaffa gate, eastwards into the city, where at present it debauches into "the Pool of the Patriarch" (the Hammam-el-Batrak), the Amygdalon [Tower] Pool of Josephus.

From the manner in which the locality is mentioned, we infer that the king was wont to pass that way, possibly on an inspection of the north-

western fortifications.²⁵ The prophet's commission to Ahaz was threefold. He was to admonish him to courage (Isaiah 7:4), and to announce that, so far from the purpose of the allies succeeding, Ephraim itself should, within a given time, cease to be "a people."²⁶

Lastly, he was to give "a sign" of what had been said, especially of the continuance of the house of David. This was, in contrast to the king's unbelief, to point from the present to the future, and to indicate the ultimate object in view - the birth of the Virgin's Son, Whose name, Immanuel, symbolized all of present promise and future salvation connected with the house of David.

The result was what might have been expected from the character of Ahaz. As, with ill-disguised irony, he rejected the "sign," implying that his trust was in the help of Assyria, not in the promise of God, so he persevered in his course, despite the prophet's warning. Yet it scarcely required a prophet's vision to foretell the issue, although only a prophet could so authoritatively, and in such terms, have announced it (Isaiah 7:17-8:22). Every Jewish patriot must have felt the wrong and humiliation, every clear-sighted politician have anticipated the consequences of calling in - and in such manner - the aid of Tiglath-pileser. For the terms on which Ahaz purchased it were the acknowledgment of the suzerainty of Assyria (2 Kings 16:7), and a present of the silver and gold in the Temple, the royal palace, and in the possession of the princes (2 Kings 16:8; 2 Chronicles 28:21.) If it led to the immediate withdrawal of Rezin and Pekah, yet the danger incurred was far greater than that avoided. And in 2 Chronicles 28:20 we read: "And Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came against him [viz., against Ahaz], and distressed him, but strengthened him not." Although, even from its position in the text, this seems a general

²⁵ It could scarcely have been to stop the waters of the fountains without the city, since there are not any fountains there, and "the pool" was one for rain-water.

²⁶ In our view the fulfillment of this prophecy was in the transplanting to Samaria of a foreign population in the days of Esar-haddon (Ezra 4:2); and not, as has lately been suggested, in the appointment of an Assyrian prefect of Samaria, which would scarcely fulfill: "Ephraim shall be broken, that it be not a people" (Isaiah 7:8).

statement rather than the record of a definite event, yet some historical fact must underlie it.

Further reference will be made to it in the sequel. But, while we do not read of an expedition of Tiglath-pileser against Jerusalem, such may have been made, even if under the guise of a friendly visit.²⁷

And perhaps there may be some connection between this and the reported Temple alterations, "on account of the king of Assyria" (2 Kings 16:18). In any case Tiglath-pileset must have desired to extend his conquests further south than Samaria. He must have coveted the possession of such a city and fortress as Jerusalem; and the suzerainty so abjectly offered by. Ahaz would in his hands become a reality. In fact, the subjugation of Judea must have formed part of his general policy, which had the subjection of Egypt as its scope. And from 2 Kings 18:7, 14, 20, and Isaiah 36:5, we infer that from the time of Ahaz to that of Hezekiah the kingdom of Judah was actually both subject and tributary to Assyria.

An episode in the Syro-Israelitish war, hitherto only alluded to, still remains to be described. It will be remembered that the Israelitish victors had taken 200,000 prisoners. From the expressions used, we infer that these were brought to Samaria, not by the whole army - the majority having, after the Eastern manner, probably dispersed to their homes - but by a division, or armed escort, perhaps by those who formed the standing army. But even in Samaria God had not left Himself without a witness. "A prophet of Jehovah was there, whose name was Oded." As in the days of Asa, the prophet Azariah had met the victorious army of Judah on its return not with words of flattery, but of earnest admonition (2 Chronicles 15:1-7), so now this otherwise unknown prophet of Samaria. And his very obscurity, and sudden and isolated message, as well as its effect, are instructive of the object and character of prophetism. Only a prophet of the Lord could have

dared, in the circumstances, to utter words so humiliating to Israel's pride, and so exacting in their demand. The defeat and loss of Judah had been in Divine punishment of sin, and would they now add to their own guilt by making slaves of the children of Judah and Jerusalem? Or did they presume to regard themselves as instruments of God's judgments, forgetful of the guilt which rested upon themselves? Nay, let them know that wrath was already upon them, alike for their sins, for this fratricidal war, and now for their purpose of enslaving their brethren - and let them set their captives free.

There is not the least reason for questioning the accuracy of this narrative,²⁸ nor yet of that of the effectual intervention on behalf of the captives of four of the heads of houses in Ephraim, whose names have been handed down to honor.

The latter is a further confirmation of the historical character of the report. Indeed, even if it had not been recorded, we should have expected some such intervention. The more serious party in Israel, whether friends or foes of Pekah, must have disapproved of such an undertaking as that of their king. There had previously been wars between Israel and Judah; but never one in which Israel had joined a heathen power for the purpose of overthrowing the house of David, and placing on its throne a Syrian adventurer. It must have awakened every religious and national feeling; and the sight of 200,000 Judean women and children driven into Samaria, weary, footsore, hungry, and in rags, to be sold as slaves, would evoke not satisfaction, but abhorrence and indignation. It is to this that we understand the four princes to refer when speaking of the "trespass" already committed by this war, and warning against adding to it by retaining the captives as slaves. As we realize the scene, we do not wonder at the intervention of the princes, nor at the popular reaction when the words of the prophet roused them to full consciousness of their wrong. Nor,

²⁷ It is possible that Tiglath-pileser, after his conquering progress through Galilee, Philistia, and to Gaza and Northern Arabia, may, on his way back to occupy Samaria, have passed close by, or even through Jerusalem. An account of this expedition will be given in the sequel.

²⁸ This has been done by certain critics. Unwilling as we are to use hard language, not only in this, but in most of the difficulties raised by that school of critics, it seems not easy to determine whether their ingenuity is greater in raising objections that are ungrounded, or in constructing a history of their own.

taking merely the political view of it, could princes or people have been blind to the folly of weakening Judah and entangling themselves in a war with Tiglath-pileser.

As so often in similar circumstances, the revulsion of popular feeling was immediate and complete. The spoil and the captives were handed over to "the princes;" those who had lately been prisoners were tenderly cared for as brethren and honored guests,²⁹ and brought back to the Judean border-city Jericho. Without presuming to affirm that this episode was in the mind of our Lord when He spoke the parable of "the Good Samaritan," there is that in the bearing of these men who are expressed by names³⁰ which reminds us of the example and the lessons in that teaching of Christ.

Another suggestion we would venture to make. It will be remembered that when Isaiah was directed to meet King Ahaz he was to go not alone, but accompanied by his son, Shear Yashub (Isaiah 7:3). The meaning of this evidently symbolical name is "A remnant shall return." May that name not have been a symbolic prediction of the episode just related, and intended to show how easily the Lord could give deliverance, without any appeal for help to Assyria?³¹

If so, it casts still further light on the place occupied by symbolism, not only in the Old Testament, but in Hebrew, and in measure in all Eastern thinking. Symbolism is, so to speak, its mode of expression - the language of its highest thinking. Hence its moral teaching is in parables and proverbs; its dogmatics in ritual and typical institutions; while in its prophecy the present serves as a mirror in which the future is reflected. To overlook this constant presence of the

²⁹ They were, "anointed," and the weak among them carried back on asses.

³⁰ That is, their names were recorded in perpetuum rei memoriam. A noble fact this; nor was, in all likelihood, participation in this good deed limited to the four princes.

³¹ We mark that throughout the names are here symbolical (comp. Isaiah 8:18). That Shear Yashub recurs in Isaiah 10:21 (comp. ver. 20) is only in accordance with the reflection of the future upon the present, which is a characteristic of prophecy - nor can we fail to remark concerning this Shear Yashub that it is "a remnant of Jacob" and its return is "to El-Gibbor" [God the Mighty], comp. Isaiah 9:6.

symbolical and typical in the worship, history, teaching, and prophecy of the Old Testament is to misunderstand not only its meaning, but even the genius of the Hebrew people.

We turn once more to the course of this history to trace the results of Ahaz' appeal to Assyria as against Syria and Israel. Unfortunately, of the two groups into which the Assyrian inscriptions of that reign have been arranged, that which is chronological and also historically the most trustworthy has in important parts been destroyed or rendered illegible by a later monarch of a different dynasty (Esarhaddon).

Nevertheless we are able to gather a sufficiently connected history at any rate of twelve out of the eighteen years of the reign of Tiglath-pileser. Its beginning, and to the period of the taking of Arpad, has been described in the previous chapter. And thus much may be added generally, that "the picture of Tiglath-pileser derived from the Assyrian inscriptions entirely corresponds with what we know of him from the Bible.

Further, we learn that in Tiglath-pileser's expedition against the Syro-Israelitish league his first movement was against Israel and the smaller nations around Judah (2 Chronicles 28:17, 18). A brief account of the campaign against Israel is given in 2 Kings 15:29, 30, which we cannot help thinking is there out of its place.

But it correctly indicates, in accordance with the Assyrian inscriptions, the priority of the march against Israel to that upon Damascus, which is recorded in 2 Kings 16:9, and it seems also alluded to in 2 Chronicles 28:16, comp. ver. 17. From the Assyrian inscriptions we learn that Tiglath-pileser made an expedition against Philistia - that country being presumably named as the utmost western objective of a campaign which was equally directed against Samaria, the Phoenician towns, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and even affected Judah. To the latter the notice in 2 Chronicles 28:20 may possibly bear reference.

Judging from the order of the conquered cities mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, Tiglath-pileser had left Damascus aside, and marched straight on the old Canaanitish towns at the western foot of Lebanon, which commanded the

road to Palestine. Two of these are specially mentioned, Arka (Genesis 10:17), the modern Irka, about twelve miles north-east from Tripolis, and Zemar (Genesis 10:18), the modern Symra, the ancient Simyros.

After an unhappy break of two lines in the inscription, we next come upon the names of two of the cities which in 2 Kings 15:29 are described as taken by Tiglath-pileser, Gilead and Abel-beth-Maachah, with express notice of their situation in the land of Beth-Omri (Samaria), and of their having been added to the territory of Assyria. The inscription further states that Tiglath-pileser had set his own officials and governors over these districts. Thence the victorious expedition is traced as far as Gaza, whence no doubt, after having subjugated all the border-tribes to Northern Arabia, it returned to the land of "Beth-Omri." It is added that Tiglath-pileser carried away to Assyria all its inhabitants, with their chattels, and killed Pekah their king, appointing Hoshea in his place (2 Kings 15:30).

We do not fail to perceive in this record boastful exaggerations by the Assyrian monarch, since, although the revolution which cost Pekah his life (2 Kings 15:30) was no doubt occasioned by the victories of Tiglath-pileser, yet the Israelitish king fell by the hand of Hoshea, the leader of the rising. At the same time Hoshea was absolutely dependent on Assyria, to which he became tributary. On the Assyrian inscription the sum exacted from him is said to have amounted to ten talents of gold (67,500 pounds) and 1,000 talents of silver (375,000 pounds).

The list of the conquered Israelitish cities given in 2 Kings 15:29 enables us to follow the course of the campaign of Tiglath-pileser straight down from north to south, through Upper Galilee. The Assyrians took first Ijon, in the tribe of Naphtali (2 Chronicles 16:4), a place formerly conquered by Ben-hadad (1 Kings 15:20), probably the modern Tell Dibbin, on a hill in a "well watered" district, on the road from Damascus to Sidon. Thence the conquerors passed to Abel-beth-Maachah, "the meadow" of Beth-Maachah (a neighboring small Syrian district), also called Abel Mayim, "meadow of waters" (2 Chronicles 16:4), a considerable town, known to us from the clays of David (2

Samuel 20:18) and of Ben-hadad (1 Kings 15:20), situated about one and a half hours west-north-west from Dan. The next town occupied, Janoah (not that of Joshua 16:6), probably the modern Hunin, lay about midway between Abel-beth-Maachah and Kedesh, the place next captured. It was also in the possession of Naphtali - and indeed, to distinguish it from other places of the same name, was known as Kedesh-Naphtali, or Kedesh in Galilee (Joshua 20:7; 21:32; 1 Chronicles 6:76). This was one of the ancient Levitical cities, and the birthplace of Barak (Judges 4:6, 9). Although belonging to Upper Galilee, it was at the time of Christ held by the Tyrians (Jos. Wars, 2. 18, 1), whose territory here bounded with Galilee. It still retains its old name, and lies north-west of the marshes that surrounded Lake Merom. The other three names in 2 Kings 15:29 among the conquests of Tiglath-pileser seem those of districts rather than towns: Gilead, the later Gaulonitis,³² the northern portion of the trans-Jordanic district which Jeroboam II had only lately won back for Israel (2 Kings 15:25); Galilee, in the more restricted sense of the term, that is: the northern part of it, or "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 9:1; compare 1 Kings 9:11) - in short, "all the land of Naphtali."

The advance of Tiglath-pileser, marked by the occupation of those towns in a straight line from north to south, concerted Galilee and the adjoining trans-Jordanic district into an Assyrian province, which served as a basis for further operations. These terminated - perhaps after passing near or through Jerusalem - with the occupation of Samaria, where a revolution ensued, in which Pekah fell. He was succeeded by the leader of the rising, Hoshea, who became tributary to Assyria.

³² The LXX. renders it Galaan. A city of Gilead (no doubt in that district) is mentioned in Hosea 6:8; 12:11 (?). The context would certainly lead us to apply to a city rather than to the district the term in 2 Kings 15:29. But the localization hitherto proposed for this Gilead does not meet the exigencies of the narrative, being too far south. A very important question here arises in connection with 1 Chronicles 5:26. As Pul and Tiglath-pileser are one in the same person, and the transportation alluded to was the second - that under Shalmaneser, or rather than Sargon (compare 2 Kings 17:6) - we can only suggest that by some confusion caused by the two names Pul and Tiglath-pileser, the later has by a clerical error, crept into the text, instead of Shalmaneser or else Sargon.

The easier part of his undertaking accomplished, Tiglath-pileser turned his arms against Damascus. Here he met with a stubborn resistance. Holy Scripture only records (2 Kings 16:9) that Damascus was taken, Rezin killed, and the people carried captive to Kir - a district not yet certainly identified, but apparently belonging to Media (compare Isaiah 21:2; 22:6). It was thence that the Syrians had originally come (Amos 9:7), and thither they were again transported when their work in history was done (Amos 1:5).

Unfortunately, the Assyrian tablets which record this campaign are mutilated, that in which the death of Rezin was recorded being lost. But we learn that the siege of Damascus occupied two years; that Rezin was shut up in his capital, into which he had been driven; that not only was every tree in the gardens round Damascus cut down, but, in the language of the tablet, the whole land desolated as by a flood. With the capture of Damascus, the Damasco-Syrian empire, which had hitherto been a scourge for the punishment of Israel, came to an end. Henceforth it was only a province of Assyria. It is in the light of all these events that we have to read such prophecies as those in Isaiah 7 and the first part of chapter 8.

The majestic divine calm of these utterances, their lofty defiance of man's seeming power, their grand certitude, and the withering irony with which what seemed the irresistible might of these two "smoking firebrands" is treated - all find their illustration in the history of this war. Such prophecies warrant us in climbing the heights of faith, from which Isaiah bids us to look, to where, in the dim distance the morning glow of the new Messianic day is seen to fill the sky with glory.

But in Damascus the conquered did Tiglath-pileser gather, as for an Eastern durbar, the vanquished and subject princes. Thither also did King Ahaz go "to meet" the king of Assyria; and thence, as the outcome of what he had learned from prophecy and seen as its fulfillment in history, did this king of Judah send the pattern of the heathen altar to Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:10, 11). On the Assyrian monuments he is called Joachaz (Ja-u-ha-zi). But sacred history would not join the name of the Lord with that of the apostate descendent of David. For all time it points at him the finger, "This is that

King Ahaz" (2 Chronicles 28:22); and he sinks into an unhonored grave, "not into the sepulchers of the kings of Israel" (ver. 27). And yet other and still wider-reaching lessons come to us from this history.

VII_09 - Hoshea, (Twentieth) King of Israel

2 Kings 17

THERE is a strange Jewish tradition to the effect that from the time when Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were deported, the observance of Jubilee years ceased (Arakh. 32 b; Fer. Shebh. 39 c; Fer. Gitt. 45 d).

Whatever of truth there may be in this notice, other peculiarities connected with this period are of such interest and importance in this history, alike retrospectively and prospectively, that we group them together in an orderly form before proceeding with our narrative.

When we turn to the first and most prominent factor in this history, Israel, we are impressed with this, that now, for the first time since the separation of the brother-nations, the northern kingdom had entered into a formal league against Judah with a heathen nation, and that its hereditary foe, Syria. And the significance of this fact deepens as we remember that the final object was not merely to conquer Judah, but to dethrone the house of David, and substitute for it a Syrian, presumably a heathen ruler. So forgetful had Israel become of its great hope, and of the very meaning of its national existence. For the first time also, at least in the Biblical record, does the Assyrian power now appear on the scene of Palestine, first to be bought off by Menahem (2 Kings 15:19, 20); then to be invoked by Ahaz, with the result of rendering Judah tributary, and finally of overthrowing Israel.

When we pass from Israel to Judah, we find that the country had now attained a state of national prosperity greater even than in the time of Solomon. But in its train had come luxury, vice, idolatry, and heathen thoughts and manners, to the utter corruption of the people. In vain did the prophets call to repentance (Joel 2:12-14; Isaiah 1:2-9, 16-20); in vain did they speak of nearing judgment (Micah 2:3; Isaiah 1:24; 3:1-8; 3:16-4:1:5:5-to end); in vain seek to woo by promises

of mercy (Micah 4:1-5; Isaiah 2:2-5). Priests and people boasted in an outward and formal observance of ritual ordinances, as if these were the substance of religion, and in this trust set lightly by the warning of the prophets (Isaiah 1:11-15). In their overweening confidence as to the present, and their worldly policy as regarded the future, they brought on themselves the very evils which had been predicted, but from which they had deemed themselves secure. And so it came that a people who would not turn to their God while they might, had in the end this as their judgment of hardening, that they could no longer turn to Him (Isaiah 6:9-13).

Indeed, Judah had so declined that not only idolatry of every kind, but even the service of Molech - nay, witchcraft and necromancy, expressly denounced in the law (Deuteronomy 18:10-13), were openly practiced in the land (Isaiah 8:19). The Divine punishment of all this has already appeared in the preceding history. For if, at the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, Judah had attained its highest state of prosperity, it had sunk at its close to the lowest level yet reached. In truth all the three nations engaged in the war described in the previous chapter received meet punishment. The continuance of the northern kingdom was now only a question of time, and the exile of Israel had actually begun. Judah had become dependent on Assyria, and henceforth was only able fitfully and for brief periods to shake off its yoke, till it finally shared the fate of its sister-kingdom. Lastly, Syria ceased to exist as an independent power, and became a province of Assyria.

But in the history of the kingdom of God every movement is also a step towards the great goal, and all judgment becomes larger mercy. So was it on this occasion also. Henceforth the whole historical scene was changed. The prophetic horizon had enlarged. The falling away of Israel had become already initially the life of the world. The fullest predictions of the Person and work of the Messiah and of His universal kingdom date from this period. Even the new relations of Israel formed the basis for wider conceptions and spiritual progression. Those petty wars with Syria, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia, which had filled the previous history, now ceased to be

factors in it, and Israel found itself face to face with the great world-power. This contact gave new form and shape to the idea of a universal kingdom of God, wide as the world, which had hitherto only been presented in dim outline, and of which only the germ had existed in the religious consciousness of the people. Thus in every respect this was the beginning of a new era, an era of judgment indeed, but also of larger mercy; an era of new development in the history of the kingdom of God; a type also of the final hardening of Israel in the rejection of their Messiah, and of the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Hoshea, the son of Elah, the last king of Israel, ascended the throne in the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah. His reign extended, at least nominally, over nine years (2 Kings 17:1). Of its religious character we have this brief notice, that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him." In the absence of details, we can only conjecture that this indicates decrease in the former active opposition to the worship of Jehovah. This seems implied in the circumstance that apparently no official hindrance was offered to the later invitation of Hezekiah to attend the Passover in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 30:1-12). The Talmud has it that after the deportation of the golden calves to Assyria (Hosea 10:5, 6), Hoshea had abolished the military posts which since the time of Jeroboam 1. had been set to prevent Israelites from going up to the feasts at Jerusalem (Gitt. 88 a; Babh. Q. 121 b; comp. Seder Ol. R. 22). Tiglath-pileser died probably five years after Ahaz had "met" him in Damascus. He was followed on the throne by Shalmaneser IV. ³³

Although special records and inscriptions of his reign do not exist, we learn from fragmentary notices that in the third year of his reign the Assyrian monarch undertook expeditions against the west - presumably Phoenicia and Israel. Further light comes to us from Josephus (Ant 9. 14, 2), who reproduces an extract from the historical work of Menander, itself derived from the Tyrian archives. Thence we learn that the

³³ On the Assyrian inscriptions: "Salmanu-ussir" (Salman [a god] be merciful!); Hoshea on the Assyrian inscriptions: A-u-si'.

Assyrian king invaded Phoenicia, and on the same occasion no doubt also Samaria, which was in league with it. As Shalmaneser was not a successful leader, we can easily understand that the allies may have cherished a hope that the heavy yoke of Assyria might be shaken off. But on the appearance of Shalmaneser Hoshea had to submit - in the language of Scripture, he "became his servant and rendered him tribute" (2 Kings 17:3).

Similarly, according to the Tyrian annals, most of the Phoenician cities seem to have surrendered or made terms with him, with the exception of Tyre, which held out for five years, and was only taken by Sargon, the successor of Shalmaneser. It is probably to this that the prophecy in Isaiah 23: refers. The Tyrian annals, and even the Assyrian inscriptions, mutilated as they are, lead us to regard this campaign as consisting of several expeditions into Phoenicia. This renders it difficult to know at what precise period the first submission of Hoshea was made.

It seems likely that the protracted resistance offered by Tyre may have encouraged the hope that Shalmaneser might after all prove unsuccessful against a powerful combination. Accordingly, Hoshea entered into negotiations with Seve, "the king of Egypt."

The king of Israel had good reason for looking hopefully to an alliance with this monarch. He was the first Pharaoh of the twenty-fifth Ethiopian dynasty. Under him Egypt, which before had been pressed in the north by the Assyrians and in the south by the Ethiopians, and suffered from internal dissensions, became strong, peaceful, and independent. This is not the place for details of a reign which was not only signally beneficial to his country, but elevated in character. Seve was too wise a monarch to be persuaded by the ambassadors, or seduced by the "presents" which Hoshea sent, into an active alliance with Israel against Assyria. The attempted "conspiracy" became known to Shalmaneser. He turned against Hoshea, who in the meantime had ceased to pay his tribute, seized and cast him into prison (2 Kings 17:4).

The further progress of this war is only briefly summarized in the Biblical record (2 Kings 17:5,

6), which is chiefly concerned with the issue of the struggle, and its spiritual import and lessons. It only relates that the siege of Samaria lasted three years; that at the end of them - that is, in the ninth (or last) year of Hoshea - the city was taken; and, lastly, that "Israel" was "carried away" to certain places which are mentioned. Happily, the Assyrian inscriptions enable us to fill up this bare outline. From them we learn that after the siege of Samaria had continued about two years, Shalmaneser was succeeded by Sargon, who took the city (after a siege of altogether three years) in the first year of his reign - that is, in the year 722 B.C.

Strictly speaking, the sacred text does not expressly attribute the capture of Samaria to Shalmaneser himself (comp. 2 Kings 17:6; 18:10, 11), although Sargon is not mentioned.

And for this silence, or even the ascription of this campaign wholly to Shalmaneser, there may be reasons, unknown to us, connected with the relation between Sargon and Shalmaneser, and the part which the former may have taken in the military operations or the conduct of the siege. Certain it is that Sargon was not the son of Shalmaneser, although apparently of princely descent - perhaps the scion of a collateral branch of the royal family. Nor do we know the circumstances of his accession - possibly in consequence of a revolution, easily accounted for by dissatisfaction with the king's failure both before Tyre and Samaria. In any case, the inscriptions distinctly inform us that Sargon captured Samaria, led away 27,280 of its inhabitants, took fifty chariots, leaving his subordinates to take the rest of the property found in the city, and appointing a governor, with the same tribute as Hoshea had paid.

Similarly, the Biblical account of the deportation of Israel into exile is supplemented and confirmed by the Assyrian records. The places to which they were carried are not indeed enumerated in the Assyrian inscriptions, but their location can mostly be ascertained. "Halah" (or rather "Chalah"), the first place mentioned in 2 Kings 17:6, was, judging from its conjunction with "the river Chabor" and with "Gozan" (comp. 1 Chronicles 5:26), a district contiguous to them, called Chalcitis, where a mound called Gla may represent

the city. There cannot be any doubt in regard to the other localities to which the Israelites were carried. They were "placed" "on the Chabor, the river of Gozan,"³⁴ and in the cities of the Medes."

"Gozan" - Gausanitis - the Assyrian Gu-za-nu, is a district in Mesopotamia traversed by the Chabor (Ass., Ha-bur), the "great" river, with "verdant banks," which springs near Nisibis, and is navigable long before it drains the waters of Gozan into the Euphrates. The last district mentioned lies east of the others. "Media" is the province stretching east of the Zagros Mountains, and north to the Caspian Sea, or rather to the Elbur mountain-chain, which runs parallel to its southern shore. Its "cities" had only lately been overrun by the Assyrian conqueror. In them the legendary book of Tobit still places these exiles³⁵ (Tobit 1:14; 3:7).

The account of the Ten Tribes by Josephus adds little to our knowledge. He describes them as "an immense multitude, not to be estimated by numbers," and as located "beyond the Euphrates" (Ant. 11. 5, 2). Equally, if not even more vague, are the later references to them in 4 Esdras, and in Rabbinic writings. From all this we may infer that there was no longer any reliable historical information on the subject.

On another point, however, we have important information. We know that with these exiles went their priests (2 Kings 17:27), although not of Levitical descent (2 Chronicles 11:14). Thus the strange mixture of the service of the Lord and foreign rites must have continued. In the course of time the heathen elements would naturally multiply and assume greater prominence, unless, indeed, the people learned repentance by national trials, or from higher teaching. Of this there is not

³⁴ Some writers, however, have regarded this "Chabor" as representing not the well-known river, but a smaller affluent of the Tigris, north of Nineveh. Similarly, it has been maintained that the right rendering would be "the river Gozan," a river flowing into the Caspian Sea. Thus, while all writers are approximately at one as to the general direction of the place of exile, there are sufficient divergences to make the precise district and localities matter of controversy.

³⁵ But the supposition that the birthplace of the prophet Nahum was the Elkosh not far from Nineveh, and on the left bank of the Tigris, is at least unproved.

any evidence in the case of Israel; and if the footsteps of these wanderers shall ever be clearly tracked, we expect to find them with a religion composed of various rites, but prevailingly heathen, yet with memories of their historical past in traditions, observances, and customs, as well as in names, and bearing the marks of it even in their outward appearance.

On yet another point does the testimony of the Assyrian records confirm the Biblical narrative. From the inscriptions we learn that Sargon transported to Samaria, in room of the exiled Israelites, inhabitants of countries conquered by him. And when in 2 Kings 17:24 we read that these new colonists were "brought from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim," we recognize the names of places which, according to the Assyrian inscriptions, were conquered by Sargon, and whence, as was his wont, he deported the inhabitants.³⁶

From the inscriptions we further learn that these transportations were successive, and that even the earliest of them did not take place immediately on the removal of the Israelites. Thus we understand how lions, so numerous in Palestine at one time, but gradually diminished with the growth of the population, once more increased among the scanty and scattered settlers. The sacred historian recognizes in this the hand of the LORD.³⁷

And rightly so, since all who are in sympathy with things Divine must by the spiritual instinct of their new nature rise to the recognition of Him Who ruleth, and of Whose government and purposes all events are the unbidden means, and all men the unconscious, yet free, agents. But especially do we mark this realization of the eternal Presence of the living God as the distinguishing characteristic of

³⁶ It has, we think, been fully established that the deportation mentioned in 2 Kings 17:24 was that made by Sargon, and not the later one by Esar-haddon (Ezra 4:2).

³⁷ At the same time, the rendering of 2 Kings 17:25, 26, in the A.V. is not correct. Instead of "therefore the Lord sent lions among them," it should simply be, "and the Lord sent lions amongst them." Nor should the attribution of things to God be always pressed in its strictly literal sense. Sometimes it is even an Oriental mode of expression. Comp. 2 Chronicles 35:21.

Old Testament teaching, whose first and last utterance it is- "Jehovah reigneth."

But we have more than merely a general confirmation of the Biblical account. From the Assyrian records we learn that in the first year after his accession Sargon vanquished Merodach-Baladan of Babylon, and deported of the people to "Chatti," which is the designation for Syro-Palestine, inclusive of Samaria. Again, the Biblical expression "Babylon" includes besides the capital other cities of Babylon, and transportations from some of them to "the land of Beth Omri," or Samaria, are expressly recorded.

According to the inscriptions, these took place not only in the first but in other years, notably in the seventh after the accession of Sargon and the taking of Samaria. Among the cities mentioned as furnishing colonists, "Cuthah," which has been re-discovered in the modern Tell-Ibrahim, lay about fifteen miles north-east of Babylon. "Ava" has not yet been identified. Sepharvaim, or "the twin Sipar" (Sippahra), so called because the city was built on both banks of the Euphrates, has been recognized in the ruins of Abu-Habba, about twenty miles north of Babylon, where the celebrated Temple of the Sun has been laid bare. Lastly, Hamath is the well-known Syrian city which rebelled against Assyria under a king Jahubi'd, who was vanquished in the battle of Karkar, when Hamath was taken, and its people deported. The other cities mentioned in Scripture were conquered by Sargon at a later period, in his final wars against Merodach-Baladan, in the twelfth and thirteenth years after his accession (710, 709 B.C.). Hence the transportation of their inhabitants to Samaria must have been as many years after the taking of the capital of Israel.

As the sacred text informs us (2 Kings 17:25-33), the new colonists brought with them the worship of their national deities. Among these, "Succoth-benoth" - mentioned as the deity of "the men of Babylon" - is probably a corruption of the name of the well-known Babylonian goddess, Zir-banit,³⁸ "She who gives seed [posterity]."

³⁸ The wife of the god Merodach, and with him, next to Bel and Beltis, a favorite object of worship.

As the god of Cuth, "Nergal" is mentioned, and this is confirmed by the Assyrian inscriptions. Nergal seems to have been the lion-god represented by the colossal winged lions at the entrance to the palaces. Concerning "Ashima," the deity of Hamath, and Nibhaz and Tartak, the gods of the Avites, we possess not any definite information. On the other hand, "Adrammelech" ["Adar is king"] and Anammelech ["Anu is king"], the gods of Sepharvaim, represent well-known Assyrian deities. Adar (originally A-tar) means "father of decision."

In the inscriptions this god bears among others the designation of "lord of fire," which accords with the Biblical notice that the worshippers "burnt" to him "their children in fire." He is represented as a winged bull, with human head and a man's face. Anu was represented as a man clothed in the skin of a fish, culminating in a tiara. After the two supreme gods, Il and Asur, he occupied the first rank in the Triad [Anu, Bel, Nisroch]. He is also described as "the good god," and as "lord of the night." His female counterpart bore the name Anat or, Anatum.

The perils which the new settlers experienced from the increase of wild beasts, which, in true heathen manner, they ascribed to their ignorance of "the manner of the God of the land," led to an appeal to the king. Entering into their views, Sargon dispatched to Samaria one of the priests who had accompanied Israel into exile. He settled in Bethel, the traditional metropolis of Israelitish worship, such as Jeroboam I. had remodeled it. And it was this corrupt form of Jehovah worship which he taught the new settlers. The result was a mixture of Israelitish truths, traditions, and corruptions, with the pagan rites which they had brought with them. Thus their new religion bore a strange similarity to the mixed new, partly Israelitish, partly foreign, population. And such, according to the writer of the Book of Kings, continued substantially the character of the religion of Samaria to his own days.

Yet another transportation of foreign colonists to Samaria seems to have taken place in the reign of Esar-haddon, or rather of his son - possibly in consequence of an attempted rising on the part of the Israelitish population (comp. Ezra 4:2, 10). But

what most deeply impresses us in the Biblical narrative of these events is the spirit and manner in which at the close of Israel's national history the writer passes in review the leading characteristics. The Divine calling of Israel; their defection, rapidly growing into open idolatry; the warnings of the prophets sent to them, and their neglect; the hardening of heart, leading up to the utmost corruption in religion, morals, and life - such, with a brief reflection on Judah's kindred guilt and danger, is the summary presented to us of this history in its spiritual aspect. Scarcely on any other occasion does the sacred writer allow himself reflections of this kind. But they are appropriate, and almost needful, at the close of a history which relates events in their bearing on the kingdom of God, and views Israel as a nation called to be the servants and the messengers of the Lord. They explain the inner meaning of God's dealings in the past, and the deeper causes of a rejection and an exile which cannot end till Israel and Judah, no longer hostile nor separate, shall in one common repentance turn to seek Jehovah their God and the Son of David their King.

VII_10 - Hezekiah, (Thirteenth) King of Judah. (Twentieth) King of Israel

2 Kings 18:1-6; 2 Chronicles 29 to 31

THERE is not a more striking instance of Divine mercy on the one hand, nor yet, on the other, of the personal character of religion even under the Old Testament, than that Ahaz should have been succeeded on the throne of Judah by Hezekiah. His name, "Strength of Jehovah," or, perhaps better, "God is might," was truly indicative of the character of his reign. In every respect - not only as regarded the king personally, but also in the results of his administration, as affecting his country and people - this period was in complete contrast to that which had immediately preceded it.

Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, ascended the throne at the age of twenty-five, towards the close of the third year of Hoshea's reign in Israel.

He was therefore a witness of the events which befell Samaria. From a merely political point of view, the position of a king of Judah must have been one of no small difficulty. In the northern

kingdom Pekah had sown the wind, and Hoshea would reap the whirlwind. The one had brought upon himself the might of Assyria; the other would ultimately lose crown and life in his attempts to shake off the yoke of the conqueror. And in his ruin would Israel be involved. Assyria was the paramount power, not only in Samaria, which was so soon to become a province of that empire, but in Judah also. For Ahaz had made himself tributary to it, and held his crown almost at the mercy of the great world-empire. And, as will appear in the sequel, Hezekiah himself was to feel the power of Assyria even before he came into actual conflict with it.

All this succession of evils, and those which were still to follow, were the consequences of the disbelief and unbelief of Ahaz. As he had discarded the religion of Jehovah, so he despised His Word. In the political circumstances of the country, the only alternative before him was either to trust in the Lord for deliverance, or else to surrender to a foreign power. Against the admonitions and warnings of the great prophet, who had assured him of Divine help, Ahaz had chosen the second alternative. His resolve was not only sin: it was folly. His short-sighted policy brought in another power whose domination could never afterwards be permanently shaken off. Afterwards, when the kingdom of Israel came to an end, the two rival world-empires, Assyria and Egypt, stood face to face, only separated by little Judah - an object of ambition to both, a help to neither, yet whose subjection was absolutely necessary to Assyria, not only in view of its further projects, but even if previous conquests were to be preserved. And for an Assyrian monarch not to be successful was, as this history has shown, to lose crown and life.

So matters stood when Hezekiah ascended the throne. Of all the political combinations possible to him, he chose none. He returned to the point from which Ahaz had departed. His policy was not to have any policy, but to trust in the living God, to obey His Word, and to follow His guidance. His policy was his religion, and his religion was true policy. The only occasion on which he was tempted to deviate from it was at a later time, and it well-nigh proved fatal to him, as in the sequel it

certainly did to his successors. Not that Hezekiah neglected to avail himself of political combinations as they arose. Indeed, this became the source of his danger. He may have argued that not to make use of the means placed within his reach was fatalism, not faith. In this he erred. Yet he did not put his trust in such alliances. He treated them rather as means for defensive, than as instruments sought for offensive purposes. The only real help which he sought was that of the living God.

Thus religion was the central principle of his reign and the secret of his success. The first act of his government was to abolish every kind of idolatry, whether of foreign or domestic origin. The "bamath," or "high places," were abolished; the matseboth, or stone pillars and statues erected for the worship of Baal, were broken down; and the Asherah, or wooden symbol of the lascivious worship of Astarte, was cut down. Nay, even the brazen serpent, which had apparently been preserved since the time of Moses, and had, no doubt in degenerate times, become almost an object of worship, was now destroyed, having received the appellation which, when made an idol, it deserved - Nechushtan, "brazen," a piece of brass (2 Kings 18:4).

In general, the sacred text describes Hezekiah as unequalled in religious earnestness and in conformity to the Divine law by any even of the pious kings that had preceded, or who succeeded him, and it places him on a level with "David his father." And this is fully vindicated by his abolition of even that form of Jehovah-worship on "heights" which Solomon, as well as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, and Uzziah had tolerated (1 Kings 3:2; 15:12, 14; 22:43; 2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35).

But the reformation initiated was not only negative, and Hezekiah restored the services of the Temple in their completeness and purity. From the detailed account in the Book of Chronicles, we learn that "the house of the Lord" had actually been closed (2 Chronicles 29:3, 7). By this we understand the closing of the Sanctuary itself, that is, of the holy and most holy places, since Ahaz continued to use the court of the priests, although for sacrifices at the heathen altar which he had

reared. But now the doors of the Sanctuary were repaired, and once more thrown open. Then Hezekiah "gathered" the priests and Levites in "the wide place on the east," probably some well-known locality in the eastern part of the Temple-buildings (comp. Ezra 10:9; Nehemiah 8:1, 3, 16).

This for the purpose of calling upon them to sanctify themselves, and to remove the heathen abominations which had defiled the Temple. And with this object, the king made in their hearing an earnest review of the sinful past, with its consequent judgments, and a declaration of his purpose "to make a covenant with the Lord."

The response to his appeal was immediate and hearty. In the account of the work now taken in hand by representatives of the Levites they appear once more according to their ancient division into the three families of Kohath, Merari, and Gershon, as David had arranged their courses (1 Chronicles 23:6-23, comp. ver. 27). With these were conjoined as a special branch, probably on account of their pre-eminence (Numbers 3:30), the representatives of the house of Elizaphan, a chief of the Kohathites (Exodus 6:18). Next in the enumeration we find the representatives of the three ancient divisions of Levite musicians - the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and Jeduthun (comp. 1 Chronicles 25:1-6; 2 Chronicles 5:12).

While these heads of Levite houses gathered their brethren to do the work assigned to them, the priests similarly cleansed the inner part of the house, when the Levites flung the remnants of past heathen defilement into the brook Kidron. It marks the zeal with which the work was carried on that, begun on the first day of the first month of the first year of Hezekiah's reign - reckoning its ecclesiastical commencement from the month Nisan - it was completed on the sixteenth day.

Then the vessels which Ahaz had cast away were restored, viz., the altar of burnt-offering, the stands for the brazen lavers, and that for "the sea" (comp. 2 Kings 16:14, 17).³⁹ The Temple having been thus purified, its services were recommenced with

³⁹ It will be remarked that this notice in 2 Chronicles 29:19 confirms the previous account in 2 Kings, and that in a manner instructive as regards the harmony of the two narratives, even where the one records what the other omits.

a grand function, when seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs were offered for the congregation as burnt-offerings, and seven he-goats as sin-offerings ⁴⁰ (comp. Leviticus 4:14; Ezra 8:35).

In strict accordance with the Mosaic law, all the sacred functions were discharged by the Aaronic priesthood, with sprinkling of blood on the altar, and imposition of hands on the sacrifices, denoting their vicariousness (Leviticus 1:4; 4:4, 15, 24, and Leviticus 4:7, 18, 30; 5:9). But what specially distinguishes these services is that the sin-offerings were brought not only for Judah, but "for all Israel" (2 Chronicles 29:24), indicating alike the solidarity of "all Israel" as the congregation of the Lord, and the representative character of these sacrifices. And in accordance with the institution of David, the sacred strains from Levite instruments, and the inspired hymns of David and of Asaph, ⁴¹ once more filled the Temple with the voice of melody and of praise, while the king, the princes of Judah, and the people responsively bowed their heads in lowly worship.

The more direct sacrificial offerings for the people were followed, at the king's suggestion, by thankofferings (comp. Leviticus 7:11, 16), also of a public character, to which "as many as were of upright heart" - probably they who had stood aloof from the idolatry of the previous reign - added burntofferings. As these thankofferings were brought by the congregation as a whole, the victims were not slain and flayed by the offerers, as was the case when brought by private individuals (Leviticus 1:5, 6); but this part of the service devolved on the priesthood, who called in, as in such case they might, the assistance of the Levites. When we remember that, besides the special "burnt-offerings" of individuals (70 bullocks, 100 rams, and 200 lambs), the

"thankofferings" of the congregation amounted to no less than 600 oxen and 3,000 sheep (2 Chronicles 29:32, 33), we scarcely wonder that the priests alone should not have sufficed for the service. And as the text significantly marks, recalling the special defection of the priesthood, from the high-priest Urijah downwards (comp. 2 Kings 16:15), the number of priests who had as yet sanctified themselves was proportionally smaller than that of the more faithful Levites. "So the service of the house of Jehovah was established. And Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people, because of that which God had prepared to [for] the people [probably referring to their willing participation and contribution to these services], for the thing had come suddenly" [without long previous preparation] (2 Chronicles 29:35, 36).

What followed shows that, however sudden the impulse in this religious revival, it was neither transient nor superficial. Of all the festivals in Israel, the most solemn was that of the Passover. It commemorated Israel's national birthday as the redeemed of the Lord, and pointed forward to that better deliverance of which it was the emblem. Ordinarily this feast commenced on the evening of the 14th Nisan (Exodus 12:6, 8, and parallels). But in the present instance this was impossible. Not only had the cleansing of the Temple occupied till the 16th of the month, but a sufficient number of priests for the services had not yet sanctified themselves, while further time was required to make announcement of the Passover throughout all Israel. For, unlike the services at the reconsecration of the Temple, which seem to have been confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, this was to be observed as a great national festival. But it was possible to remove the difficulty thus arising. The law, while fixing the ordinary date of the Passover, had also made provision for an after-celebration of the feast on the corresponding day of the second month in cases of unavoidable hindrance (Numbers 9:6-13). This is one of the most instructive commendations on the character of the Mosaic law. It shows that the outward form was not of its essence, but was flexible and adaptable. Thus the law was not something rigidly outward and absolutely permanent, but gave indication of the possibility of an enlargement by a higher fulfillment of its spirit as distinguished

⁴⁰ That only the he-goats were brought as sin-offerings appears, first, from 2 Chronicles 29:23, and, secondly, from the circumstance that the burnt offerings are afterwards specially enumerated in ver. 27.

⁴¹ This reference to the two great Psalmists not only indicates the existence of their Psalms at that time, but seems to imply such an activity on the part of Hezekiah in regard to the canon of Holy Scripture then existing as is expressly mentioned in connection with the Book of Proverbs.

from the mere letter. Hence such a provision seems like an unspoken pledge of a future transformation of the law, in accordance with the higher conditions and the wants of new circumstances. Lastly, it also affords a precedent and a warrant for such a change as that of the transference of the Sabbath from the close of the week to its beginning; from the day of rest to that of the Resurrection of Christ; from the memorial of the completion of the first creation to that of the second in the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Of this legal provision of an after-Passover, Hezekiah resolved to avail himself. We mark as specially interesting in itself, and as foreshadowing great changes in the future political and ecclesiastical organization of Israel, that Hezekiah acted in this with the advice of "his princes and all the congregation in Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:2). And yet more interesting is it to learn that the invitation to attend the Passover addressed by the king "and his princes" was sent not only to the cities of Judah, but to all Israel, "from Beersheba even to Dan." To this the text adds the retrospective notice that previous Paschal observances had been partial, not general: "for not in multitude [in large numbers] had they done it, as it is written" ⁴² (2 Chronicles 30:5).

This brotherly invitation to the feast of Israel's birth and the common worship of their God and Redeemer was, so to speak, the answer which repentant Judah now made to that fratricidal war which Israel had so lately waged with the object of exterminating the kingdom of David. And the letters of the king and the princes bore such tender references to past sin and judgment, and to present national calamity, and breathed such a spirit of

religious hope for the future, as almost to rise to the level of New Testament sentiment.

In spite of the mockery with which at least at first the invitation was received by the majority in what still remained of the northern kingdom, the final response was truly encouraging (comp. vers. 10, 18). In Judah it was both hearty and unanimous (2 Chronicles 30:12). From the other parts of the country "a multitude of people, even many," came from out of five of the tribes that still constituted the kingdom of Israel. For Naphtali had been annexed to Assyria, and Reuben and Gad been deported. The festival in Jerusalem was followed by a spontaneous national movement against idolatry.

For while the purification of the Temple had been a public act of reform initiated by the king, it was left to the people gathered in Jerusalem to remove the altars in the capital, whether in private houses or in more public places, which were the remnant of the idolatrous worship introduced by Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:24).

The only drawback to the right observance of the Passover festivities was that many of the worshippers "were not sanctified." Accordingly the Levites had to offer for them the Paschal lamb, which, by the law, each offerer should have slain for himself and his house. This applied specially to those who had come from the northern kingdom (ver. 18). If, none the less, they were allowed to partake of the Paschal feast, this was a concession almost necessary in the circumstances, since otherwise theirs would not at all have been a Passover; and for this Hezekiah implored and obtained forgiveness from the Lord. ⁴³

How deeply this revival had struck its roots appears from the voluntary resolve of the people to follow up the seven days of the Passover by other seven days of festivity. For the wants of the people during that time King Hezekiah and the princes made liberal provision (vers. 23, 24). It was at this

⁴² Any previous celebration had not been attended by the people generally, according to the Law, but had been partial and local. The rendering of *brl* by "in multitude," and not, as in A.V., by "for a long time," seems established by the use of the same expression in regard to the priests in ver. 24. It is also confirmed by such passages as Genesis 20:30; 48:16; Deuteronomy 1:10. The rendering is very important, as showing, first, the continued observance of the Passover; secondly, its admittedly sparse attendance, which rendered it more local than national. This also accounts for its rare mention in the historical books.

⁴³ The expression in ver. 20, "The Lord...healed the people," refers to moral healing, that from guilt. Comp. Psalm 41:4; 147:3; Jeremiah 3:22; Hosea 14:4. We add that ver. 22 should be rendered, "All the Levites that understood good understanding about the service of the Lord," i.e., who were well skilled in the various services of the sanctuary devolving on them.

time also that the removal of all traces of idolatry from the land, briefly noticed in 2 Kings 18:4, took place. This was effected, as the fuller account in the Book of Chronicles explains, by a spontaneous popular movement which extended beyond Judah to "Ephraim also and Manasseh" (2 Chronicles 31:1), although, as we may reasonably conjecture, only in districts from which the chief inhabitants had come to Jerusalem. Closely connected with the restoration of the Temple services were the arrangements now made for their orderly continuance. The "courses" of the priests and Levites were once more settled. The public sacrifices of the congregations - daily, Sabbatic, and festive - were provided by the king as his contribution. the "portion of his substance." The latter was indeed very large (comp. 2 Chronicles 32:27-29); but the number of sacrificial animals and other requisites furnished by the king according to the requirements of the law (Numbers 28, 29) was correspondingly great. It has been calculated to have amounted to "nearly 1,100 lambs, 113 bullocks, 37 rams, and 30 goats, besides vast quantities of flour, oil, and wine for the accompanying meat and drink-offerings."

For the personal support of the ministering priests and Levites nothing more was required than the re-enactment of the ancient provision of firstfruits, tithes, and firstlings (Exodus 23:19; Numbers 18:12, 21, etc.; Leviticus 27:30-33). These, together with "the tithe of dedicated things" ⁴⁴ (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 14:28), were now offered in such quantity as not only to suffice for the wants of the priesthood, but to leave a large surplusage, to the thankful joy and surprise of Hezekiah and the princes.

In answer to the king's inquiry the high-priest Azariah explained that the large store accumulated was due to the special blessing bestowed by the Lord on a willing and obedient people (2 Chronicles 31:5-10). The collection of this store began in the third month - that of Pentecost - when the wheat harvest was completed, and it ended in the seventh month - that of Tabernacles, which

⁴⁴ The so-called Terumoth, here called "a tithe," because they stood in the same relation to "things dedicated" as the ordinary tithe to the ordinary produce of the soil.

marked the close of the fruit harvest and of the vintage. And these contributions, or dues, came not only from Judah, but also from "the children of Israel" (ver. 6); that is, from those in the northern kingdom who had joined their brethren in returning to the service and the law of their Lord.

For the storage of these provisions, Hezekiah ordered that certain chambers in the Temple should be prepared, and he appointed officials, who are named in the sacred text, alike for the supervision and the administration of these stores (verses 11-19). Again and again it is noted with what "faithfulness" one and the other duty were discharged by each in the special department assigned to him (verses 12, 15, 18). The provision for the priesthood included not only those who were for the time actually on service in the Temple, ⁴⁵ but also the others in the priest cities, together with their wives and children, and lastly to those in the country districts around these cities (vers. 16-19).

These and all kindred arrangements were extended throughout all Judah. And the detailed account given of the religious activity of Hezekiah closes with the twofold notice that he "wrought the good, the right, and the truth before Jehovah his God;" and that in all he undertook, whether as matter of public or private religious arrangement, "he did it with all his heart, and prospered" (2 Chronicles 31:20, 21).

To the description of the reformation inaugurated by the piety of Hezekiah, it seems desirable to add some further particulars, either illustrative of the

⁴⁵ The text is somewhat involved. In ver. 16 translate, "besides their registration [the names registered] of the males from three years upwards, of all them that came to the house of Jehovah, according to the requirements of every day," etc., i.e., as they were needed for duty each day. Verse 17 is an intercalated sentence, "but the registration of the priests, it was according to the houses of their fathers," etc. ("in their charges," i.e., in their offices). Verse 18 again connects itself with the close of ver. 15 (verses 16 and 17 being a double parenthesis): "and [viz., to give] to the registration [the names registered] of all their little ones...for in their faithfulness they showed [proved] themselves holy (comp. Ezekiel 38:23, and see Ewald, *Lehrb. d. hebr. Spr.*, p. 329) concerning the consecrated [holy]." In the R.V. the rendering "in their set office" is utterly unwarrantable - "trust" is not much better. Otherwise, their rendering seems to apply to the recipients, not to the distributors. This is possible, but our rendering is in accordance with the context.

text or derived from other notices in Holy Scripture. As regards the trustworthiness of the account of the sacrificial worship in the restored Temple - that it was not of later invention, and designed to bear out the priestly institutions first enforced in the time of Ezra - we have to point to the important fact that the number of sacrifices and sin-offerings in the time of Hezekiah notably differs from that at the dedication of the Temple in the time of Ezra (comp. 2 Chronicles 29:21, 32 with Ezra 6:17). This, considering especially the symbolism of numbers, shows that the one account could not have been framed upon the other. It follows that the Mosaic institutions must have existed in and before the time of Hezekiah, and could not, as a certain school of critics contends, have originated with the priesthood at a much later period. Indeed, as we follow the present line of argument, by a comparison of the services in the time of Hezekiah with the Mosaic institutions to which they bear reference, the conviction grows upon us not only of the existence of the latter, but of their general acknowledgment, since, keeping in view the circumstances of the previous reign, it is impossible to suppose that all this could have been "invented" in the first year of Hezekiah's reign. And as connected with this we mark that not only were the liturgical services conformed to a previous model - the Davidic - but that the hymns chanted were in "the words of David and of Asaph the seer" (2 Chronicles 29:30). This seems not only to imply the existence at the time of Davidic and Asaphite psalms - the absence of any mention of other Psalm-collections here deserving special notice - but even to indicate some orderly

collection of these Psalms in books. In short, it casts light on the beginning of the present arrangement of the Psalter in five books. It may well have been that, subject to later revision, the former collection of Psalms consisting, roughly speaking, of the two first books of Psalms (now Psalm 1-41; 42-72), was now enriched by the addition of a further collection - roughly speaking, the present third book of Psalms (Psalm 73-89), which in its present form begins with an Asaphite Psalm (Psalm 73), and has in succession eleven Psalms of the same authorship (Psalm 73-83).

But whatever our view, or more accurately, our conjectures, on this subject, there cannot at least be doubt that Hezekiah actively busied himself, under competent guidance, with the collection and arrangement of the existing sacred literature of Israel. This is expressly mentioned as regards a part of "the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, collected" (Proverbs 25:1).

(...) "removed," "transferred," "collected."

And to this, as assuredly among the most important parts of Hezekiah's activity, the closing notice of his religious work done by him may also bear reference:

"And 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" (2 Chronicles 31:21).