
a *Grace Notes* course

Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

History 518

Grace Notes

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Volume VII - Decline Of The Two Kingdoms; Assyrian And Babylonian Captivity

Preface

THE volume herewith introduced to the reader brings, according to the original plan of the series, this Bible History to a close. This circumstance naturally suggests a retrospect, however brief. In the Prefaces to preceding volumes, the chief characteristics of each period were successively sketched, and the questions indicated to which they gave rise, as well as the special points in respect of which the treatment of one part of this History differed from another. The period over which the present volume extends - that from the decline to the fall of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel - can scarcely be said to have any distinguishing features of its own. It is the natural outcome and the logical conclusion of the history which had preceded. It means that this History, as presented in Holy Scripture, is one and consistent in all its parts; or, to put it otherwise, that what God had from the first said and done with reference to Israel was true. Thus, as always, even the judgments of God point to His larger mercies.

In two respects, however, this period differs from the others, and its history required a somewhat different treatment. It was the period during which most of the great prophets, whose utterances are preserved in the books that bear their names, lived and wrought, and over which they exercised a commanding influence. And never more clearly than in this period does it appear how the prophet, as the messenger of God, combined the twofold function of preaching to his own and, in a sense, to every future generation, and of intimating the wider purposes of God in the future. There is not in the prophetic utterances recorded any one series of admonitions, warnings, or even denunciations which does not lead up to an announcement of the happy prophetic future promised. In this respect prophecy has the same fundamental characteristic as the Book of Psalms, in which, whatever the groundnote, every hymn passes into the melody of thanksgiving and praise. This similarity is due to the fact that, in their Scriptural aspect, the progress of outward teaching and the experience of the

inner life are ever in accordance. On the other hand, there is not in the prophetic writings any utterance in regard to the future which has not its root, and, in a sense, its starting point in the history of the time. The prophet, so to speak, translates the vernacular of the present into the Divine language of the future, and he interprets the Divine sayings concerning the future by the well-known language of the present. As between his teaching and his prediction, so between the history of the present and that of the future there is not a gap: they are one, because through both runs one unswerving purpose which gradually unfolds what from the first had been enfolded. And so history and prophecy also are one, because God is one. And so also, if we would rightly understand them, must we study not so much prophecies as isolated utterances, but as prophecy in its grand harmonious historical unity.

But apart from the considerations now offered, it must be evident to the most superficial observer how much and varied light the utterances of the contemporary prophets cast on the condition, the circumstances, and the history of the time in which they lived. Indeed, from their writings we obtain the most vivid account, not only of the moral and religious state of the people, and even of their manners, but of the moving springs and the real history of events. On the other hand, it must be equally evident how the history of the time illustrates not only the occasion but often the meaning of the prophetic utterances. And so the one helps the understanding of the other. But this circumstance has also naturally imposed on us the duty of studying the history of this period in connection with the various prophecies referring to it, to which, accordingly, constant reference will be found in the present Volume.

Another peculiarity of this period is that its history will be found inseparable from that of the great empires of the world - especially Assyria and Babylonia. Those who have followed the progress of Assyriological studies know how often and unexpectedly light has been cast on the history of the Old Testament by the information derived from the Assyrian monuments. But they equally know that this science is as yet almost in its infancy; that on some points connected with the

Old Testament, the opinions of Assyriologists differ, or else have undergone change, while on others the information we possess may receive further confirmation, modification, or important addition. It will be understood that in these circumstances the preparation of the present volume has required special labor and care. I can only hope that it may serve to make clear the history of a period which without illustration both from the prophetic writings and the Assyrian records would be not a little difficult and complicated. Lastly, the twofold Index to the whole series, contributed by the industry of my daughter, will, it is believed, be helpful to the student.

Thus far as regards the present volume. And now it is with more than the common feelings of natural regret on bringing to a close a work which has engaged a writer more or less for a number of years, and on parting from a circle of readers, whom in the course of time he has come to regard as friends, that the concluding paragraphs of this Preface are written. The object in beginning this series was to make a fresh study of Old Testament history from the original text, with such help as was to be derived from the best criticism and from cognate sciences. And not only was it to follow the course of the outward history, describing it as accurately and fully as might be, but to reach beyond this to its spiritual and universal meaning to mark the unity, application, and unfolding of its underlying idea; and to point to its realization and completion in the kingdom of God. Briefly, the underlying idea of the Old Testament, in its subjective aspect, is that of "the Servant of the LORD." The history of the Old Testament in its progress to the New is that of the widening of the idea of the servant of the LORD into that of the kingdom of God. Lastly, its realization and completion is in the Christ and the Church of God. Unless, indeed, the Old Testament had this higher meaning and unity, it could not possess any permanent or universal interest, except from a historical point of view. It would not permanently concern mankind - no, nor even Israel, at least, in its present relation to the world. On the other hand, without it the New Testament would want its historical basis, and the historical Christ offer what would seem an absolutely unintelligible problem.

Such, then, has been the plan and conception of this Bible History. The readers in view were teachers, students, and generally the wider, educated and thoughtful public. Throughout, the desire has been not to ignore nor pass by difficulties or questions that might arise in the course of this History, but without always specially naming, rather to anticipate and remove or answer them by what seemed the correct interpretation of the narrative. How far this aim has been attained must be left to the judgment of others. This only may be truthfully said, that as difficulties have not in any case been consciously ignored, so their solution has not been sought by inventing an interpretation simply for the purpose of removing an objection. If it may seem that sometimes suggestions have been offered rather than positive statements made, it was because caution was felt to be not only in place but even part of necessary reverence.

But beyond all this there are wider questions connected with the Old Testament, which have, particularly of late, been prominently brought forward. In a work like the present it seemed specially desirable to avoid controversial matters, which, in any case, could not here be satisfactorily dealt with. And yet all reference to them could not be omitted. But on the most fundamental of them - that of the origin and date of the Pentateuch it may be well here to mark what appears an essential distinction. There is the widest difference between the question whether the Pentateuch - legislation is of Mosaic origin, and this other of the precise time when it, or any special part of it, may have been reduced to writing or redacted. The former is a question of principle, the latter one chiefly of literary criticism, and as such can have no absolute interest for general readers of the Bible.

On the first of these questions the present writer has not seen any reason for departing from the old lines of the Church's faith, but rather everything to confirm our adherence to them. Thus literary criticism may, and ought, in this, as in other matters, to continue its independent course of investigation without causing any misgivings to those who, on good and valid grounds, hold fast to the old truth concerning 'Moses and the prophets' and the assured fact of their testimony to Christ.

And the final result of all investigations can only be the confirmation and vindication of the faith of the Church.

In conclusion I have to thank the readers of this Bible History for their kindness, and the indulgence extended to me in completing this series. Any delay in it has been caused by literary engagements. To me, at least, it has afforded the refreshment of periodically returning to a loved work, while the marked advance in cognate studies tending to the illustration of this History has been of the greatest advantage during the progress of the Series. It only remains, with all humility, to offer the results of these labors to those who love the Old Testament, in the earnest hope that He in Whose service they were undertaken may graciously accept, and by His blessing further them, not only to the fuller knowledge, but to the spiritual understanding of His own Word.

VII_01 - Athaliah, (Seventh) Queen, and Jehoash, (Eighth) King of Judah

2 Kings 11:1-20; 2 Chronicles 12:10 to 23:21

WITH the accession of Jehu and the destruction of the house of Ahab, and with the ill-fated alliance between the doomed race of Ahab and the descendants of David, the last period in the history of Israel and Judah's national decline had begun. The measure was not only full, but the Hand hitherto lifted in threatening was no longer stayed. We have reached a period of judgments, when each follows the other with only brief intermission. Of the events in Israel connected with the rebellion of Jehu, of the character of the religious changes introduced by him, and of the troubles and difficulties of the military monarchy which he founded, a detailed account has already been given.¹ But the full sweep and import of

¹ Here we recall only these points: 1. The literal fulfillment of the prophetic predictions concerning the house of Ahab (1 Kings 21:21-24; 2 Kings 9:6-10). 2. That the reaction against the foreign idolatry introduced by Ahab and Jezebel consisted in a return not to the pure service of Jehovah, but to that under the form of the golden calves instituted by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:27-33). In short it was an attempt to reverse the whole previous policy both in Church and State and to reconstitute the kingdom of Israel as Jeroboam had sought to found it on its original separation from Judah. And it may well have been that his slaughter of Ahaziah, and then of the princes royal of Judah (2 Kings 9:27; 10:13, 14), may, from a political point of view,

these events will only be perceived as we mark their direct and indirect influence on the history of Judah.

The union between Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, and Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had introduced apostasy, and brought calamity to the house of David. If the marriage had been planned from political motives, perhaps in the hope of an ultimate reunion of the two kingdoms, or at least with the expectation of a firm and close alliance between them, the result speedily showed the folly of attempting to achieve imaginary successes by subordinating principle to so-called policy.

Indeed, this is one of the lessons which throughout make the history of Israel typical of that of the Church, and in a sense of all history, and which constitute its claim to the designation of "prophetic." In it events move, so to speak, in step with the utterances of the God of Israel. No direct or sudden interference seems necessary; but in the regular succession of events, each deviation from Divine order and rule, each attempt to compass results by departure from God's law and word, brings with it, not success, but failure and ruin. From her entrance into her new home in Judah, to her seizure of its throne, Athaliah brought it only evil. Her very name, "Athaliah" ("Jehovah oppresseth"), seems significant. She possessed all the evil qualities of her mother Jezebel, without her queenly bearing and courage; all the cunning of her father, without any of his impulses towards good. Holy Writ marks that she was her son's "counselor to do wickedly" (2 Chronicles 22:3), and her influence for evil must have commenced in the previous reign of her husband, Jehoram. To the influence of "the house of Ahab" are expressly traced, both in the reign of Jehoram and in that of Ahaziah, the revival of idolatry (2 Kings 8:18, 27; 11:15; 2 Chronicles 22:3, 4); the desecration of the Temple of Jehovah (2 Chronicles 24:7), and those evil counselings (2 Chronicles 22:4) which brought such Divine judgments (2 Chronicles 21:13, 14,

have been determined by the wish to break the bonds that were re-uniting the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Lastly, we have to bear in mind the military character of the monarchy founded by Jehu, which continued under his three successors, although no: with successful results.

16, 17; 22:7). To her, we cannot doubt, was due not only the slaughter of his "brethren," with which Jehoram stained the beginning of his reign (2 Chronicles 21:4), but the destruction by Jehu of so large a number of the remaining royal princes of Judah (2 Kings 10:13, 14; 2 Chronicles 22:7, 8). And if her murderous purpose on seizing the government had been wholly successful, the political union between the house of Ahab and that of Jehoshaphat would have ended in the extermination of the whole house of David.

There is not a scene in Jewish history more vividly depicted than that of Athaliah's seizure of the Jewish crown, and of her miserable end. It seems more than likely that on his ill-fated expedition to the court of Israel, Jehoram had entrusted the government of the kingdom to his mother, who had all along exercised such determining influence upon him.²

We need not wonder, although we take notice of it, that the position of woman in Israel should have been so different from that generally assigned to her in the East. A nation which counted among its historical personages a Miriam, a Deborah, and an Abigail - not to speak of other well-known figures - must have recognized the dignity of woman. Nor can we here forget the influence respectively exercised by the mother of King Asa (1 Kings 15:13), by Jezebel, and by other queen-consorts or mothers.³

When tidings successively reached Athaliah, first of the death of Ahaziah, and then of the murder of presumably the great majority of the royal princes, the thought would naturally suggest itself to such an ambitious and unscrupulous woman permanently to seize the reins of the government. Other motives may also have contributed to this resolve. She must have known that, despite all that had been done in the two previous reigns to denationalize Judah, her party formed only a small and unreliable minority even in the capital. Both in Jerusalem and throughout the country the great

majority were, as events afterwards proved, opposed to the queen-mother, or at least attached to the old order in State and Church. The acknowledged and natural head of this party was the active and energetic high-priest,⁴ Jehoiada, the husband of Jehosheba or Jehoshabeath,⁵ the half-sister of the late King Ahaziah.⁶ And Athaliah must have felt that if, after the slaughter of the other princes by Jehu, a minor were proclaimed king, his guardianship and the government would naturally pass into other hands than hers.

In view of such possible dangers to herself, but especially for the realization of her own ambitious designs, the queen-mother resolved, in true Oriental fashion, on the slaughter of all that remained of the house of David. On its extinction there could no longer be any possible rival, nor yet any center around which an opposition could gather. It casts manifold light on the institution and the position of the priesthood, with its central national sanctuary in the capital, that at such a period the safety of the people ultimately rested with it. Evidently it must have been an institution of the highest antiquity; evidently, it must have formed part of the central life of Israel; evidently, it was from the first invested with all the dignity and influence which we associate with it in the Mosaic legislation; evidently, it was intended as, and did constitute, the religiously preservative and conservative element in the commonwealth, the guardian of Israel's religion, the rallying-point of civil rights and of true national life. Even the fact that in such a time the high-priest was wedded to the king's sister is significant.

⁴ From the absence of any designation to that effect, it has been doubted whether Jehoiada was actually the high-priest. But this seems implied throughout the narrative, and also indicated in 2 Kings 12, specially in verse 10.

⁵ The two names are identical in meaning, and only differ in form. The signification is almost the same as that of Elisheba or Elisabeth.

⁶ Every probability attaches to the statement of Josephus (Ant. 9. 7, 10), that Jehosheba was the daughter of Jehoram {half-sister to Ahaziah} by another mother than Athaliah. Whether or not she was full sister of Joash, whose mother was "Zibiah of Beer-sheba" (2 Chronicles 24:1), must remain undetermined.

² She acted probably as Gebhirah, like Maachah, the mother of King Asa (1 Kings 15:13).

³ Even among non-Jewish nations we recall the name of Dido, of the same lineage and in the same century as Jezebel and Athaliah.

From the general massacre of the royal house by Athaliah, Jehosheba had succeeded in rescuing an infant son of Ahaziah, Joash by name. Together with his nurse, he was for a short time concealed in "the chamber of beds," apparently that where the mattresses and coverlets of the palace were stored, and which would offer a very convenient hiding-place. Thence his aunt removed him to a still more safe retreat in the Temple, either one of the numerous chambers attached to the sanctuary, or, as seems most likely, to the apartments occupied by her husband and his family within the sacred enclosure, or closely joined to it.⁷

So matters continued for six years, Joash probably passing for one of the children of the high-priest. During that time the plunder of the house of Jehovah and the transference of its dedicated things to the service of Baalim, which had been begun by the sons of Athaliah (2 Chronicles 24:7), must have been carried to its utmost extent. Naturally it would arouse a strong reaction on the part not only of those who held the foreign rites in abhorrence, but also of those who were opposed to the rule of the foreign queen who had murdered all that had remained of the family of David. In the seventh year of this misrule, Jehoiada "took courage," and organized a counter-revolution, in which all ranks in the State were equally represented.

If ever a movement of this kind was constitutional, it was that against the murderous usurper of the throne of David. The Book of Chronicles, while always relating events pre-eminently from the priestly and Levitical viewpoint, here furnishes some welcome details, apparently derived from the

⁷ The twofold objection raised that, in accordance with 2 Chronicles 8:11, the wife of the high-priest could not have lived in the Temple, while, according to Nehemiah 3:20, 21, the high-priest had a house outside the Temple, is inapplicable. The former passage applies only to the Egyptian (foreign) wife of Solomon, while the latter only informs us of what was the rule in the time of Nehemiah. In any case it seems difficult to understand how an infant with his nurse, or with that nurse and his aunt, could have been concealed for six years in the Temple, unless that aunt resided with her husband within the precincts of the sanctuary. If, as some critic would have us believe, Jehosheba was not married at all to the priest, but only concealed with the child in the Temple, Athaliah would surely have searched out her hiding-place.

same original sources as the account in the Book of Kings, although omitted in the latter.

From the two accounts we infer that Jehoiada in the first place addressed himself to the five "captains of hundreds," or centurions, whose names are mentioned in 2 Chronicles 23:1. Apparently they commanded the five divisions of the royal bodyguard, which combined the designation Kari (equivalent to Kerethi) given in Davidic time to the corps, then consisting chiefly, if not entirely, of foreign (Philistian) auxiliaries, with the older (So in 1 Samuel 22:17) and more permanent⁸ name of "runners" (ratsim).

The account in the Book of Chronicles adds what in itself would seem most likely, that the military leaders distributed themselves through the country to secure the adhesion and co-operation of the heads of families and clans, and of the Levites. Manifestly it would be necessary to enlist the latter, since the central scene of the rising was to be the Temple. There the confederates met, probably at one of the great festivals, when the youthful prince was presented to them. As, no doubt, in the first instance the military leaders, so now the whole assembly bound themselves by a solemn oath to the undertaking, which primarily had only the proclamation of the new king for its object (comp. 2 Chronicles 23:3).

The differences, and even more the similarity, in the narratives of the event in the Books of Kings and Chronicles have suggested what to some appear discrepancies of detail. It is well to know that, even if these were established, they would not in any way invalidate the narrative itself, since in any case they only concern some of its minor details, not its substance. The most notable difference is that in the Book of Kings the plot and its execution seem entirely in the hands of the military; in Chronicles, exclusively in those of the

⁸ 1 Kings 14:27; 2 Kings 11:4; 2 Chronicles 30:6. Considerable doubt, however, prevails as to the literal reading of the "Cherethites and Pelethites." Some regard them as appellations of Philistian clans; Kimchi even as those of two families in Israel; while most translate "executioners and couriers." In our view, the "Kari," or "Kari tribe," is an appellation marking the old name of the corps, due partly to its original composition, partly, perhaps, also to the circumstances in which it was formed. The correct rendering of 2 Kings 11:4 would be: "The centurions of the Kari and the Runners."

priests and Levites. But in Chronicles also - and, indeed, there alone - the five military leaders are named; while, on the other hand, the narrative in the Book of Kings throughout admits the leadership of the priest Jehoiada. And even a superficial consideration must convince that both the priests and the military must have been engaged in the undertaking, and that neither party could have dispensed with the other. A revolution inaugurated by the high-priest in favor of his nephew, who for six years had been concealed in the Temple, and which was to be carried out within the precincts of the Sanctuary itself, could no more have taken place without the co-operation of the priesthood than a change in the occupancy of the throne could have been brought about without the support of the military power. And this leaves untouched the substance of the narrative in the two accounts, even if what we are about to suggest in the sequel should not seem to some a sufficient explanation of the part assigned respectively to the priesthood and the military in the two narratives.

Of this, at least, there cannot be any doubt, that the account in the Book of Kings deals with the operations assigned to the military. Briefly, they may be sketched as follows. As each of the "courses" into which the priesthood was divided relieved the other at the beginning of every Sabbath, so apparently also the royal bodyguard. The plan now agreed upon was, that the guard which was relieved should, instead of returning to their homes or barracks, march into the Temple, where the high-priest would furnish them with weapons from those that had formerly belonged to David, and which, no doubt, according to sacred custom, had been deposited in the sanctuary.

The sole object of that guard (2 Kings 11:7, 11) was in two divisions to surround the new king on either side, with orders to cut down any one who should try to penetrate their ranks, and to close around the person of the king in all his movements. Thus far for the guard that had been relieved. On the other hand, the relieving guard was to be arranged in three divisions. One of these was to form, as usually, the guard of the royal palace, so that the suspicions of Athaliah should not be aroused. The second division was to occupy

the gate Sur,⁹ also called the "gate of the foundation" (2 Chronicles 23:5); while the third division was to be massed in "the gate behind the guard," the same as "the gate of the guard" (2 Kings 11:19), and which probably formed the principal access from the palace into the Temple. The object of all this was to guard the palace - not only to disarm suspicion, but for defense (2 Kings 11:5), and to ward off or bar¹⁰ any attempt on the part of adherents of Athaliah to possess themselves of the royal residence.

The importance of this will be understood, not only in case of a counter-revolution, but in view of the ancient custom of solemnly placing the king on the royal throne as the symbol of his accession to the government (1 Kings 1:35, 46), which it was intended to observe also on this occasion (2 Kings 11:19).

It must have been noticed that, minute and complete as these arrangements were, so far as regarded the defense of the new king and the guard of the royal palace against a sudden attack by the adherents of Athaliah, they left all the main gates of access to the Temple undefended against any eventuality. And yet it must have been quite as important to protect the Sanctuary from a hostile rush upon it, and to avert its profanation by a fight within its sacred precincts. It is on this ground that we deem it antecedently probable that provision should have been made for guarding the Temple itself, similar to that in regard to the king and the royal palace. But this would naturally devolve upon the Levites, as the regular custodians of the Temple, just as the military guard would as naturally have the immediate custody of the person of the king. And such participation on the part of the Levites seems otherwise necessarily implied in the circumstance that the rising was planned by the priesthood, and organized by them

⁹ Some have regarded this as a side-entrance. Probably this gate gave easy access to the palace, although it formed not the private royal entrance to it, which was from "the gate of the guard."

¹⁰ The word (massach), 2 Kings 11:6, rendered in the A.V. by "that it be not broken down," has been variously explained; but the above gives, it is believed correctly, the meaning intended to be conveyed. The suggestions of the Rabbis are without value.

as well as by the military leaders. In all these circumstances it seems almost impossible to believe that an active part of some kind should not have been assigned to the Levites; that access to the Temple should either have been left unprotected; or that the guard of the Temple should have been entrusted to others than those who were its regular custodians.

These considerations leave no room to doubt the accuracy of the account given in the Book of Chronicles. Only as that in the Book of Kings details the arrangements for the safety of the king and the palace, so that in Chronicles records those made for the security of the Temple, which were entrusted to the Levites. Some other confirmatory particulars deserve attention. Thus we notice that although the account in Chronicles seems to imply that all the arrangements were in the hands of the Levites, yet when Athaliah was to be led to her doom, the order was given, not to the Levites, but to the military leaders, who were to bring her forth "within the ranks" (Sederot). The verse is almost literally the same as in 2 Kings 11:15. The term which we have rendered "ranks" indicates an orderly arrangement, as of soldiers. It is used in 2 Kings 11:8 in reference to the military guard which was to surround the king, but not in designation of the wider compass of Levites, which, according to 2 Chronicles 23:7, was to be about the king. We therefore conclude that this division of Levites was to form an outer circle not only around the king, but also around his military guard. This also explains the difference in the directions given in 2 Kings 11:8 to the military guards to kill those who penetrated their "ranks," and in 2 Chronicles 23:7 to the Levites, to kill those who penetrated into the Temple. In other words, the Levites were to stand beyond the guards, and to prevent a hostile entrance into the Temple buildings; and if any gained their way through them to the ranks of the military, they were to be cut down by the guards. Thus the king was really surrounded by a double cordon - the military occupying the inner court around his person, while the Levites held the outer court and the gates.

The explanations just offered will, it is hoped, show that there is not any discrepancy between the

accounts of this event in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. We can understand how in the latter the functions and localities are assigned to the Levites, which in the Book of Kings seem assigned to the military. Both had similar or kindred functions, and in close proximity to each other. Thus the two accounts are entirely compatible. In point of fact, they supplement each other, the writer of Chronicles, as usually, telling the part which the priesthood sustained in the national rising, while the writer of the Book of Kings simply relates the part taken by the secular power. Thus the one narrates what was specially done by the Levites, the other what by the military; yet each, as we have seen, also giving indications of the cooperation of the other actors. The whole question, however, is not of any real importance, although it may be well to state that the explanations which have been offered are substantially confirmed by the account given of the event by Josephus (Ant. ix. 7, 2).¹¹

The plan of Jehoiada and the leaders of the rising - or, as we may say, of the national party - was carried out in every particular. It is indicative of the general opposition to the new regime, as well as of the unpopularity of the queen, that the secret of the confederacy, although shared by so many, remained unknown to Athaliah. At the same time we must remember that they had bound themselves by an oath, on the keeping of which success depended that the priesthood was entirely under the control of its official chief; and that probably only a short time intervened between the

¹¹ Minor difficulties call only for briefest explanation. The gate Sur, at which, according to 2 Kings 11:6, one post was placed, is evidently the same as "the gate Yesod" ("foundation-gate") of 2 Chronicles 23:5. The more common explanation, that Sur is only a clerical error for Yesod (the y dropped out, and r for d), is not satisfactory, and the error may lie in Chronicles rather than Kings. The LXX. does not here help us. The Rabbis hold that it was an eastern gate, and bore seven different names, two of them being Sur and Yesod. The latter may be true, although no serious value attaches to their archaeological notices. From the circumstance that one object of the guard was to watch the approaches from the palace to the Temple, we infer that the gate Sur, possibly also called Yesod (perhaps it marked the site of the foundation-stone), was, as the word implies, "the gate of declining," a side-entrance into the palace; while "the gate of," or "behind," "the runners," formed the ordinary and principal entrance from the palace into the Temple.

league in the Temple (2 Kings 11:4; 2 Chronicles 23:3) and the execution of the plan agreed upon.

On the day appointed, both the military and the Levites were at their posts. The youthful king, who had been presented to the leaders at their first meeting in the Temple (2 Kings 11:4), was now formally introduced. Then the crown and the "testimony" were put upon him - the latter ceremony probably consisting in placing in his hands, rather than (as some have suggested) on his head, a copy of the Law, whether that referring to the duties of the king (Deuteronomy 17:18-20), or, more probably, the Law in a wider sense. Lastly, since the regular succession had been broken by the intrusion of Athaliah, the new monarch was anointed by Jehoiada and his sons, when, as was the custom, the people broke into demonstrations of joy, clapping their hands, and shouting, "Long live the king!"

However closely the secret had hitherto been kept, the acclamations of the guards and the people were heard in the palace, and the queen rushed into the Temple. Her access to it was not hindered by the military stationed in the palace, although (according to Josephus) her immediate bodyguard were prevented by the priests from following her into the Sanctuary. The sight which now met her eyes must at once have revealed to her the state of matters. On the elevated stand "at the entering in," probably to the court of the priests,¹² usually occupied, at least on solemn occasions, by the king (2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:31), she saw the youthful prince, and beside him "the captains" and the Levites blowing their silver trumpets,¹³ while "the people of the land" greeted their new monarch.

According to the Biblical account, Athaliah rent her clothes and cried, "Conspiracy, conspiracy!" while Josephus adds that she called on those present to kill the young king. The appearance and

attempted interference of the queen was the signal for her destruction. By direction of Jehoiada, she was led forth beyond the Temple between "the ranks" formed to prevent her escape or communication with possible adherents. Any who might attempt to follow her were to be immediately cut down, while Athaliah herself was to be killed beyond the bounds of the Sanctuary. It must have been close to it, where the stables communicated with the palace, that she met her fate.

While this was passing outside the Temple, Jehoiada completed the second part of the royal installation by a twofold solemn act, of which the first consisted in a covenant by which the new king and the people bound themselves to renewed allegiance to Jehovah; while by the second the king similarly bound himself to the people, no doubt to rule in accordance with the law as laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy (2 Kings 11:17). The ancient God-appointed constitution in Church and State having thus been re-established, the new king was conducted in state to the palace by the principal entrance, and formally enthroned. It was probably only after this that the people proceeded to the house of Baal, wholly destroying it and its altars and images, and slaying Mattan, the priest of Baal. The religious reformation thus inaugurated was completed by the appointment of the officials required to superintend and carry on the orderly worship of the Temple - as we infer from 2 Chronicles 23:18, 19, in accordance with the arrangements originally made by David, but which had since fallen into desuetude. And the whole account of this religious revolution concludes with this significant record: "And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet."

VII_02 - Jehoash, or Joash, (Eighth) King of Judah. Jehu, (Eleventh) King of Israel

2 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 24

As we look back on the events described in the preceding chapter, their deep meaning in this sacred history becomes increasingly apparent. The movement in the northern kingdom, which issued in the destruction of the house of Ahab and the elevation of Jehu, had been inaugurated by the prophets. It was speedily followed by another in

¹² 2 Chronicles 23:13. But opinions differ as to the exact locality.

¹³ The word used for "trumpets" is that commonly used of those blown by the Levites. In general, it will be observed that this reference, and that to "the people of the land" - indeed, the whole account - seem not only to confirm, but to imply that in the Book of Chronicles.

Judah, under the leadership of the priesthood, which resulted in the dethronement of Athaliah and the accession of Joash. From the popular point of view, each of these movements represented a reaction against what was foreign and non-Israelitish in politics and in religion, and in favor of the ancient institutions in Church and State. And, surely, we cannot fail to perceive, from the higher point of view, the fitness that in the northern kingdom, where since the time of Jeroboam there was not any authorized priesthood (2 Chronicles 11:14), the prophets should, in a sense, have taken the lead in such a movement, nor that in Judah the Divinely-instituted priesthood should have sustained a similar part.

In truth, this was one of the higher purposes of the priestly office (Leviticus 10:10; Deuteronomy 33:10; Malachi 2:7). But what we are careful to mark is the light which this throws upon the Divinely-appointed institutions in Israel, especially in reference to the mutual relations of Church and State, and the influence for good of religion upon national life and civil liberty.

There is yet another aspect of these movements, alike as regards their short-lived success and their ultimate failure. They were a last Divine interposition in that downward course which led to the final judgments upon Israel and Judah. The people had fallen away from the Divine purpose of their national calling, and become untrue to the meaning of their national history. From this point of view the temporary success of these movements may be regarded as a Divine protest against the past. But they ultimately failed because all deeper spiritual elements had passed away from rulers and people. Nor is it otherwise than as those who, as it were, uttered this Divine protest that the prophets in the north and the priests in the south took so prominent a part in these movements. But with the vital aspect which would have given permanency to these movements, neither the military party in the north nor the majority in the south were in any real sympathy.

And still deeper lessons come to us. There is not a more common, nor can there be a more fatal mistake in religion or in religious movements than to put confidence in mere negations, or to expect from them lasting results for good. A negation

without a corresponding affirmation - indeed, if it is not the outcome of it - is of no avail for spiritual purposes. We must speak, because we believe; we deny that which is false only because we affirm and cherish the opposite truth. Otherwise we may resist, and enlist unspiritual men, but we shall not work any deliverance in the land. "Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel" (2 Kings 10:28), but "he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

"And Joash did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (2 Chronicles 24:2).

But "after the death of Jehoiada," "he and his people left the house of Jehovah, God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass" (vers. 17, 18). And as if to mark this lesson the more clearly, the judgments alike upon Israel and upon Judah came to them through one and the same instrumentality - that of Hazael, king of Syria (2 Kings 10:32; 12:17, 18).

As regards the movement in the southern kingdom of Judah, Old Testament history does not present a nobler figure than that of Jehoiada, whether viewed as priest or patriot. Faithful to his religion, despite his connection with the house of Jehoram and the temptations which it would involve, he dared to rescue the infant prince and to conceal him for six years at the risk of his life. At that time he must have been upwards of a hundred years of age.¹⁴

Even after six years of misrule, Jehoiada still seems most reluctantly to have taken the initiative against Athaliah, although from his custody of the infant-prince, no less than from his age and dignity, it naturally devolved upon him. In the language of the Book of Chronicles, he had to "take courage" for it. And when at last he acted, it was, to use a modern expression, in the most "constitutional" manner, as well as in the most earnest religious spirit. There cannot be doubt that

¹⁴ According to 2 Chronicles 24:15, Jehoiada died at the age of 130. And as, according to 2 Kings 12:6, the restoration of the Temple under Jehoiada took place in the twenty-third year of Joash, the high-priest must have been about 107 years old at the accession of Joash.

the occupancy of the throne by Athaliah was not only an usurpation and a crime, but contrary to the law and constitution of the land. Yet in bringing about a change which was strictly legal, Jehoiada acted in the most careful manner, having first consulted with, and secured the co-operation of, all the estates of the realm. Similarly, the execution of the plan was entrusted to those to whom action in the matter naturally belonged; and if the high-priest marked the accession of the new king by a covenant between him and the people and Jehovah, he was at least equally careful to secure the constitutional rights and liberties of the people by another covenant between them and their sovereign. Lastly, in the period that followed, Jehoiada used his position and influence only in favor of what was best, and not at any time for lower or selfish purposes. To this record of his life we have to add his activity in connection with the restoration of the Temple. We do not wonder that when he died at a patriarchal age,¹⁵ the unparalleled honor was accorded him of a burial not only in Jerusalem itself, where, according to tradition, there were no burying-places, but "in the city of David" and "among the kings," "because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house" (2 Chronicles 24:16).

But perhaps the most striking part in this history is the almost miraculous preservation of the infant prince Joash. This fulfillment of the Divine promise concerning the permanence of the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16) must have impressed all those who believed in "the sure mercies of David." This the more, that during the six years of Joash's concealment, and when an Athaliah occupied the throne, it must have seemed to have entirely failed. The proclamation of the youthful scion of David in the Temple, the solemn religious covenant by which it was accompanied, and the happy reformation which followed, must have vividly recalled the ancient Divine promise, and directed the minds of all true-hearted Israelites to

¹⁵ He is described as "satiated of days" (A.V., "full of days"). The expression is only used in regard to these five persons: Abraham, Isaac, David, Job and Jehoiada. Needless doubt has been cast on the age of Jehoiada. The computation of age in the historical books is generally very moderate and this is characterized as an exceptionally long life.

the great goal in that Son of David in Whom all the promises were to be finally fulfilled. And for a time all seemed in accordance with the beginning of Joash's reign. It is only reasonable to suppose that during his minority, which would not have been so long as in the West, Jehoiada virtually, if not formally, acted as regent. In fact, the religious influence of the priest over the king continued "all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him." If any doubt could attach to the meaning of this expression, it would be removed by the parallel notice that "Joash did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (2 Chronicles 24:2).

His change after that is only too clearly evidenced by the murder of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, an event which has not been seriously called in question even by negative critics.

On the whole, it cannot be doubted that the great defect of the character and reign of Joash was a fatal weakness, such as that of his ancestor Ahab, probably due to want of stable, personal religious convictions. Under the guiding influence of Jehoiada, he "did that which was right;" yet even so he tolerated the worship of the people at the "high places." In view of his character, we must regard it as a specially wise act on the part of the high-priest to concern himself about the alliances¹⁶ of the young king, a circumstance which is specially noted in the Book of Chronicles (2 Chronicles 24:3).

Of his two wives, one (Jehoaddan) is mentioned as a native of Jerusalem; and from the age of her son, Amaziah, at his succession, we infer that he must have been born when his father, Joash, was twenty-two years of age¹⁷ (2 Chronicles 25:1).

But the most notable act of the reign of Joash was the restoration of the Temple. The need for it arose not so much from the age of the building, which had only been completed about a hundred and

¹⁶ Canon Rawlinson calls attention to the desirableness in this case of an early union, since all the seed royal had been destroyed by Athaliah. He also suggests that the number two [wives] on which he [Jehoiada] fixed implies a desire to combine regard for the succession with a discouragement of excessive polygamy."

¹⁷ Joash died at the age of 47.

thirty years before, as from the damage done to it by the family of Athaliah, and the forcible appropriation for the service of Baalim of all that had been dedicated to the house of Jehovah (2 Chronicles 24:7). The initiative in the proposed restoration was taken by the king himself, although it is impossible to determine in what year of his reign. According to the original plan, the sum required for the work was to have been derived from "all the money of the consecrated;" that is, all the sacred offerings "brought into the house of Jehovah; the expression, "current money," ¹⁸ meaning not coined money, which was not in use before the Exile, but silver weighed in certain proportions, for current payment to the workmen.

The sacred text further explains that this consecrated money was to be derived from two sources. from "the money of souls, after his estimation " - that is, the redemption money in case of vows, to be fixed according to the provisions of Leviticus 27:2, etc. - and from voluntary offerings. These sources of revenue the priests were to "take to themselves, every man of his acquaintance" (2 Kings 12:5), and with them to "repair the breaches of the house." The Book of Chronicles explains that this money was to be gathered by personal collection in all the cities of Judah. Considering that these contributions were mainly of the nature of voluntary offerings, like those once gathered for the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:21), such a mode of collection would appear the most suitable, especially in a time of religious revival following after a widespread religious decay.

The king had bidden the priests and Levites "hasten the matter" (2 Chronicles 24:5). But when, even in the twenty-third year of his reign, no satisfactory progress had been made with the needful repairs of the Temple, the king, with the consent of the priesthood, proceeded to make such

alterations in the mode of collecting the money as virtually to place it in his own hands and those of the high-priest. It is not necessary to suppose that there had been defalcations on the part of the priesthood; indeed, the later arrangements are inconsistent with this idea. But we can quite understand that, besides the natural reluctance to collect from friends, the priests might find such calls interfering with the collection of their own revenues in the various districts; while the people would feel little confidence or enthusiasm in what was at best an irregular and disorderly mode of securing a great religious and national object. It was otherwise when the king and high-priest took the matter in hand. A chest for receiving voluntary contributions was placed at the entrance into the court of the priests, at the right side of the altar. A proclamation throughout the whole country, announcing a mode of collection identical with that when Moses had reared the Tabernacle in the wilderness, caused universal joy, and brought thousands of willing contributors. All the other arrangements were equally successful. When the chest was full, it was carried into the royal office, and opened in presence of the king's scribe and the high-priest or his representative, when the money was bound into bags and weighed to ascertain the exact amount. "And they gave the money that had been weighed into the hands of them that did the work [that is, them] that were appointed for the house of Jehovah," viz., to superintend the building operations. According to 2 Chronicles 24:12, these were Levites, and men of such trusted character that it was deemed unnecessary to require an account of their disbursements to the workmen whom they employed. The money was in the first place exclusively devoted to the repair of the Temple (2 Kings 12:13). But when this was completed, the rest was used for the purchase of sacred vessels for the service of the Sanctuary (2 Chronicles 24:14). And it is specially indicated, partly to show the liberality of the people, and partly the extent of the religious revival, that all these contributions in no way diminished the regular revenues of the priesthood ¹⁹ (2 Kings 12:16).

¹⁸ The interpretation of the expression, as referring to the annual Temple tribute of a half-shekel (Exodus 30:13), is not only exegetically impossible, but there is, to say the least, no evidence that the provision of Exodus 30:12, 13 was either intended, or at the time obtained, as a permanent law. Exactly the same expression for "current money" occurs in Genesis 23:16.

¹⁹ The law did not assign to the priests any money in connection with sin-offerings. But we infer that it was the

We mark that the twenty-third year of Joash, when the king took in hand the hitherto neglected restoration of the Temple, was that in which, after Jehu's death, such great calamities befell the kingdom of Israel (see the next Chapter). In general, the accession of Jehu's son, his partial return to the service of the LORD, and afterwards the advance of Hazael into Israelitish territory, must all have had their influence on the state of matters in Judah. Shortly after the restoration of the Temple, Jehoiada died. The opportunity was seized by "the princes" to bring about a partial counter-reformation. It is only natural that the corruption of the last reigns should have had a demoralizing influence upon them. The moral rigor of the service of Jehovah would stand in marked contrast with the lascivious services of Asherah (Astarte - "groves" in the A.V.) and of idols, probably the sacred trees of Astarte, and the service of Baal connected therewith.

For the restoration of the latter, the "princes" humbly and earnestly petitioned the king. Joash yielded; and, although he is not charged in Holy Scripture with any act of personal idolatry, the sin which this involved brought its speedy judgment, and reacted on the whole later bearing of Joash.

It has sometimes been objected that so vital a change as this near the close of his reign seems difficult to understand. But the character of Joash, the removal of the paramount influence of Jehoiada, the growing power of the "princes" in the threatening hostilities from the north, and the circumstance that the king in the first place only permitted the proceedings of the corrupt aristocracy, sufficiently account for all that is recorded in the sacred narrative. On the other hand, there cannot be more instructive reading than to compare this later part of the history of Joash with that of Asa (1 Kings 15:9-24, and especially 2 Chronicles 14), which, although by way of contrast, seems almost a parallel to it.

The sanction given by the king to the introduction of idolatry in Judah soon brought, in the Divine order of things, its national punishment. But here also Divine mercy first interposed by admonitions

and warnings sent through His prophets (2 Chronicles 24:19). Among these we have probably to include Joel, whose prophecies were probably uttered in the period of hopeful revival which characterized the first part of the reign of Joash. But now the warnings of the prophets were not only left unheeded: they called forth violent opposition. Still, prophets might be borne with because of their extraordinary mission and message. It was otherwise when the high-priest Zechariah, the son - or, rather, grandson²⁰ - of Jehoiada, standing in his official capacity in the court of the priests, addressed the people gathered beneath in the lower court speaking in similar language, under the overpowering influence of the Spirit of God.

The princes and people conspired; and at the command of the king, unmindful not only of his duty to God, but even of the gratitude he owed to his former preserver and counselor, the grandson of Jehoiada was stoned to death "between the temple and the altar."

All things combined to mark this as a crime of no ordinary guilt, specially typical of what befell the last and greatest Prophet of Israel, the Christ of God. The death inflicted on Zechariah was that which the law had appointed for idolatry and blasphemy (Leviticus 20:2; 24:23). Thus the murderers of the high-priest, as those of Christ, unrighteously inflicted the punishment which was due to themselves. Again, in the one case as in the other, the crime was provoked by faithful admonitions and warnings sent directly of God. In both instances the crime was national, the rulers and people having equal part in it; in both, also, it was connected with the Temple, and yet the outcome of national apostasy. Lastly, in both instances the punishment was likewise national. Yet there is marked difference also. For, as Zechariah died, "he said, Jehovah, look upon it, and require it," while our Lord, when referring to this event as parallel to what was about to befall Him, implied no personal resentment when He uttered this prediction: "Behold your house is left

practice that the priest received some money-gift besides the flesh of the sacrifice (Leviticus 6:25-29).

²⁰ In Matthew 23:35 (R.V.) he is called the son of "Barachiah." From the great age of Jehoiada at the time of his death, there is every internal reason for believing that he was succeeded, not by his son, but by his grandson.

unto you desolate." And yet further, unlike the words of Zechariah, those of Christ ended not with judgment, but with the promise of His return in mercy and the prospect of Israel's repentance (Matthew 23:39). Jewish tradition has preserved, although with many legendary additions,²¹ the remembrance of this national crime, fabling that the blood of the high-priest spilt on the Temple pavement could neither be wiped away nor be at rest, but was still bubbling up when more than two and a half centuries later Nebuzar-adan entered the Temple, till God in His mercy at last put it to rest after the slaughter of many priests.

The judgment predicted upon Judah was not long delayed. Joining together the notices in the Books of Chronicles and of Kings, we learn that exactly a year after the murder of Zechariah, Hazael, the king of Syria, made a victorious raid into Judah. We cannot be mistaken in connecting this with the expedition of the king of Damascus into the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 13:3, 7, 22). Having conquered the territory east, and subjected that west of the Jordan, when Gilead specially suffered (Amos 1:3), Hazael seems next to have marched into Philistine territory, either for personal conquest or perhaps even at the request of the people. The latter seems suggested, as we shall see, alike by the siege and capture of Gath, and by the conjunction of the Philistine cities with Hazael in the prophecies of Amos (1:6-10; comp. also 6:2). These imply that the Philistine cities had been conspicuous by their traffic in the captives whom Hazael had taken in Judea.

The varying history of Gath deserves special notice. In the reign of Solomon it seems to have had a king of its own, although apparently under the suzerainty of Judea (1 Kings 2:39). During the

reign of Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, Gath is mentioned as one of the cities fortified for the defense of Judah (2 Chronicles 11:8). The suzerainty of Judah over Philistia seems to have continued up to the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:11). We have no means of judging how the Egyptian expedition in the time of Asa affected the later condition of Philistia; but we know that in this, as in other hostile attacks upon Judah, the Philistines took an active part (2 Chronicles 21:16, 17). On all these grounds it seems likely that the native population of Gath, apparently the only city held by Judah, had called in the aid of the Syrians on their occupation of the kingdom of Israel, and that this had been the occasion for the siege of Gath by Hazael. From Gath to Jerusalem the distance is only about thirty miles, and the defeat of the Judean garrison in the Philistine fortress was naturally followed by an incursion of Judea proper. Although the Syrian force was numerically much inferior to that of Judah, the army of Joash was defeated with heavy losses. These notably included the destruction of those "princes" who had been leaders in the movement that ended in the murder of Zechariah. The Book of Chronicles (24:24) is careful to mark the hand of God in a defeat which formed so striking a contrast to the victory which the LORD had given to Asa with an army greatly inferior to his enemies (2 Chronicles 14:9, etc.) And yet this was only the beginning of judgment upon Joash. According to the account in the Book of Kings (2 Kings 12:18), Joash bought off the capture of his capital by handing to the conqueror all the hallowed things of the Temple²² and the treasures of the palace.

The withdrawal of the Syrian army, under conditions so disastrous and humiliating to Judah, was the signal for internal troubles. Joash lay sick and suffering, perhaps in consequence of wounds,

²¹ The story is told, though with some variations, both in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanh. 96 b; Gitt. 57 b) and in the Jerusalem Talmud (Jer. Taan. 69 a, b), also in the Midrash on Ecclesiastes and on Lamentations. According to Jewish tradition, the sin had been sevenfold: they had murdered one who was priest, prophet, and judge; they shed innocent blood in the court of the Temple, and it was the Sabbath, and also the Day of Atonement. See the Targum on Lamentations 2:20. It deserves special notice that there Zechariah is, exactly as in Matthew 23:35, designated "the son of Iddo" (comp. Ezra 5:1; 6:14), who was really the omitted (as in Genesis 29:5; 2 Kings 9:20), perhaps because Zechariah succeeded Iddo (Nehemiah 12:4, 16).

²² The question why, if the Temple possessed so many valuables, a collection had to be made for its necessary repairs, is easily answered by the consideration that the sale even for such a purpose of things hallowed would have been looked upon as sacrilege. The things hallowed by previous kings (2 Kings 12:18), and which Athaliah and her sons had removed for the service of Baal, were no doubt restored to the Temple on the accession of Joash.

in the castelated palace Millo²³ (1 Kings 9:15), when he fell a victim to a palace conspiracy. Two of his servants²⁴ murdered him as he lay in his bed. The Book of Chronicles traces his fate to the murder of "the son [grandson] of Jehoiada" - not, indeed, in the sense of this having been the motive of the conspirators, but as marking the real cause of his tragic end.

No doubt the conspiracy itself was due to the unpopularity which the king had incurred in consequence of the successive national disasters which marked the close of his reign. And even those who had most wished to see the sternness of Jehovah-worship relaxed in favor of the service of Baal must have felt that all the national calamities had been connected with the murder of Zechariah in the Temple, which they would impute to the king. Thus, not only religion, but superstition also, would be arrayed against Joash. Even his murder produced no revulsion in popular feeling. Joash was indeed buried "in the city of David," but "not in the sepulchers of the kings."²⁵

VII_03 - Joash, (Eighth) King of Judah. Jehoahaz and Jehoash, (Twelfth and Thirteenth) Kings of Israel

2 Kings 13

THE reign of Joash, king of Judah, extended over the unusually long period of forty years.²⁶ Acceding to the throne in the seventh year of Jehu,

²³ The expression, "as one goeth down to Silla" (2 Kings 12:20), probably marks a locality, but is difficult of explanation.

²⁴ The difference in the names in 2 Kings 12:21 and 2 Chronicles 24:26 is easily explained. The first name in 2 Kings, Jozachar, is in 2 Chronicles Zabad, the initial "Jo" - Jehovah - being (as easily perceived) dropped, and the Zachar (rkz) becoming, by a clerical error, Zabad (dbz). The name of the mother of the second of the murderers is given in Chronicles in the fuller form of Shimrith. We owe to the account in Chronicles the notice of the nationality of the two mothers

²⁵ Rabbinic writings note the strict accordance between the fate of Joash and his conduct. He cast off the yoke of the kingdom of God, so did his servants cast off the yoke of his rule; Joash forgot what he owed to Jehoiada, so did his servants what they owed to their lord; Joash killed, and he was killed; Joash heeded not the dignity of his victim, nor did his servants heed that he was a king, the son of a king.

²⁶ The average duration of the reigns in Judah is twenty-two, that in Israel only twelve years.

king of Israel, he survived not only that monarch and his son and successor, Jehoahaz, but also witnessed the accession of Jehoash. According to the Biblical text, Jehu was followed on the throne of Israel by Jehoahaz, his son, in the twenty-third, or more strictly speaking, in the twenty-first year of Joash, king of Judah.²⁷

His reign, which lasted seventeen years, was a period of incessant warfare with Syria, and of constant and increasing humiliation to Israel. The history is very briefly indicated in the Book of Kings, which is chiefly concerned in marking the

²⁷ A comparison of 2 Kings 13:1 ("the twenty-third year") with ver. 10, ("the thirty-seventh of Joash") shows that these two numbers are incompatible - since, if Jehoahaz acceded in the twenty-third year of Joash, and "reigned seventeen years," the accession of his son could not have taken place in "the thirty-seventh," but in the fortieth or in the thirty-ninth year of the king of Judah. Without here entering into the controversy which of these two dates should be "corrected," we assume with Josephus (Ant. 9. 8, 5) that the accession of Jehoahaz of Israel really took place in "the twenty-first year" of Joash, king of Judah. As, on any theory of the composition of the Books of Kings, the manifest discrepancy between the numerals in vers. 1 and 10 could not have escaped the writer there must be some explanation of it, although in the absence of definite materials, it is impossible to propose any with absolute confidence. Possibly the conciliation may lie, not in an error of transcription (nk for ak) but in the peculiar mode of calculating the years of a reign in Judah (from the month Nisan) differing from that obtaining in Israel. In any case, the occurrence of a discrepancy which cannot rationally be attributed to ignorance on the part of the writer, should make us careful in our inferences about other chronological difficulties, for which as yet no adequate solution has been found. It by no means follows that further researches will not bring such to light. This remark applies especially to the relation between the chronology of the Biblical documents and that on the Assyrian monuments, which admittedly is not always absolutely exact. Such prospect of future conciliation seems to us the more likely from the circumstance that the two chronologies agree as to the date of the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.). On the other hand, we have the curious phenomenon that the differences between them for the period before that event are not uniform and permanent, but vary as to different reigns; while we mark the still more curious fact that in the date of events after the fall of Samaria (as to which both chronologies agree) there is a divergence of thirteen years. For, assuredly, when the two agree as to the fall of Samaria, it seems almost impossible that there should not be a reasonable explanation, or conciliation, of dates subsequent to it. The utter groundlessness of the bold, entire rejection by certain writers of the chronological notices in the Biblical books has been abundantly proved by Kamphausen and Riehm. We express the more confidently our views on this point that personally we attach little intrinsic importance to such points, especially where, as in numerals, errors so easily creep in.

deeper spiritual reasons for the disasters of Israel in the increasing apostasy of king and people.

But welcome light is thrown on the brief details of political history furnished in the Biblical account by what we read on the Assyrian monuments. It will be remembered that the Syrian conquest of Israelitish territory had begun during the reign of Jehu.

The Biblical notice of these successive conquests by Hazael (2 Kings 10:32, 33) is probably somewhat general, and not confined only to the time of Jehu. But the records on the Assyrian monuments show that Hazael was at war with the powerful empire of Assyria, defeated, and obliged to entreat peace under humiliating conditions. They also record that Jehu had paid tribute to the powerful king of Assyria - more strictly, that he had entered into a tributary alliance with that empire. When peace was concluded between Assyria and Hazael, the latter seems to have turned his whole force against the kingdom of Israel as allied to Assyria. By a series of victories, Hazael gradually possessed himself of the whole country east of the Jordan.

Thence, during the reign of Jehoahaz, he extended his conquests over the Israelitish territory west of the Jordan, till, in the judgment of God, the army of the king of Israel, gathered together in Samaria as the last stronghold, came to be reduced to, fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen."

The rest - in the expressive language of Scripture - "the king of Syria had destroyed," "and made them as dust to trample upon" (lit. "to tread down") (2 Kings 13:7).

And we again mark, as indicated in the previous Chapter, that it was two years after the accession of Jehoahaz, viz., in "the three and twentieth year of King Jehoash" (2 Kings 12:6), during the full progress of the Syrian conquest of Israel, when the restoration of the Temple was begun. We can scarcely be mistaken in connecting this with a national reaction against what had taken place in the north, and with fear of judgments such as had overtaken Israel. Lastly, we should notice, in final explanation of the expedition of Hazael against Gath (2 Kings 12:17), which ultimately eventuated

in a march upon Jerusalem, that the Assyrian monuments everywhere indicate a tributary dependence upon Assyria of the Philistine cities along the seacoast.

From this glimpse into the political history we turn to what throughout is the main object of the sacred writer, the indication of the religious causes which led up to these events. The Biblical text seems here somewhat involved, in part from the mixture of remarks by the writer with the historical notices extracted from existing documents. The following appears its real order. The usual notice (2 Kings 13:1) of the accession of Jehoahaz, and of the duration of his reign is followed by a general description of the character of that monarch (in ver. 2): as doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and continuing the wrongful religious institutions of Jeroboam. Then we have in ver. 3 a notice of the Divine punishment of these sins in the surrender of Israel to Hazael, king of Syria, and to Ben-Hadad, his son and successor. The following verse (ver. 4) marks the repentance and prayer of Jehoahaz, occasioned by these calamities, and God's gracious answer, although not in the immediate present (see vers. 22-25). Verses 5 and 6 form a parenthesis. Possibly it may begin with ver. 4. The reference to the wars of Ben-Hadad in ver. 3, which can only apply to the time of Jehoahaz, may be rather of a general character (see vers. 22 and 25).

In any case the continuous historical notices, or extracts, recommence with ver. 7, which describes the depressed condition of the kingdom under Jehoahaz, while vers. 8 and 9 record, in the usual form, the death of Jehoahaz and the accession of his son, Jehoash (or Joash). Thus, as already stated, vers. 5 and 6, if not also yet. 4, form an intercalated notice, telling on the one hand how God had heard the prayer of Jehoahaz by raising up "a savior" to Israel (ver. 5), and, on the other hand, how this gracious interposition did not really affect the spiritual state of Israel (ver. 6). They not only continued in the sins of Jeroboam, but "there stood the Asherah also in Samaria." This parenthetical notice must be considered as of a general character: "the savior" raised up being in the first place Jehoash (ver. 25), and finally and fully Jeroboam II. (2 Kings 14:25-27). Similarly

the account of Israel's degenerate religious condition in 2 Kings 13:6 must be regarded as a general description, and not confined to either the reign of Jehoahaz, that of Jehoash, or that of Jeroboam II.

Lastly, the graphic expression, "the children of Israel dwelt in tents as beforetimes" (lit. "as yesterday and the third day ") (the day before), is intended to recall the primitive happy days, the idea being that so thorough was the deliverance from the Syrians that Israel once more dwelt in perfect security as in olden times.

But the parenthesis in verses 5 and 6 is not the only one in this chapter. The brief notice in vers. 10-13 of the accession of Jehoash, the character of his reign, his death, and his succession by Jeroboam II., seems derived from the same historical record from which the equally brief previous account of Jehoahaz had been taken. It is followed in vers. 14-21 by a parenthetic account of what occurred in connection with the death of Elisha the prophet, derived, we would venture to suggest, from another source; perhaps a narrative of the lives and activity of Elijah and Elisha.

With this the writer connects (in verses 22-25) what really resumes and fully carries out the more summary remarks in vers. 4-6. Lastly, in chapter 14, the history of Jehoash - which had only been outlined in 13:9-13 - is taken up in detail and continued, and this in connection with the history of Judah, being perhaps derived from the annals of Judah, as the previous brief record may have been extracted from those of Israel.

Viewing this history from another and higher standpoint, we mark the readiness of the Lord in His mercy to listen to the entreaty of Jehoahaz, welcoming, as it were, every sign of repentance, and by His deliverance in response to it, encouraging a full return to Him, showing also that prosperity or disaster depended on the relation of the people towards Him. And assuredly no better evidence could be afforded us that even in our farthest decline we may still turn to God, nor yet that prayer - even by Jehoahaz, and in that state of Israel - shall not remain unanswered. Yet, though the prayer was immediately heard, as in the judgment pronounced upon Ahab (1 Kings 21:27-29), its immediate manifestation was delayed.

These are precious practical lessons to all time, and the more valuable that they are in such entire accordance with God's dealings as declared in other parts of Revelation, exhibiting the harmony and inward unity of Holy Scripture. And even as regards the outward structure of this narrative, its very want of artistic connection only inspires us with greater confidence in its trustworthiness, as not concocted but apparently strung together from extracts of existing historical documents.

Jehoahaz was succeeded on the throne of Israel by his son Jehoash (or Joash), whose reign extended over sixteen years (2 Kings 13:10, 11). Religiously it was, like that of his father, marked by continuance in "the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." Indeed, as previously stated, this return to the religious policy of the founder of the northern kingdom, supplies the explanation of the administration of Jehu, and of the popular reaction against the house of Ahab which he represented and headed. Of this uniform policy we find an indication even in the name Jeroboam, which the son and successor of Jehoash bore. There was this other continuity also, that the monarchy founded by Jehu, originating in a military revolution, continued a military rule under his successors. This appears from the alliances with Assyria, from the continuous and finally successful wars with Syria during the whole of this dynasty, and lastly from the war with Amaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 13:12). In this, as in the abolition of Ahab's religious institutions, we observe a reversal of the policy of the dethroned house. Nor can we be mistaken in ascribing to the latter cause the new friendly relations with the servants of Jehovah, and especially His prophets, which the new dynasty sought to inaugurate.

Almost the first act of Jehu had been to invite Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, to make public entry with him into Samaria, and to witness his zeal for Jehovah (2 Kings 10:16). Almost his first public measure had been the destruction of the temple of Baal, with its priests and worshippers (2 Kings 10:18-28). Even the slaughter of the descendants of Ahab and of the princes of Judah (2 Kings 13:4) might be imputed to the same motives - at least by a people in the religious condition of Israel. The same feelings may be

traced in the repentant prayer of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:4), and lastly in the visit of Jehoash to the deathbed of Elisha (2 Kings 13:14).

It is another and a more serious question how the relation of these servants of Jehovah and especially of Elisha towards a dynasty stained by so many crime, and so unfaithful to the true service of the Lord, is to be explained. It certainly cannot be understood without taking several considerations into account. The situation was not simple, but complicated, and accordingly the motives influencing the conduct of the prophets were varied, and, if one-sidedly viewed, may for that very reason appear conflicting. These three considerations may, however, help us to understand their general bearing. First, the prophets were always only the executors of God's behests; they stood not in any independent personal relation to events or individuals. Secondly, the behests of God, and consequently the prophetic commission, whether as regarded judgment or deliverance, applied to acts and individual events, not to persons or lives.

Thirdly, the final object of all was, on the one hand, the vindication of Jehovah's dealings, and, on the other, the arresting of Israel's spiritual, and with it of their national decline. It was needful that signal judgments should sweep away Ahab and all connected with his ways, and Jehu was, in the circumstances of the time and in the state of the people, the most suitable instrument for it. Thus far, and thus far only, had his counter-revolution the countenance of the prophets. Again, it was in accordance with the Divine purpose of mercy that the first indication of any spiritual comprehension of God's judgments should be welcomed and encouraged.

Hence the prayer of Jehoahaz was heard; hence, also, and in further pursuance of the promise of deliverance, the interview between the king and the dying prophet, as well as the prediction of Jonah, the son of Amittai (2 Kings 14:25). Nor must we overlook in all this the human aspect of the question. The prophets were indeed first and foremost God's messengers; but they were also true patriots, and intensely national, and this not despite, but rather because of their office. Any national reaction, any possible prospect of national

return to God, must have had their warmest sympathy and received their most hearty encouragement. In short, whenever they could, they would most readily range themselves on the side of their people and its rulers. They would co-operate whenever and in whatsoever they might; and only protest, warn, and denounce when they must. And a consideration alike of the bearing of Jehonadab (comp. Vol. VI., p. 210), and again of Elisha, must convince that as their co-operation was never withheld when it might be given, so it was never extended to that which was either wrong in itself or inconsistent with their spiritual mission.²⁸

If evidence were required of what has just been stated, it would be found in the last interview between Jehoash, the king of Israel, and Elisha. Forty-five years had elapsed since the anointing of Jehu, and as Elisha was grown up even during the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 19:19), he must have attained a very advanced age. Strange as it may seem, we have not any record of his public activity during the forty-five years that had passed since Jehu's accession. It is impossible to determine whether or not some of his recorded mighty deeds had been done during this lengthened period, although inserted in this history without regard to chronological order, having been extracted from a separate biographical rather than historical work. Or his activity may not have been of so public a character; or it may not have required record in the general history of Israel; or through him may have come the message to Jehu (2 Kings 10:30), and afterwards the impulse which led to the prayer of Jehoahaz.

Residing in Samaria, Elisha could not, even as regards his prophetic office, have fallen out of

²⁸ One is tempted to say that the kings of Israel must have found these prophets exceedingly impracticable persons failing them just when in their spiritual dullness they had reckoned upon finding them on their side. In truth, they understood not any of the principles above indicated, and looked for absolute personal support on the ground of their support of certain acts and facts. It required spiritual discernment to understand that the prophets were neither political partisans nor political opponents, but might in turn be either or both. In these circumstances we need not wonder that certain modern critics understand the prophets no better than did the kings of Israel.

public view, since, on tidings of his last fatal illness, Jehoash at once hastened to his side.²⁹

Nor, on the other hand, could we imagine this history to have omitted all reference to the death of Elisha; nor yet that the prophet should have departed without some public admonition for good or pledge of Jehovah's near deliverance of Israel. Indeed, had it been otherwise, the victory over Syria, coming so long after the prayer of Jehoahaz, might have been imputed to the prowess of Jehoash, and not to the answer of God.

It would be difficult to imagine a more striking contrast than between the bearing of the youthful king of Israel and that of the aged dying prophet. Elisha is full of confidence and courage, while Jehoash is overwhelmed rather with concern than with grief at the impending death of the prophet, weeps "over his face," and addresses him: "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" The language is the same as that of Elisha himself on the removal of Elijah (2 Kings 2:12), but uttered in a spirit very different from his.

The king's was language of respectful affection, indeed, but also of unbelief, as if with the removal of Elisha's presence from amongst them the defense and might of Israel had ceased. Very different also from the bearing of Elisha when his master had been taken from him was that of Jehoash. Then the first act of Elisha had been one of faith that dared the utmost, when with the mantle fallen from his master's shoulders he smote the waters of Jordan, and they parted hither and thither. On the other hand, almost the first act of Jehoash in view of the departure of his master was one of unbelief, that in cowardice shrunk back, even within sound of the prophet's express directions and of the accompanying assurance of promised Divine help. So the same words have a very different meaning in the mouths of different persons, nor is there safety in any mere formula, however sacred or sanctioned. In this also the letter killeth, but the Spirit maketh alive.

²⁹ Came down unto him." The expression implies, as 2 Kings 6:33, that the house of Elisha in Samaria (2 Kings 5:9; 6:32) was at the bottom of the hill on which the city was built.

Alike intrinsically, and in view of the condition of the king, as also for a lasting record to Israel, it was needful that the prophet should before his departure once more give emphatic testimony to Jehovah, emphatic confirmation also of His promise, and encouragement to Israel. So would his dying words become a permanent message to the people, and not only sum up and seal, but, so to speak, perpetuate his whole mission. It was in accordance with almost uniform prophetic custom (comp. 1 Kings 11:29-32; Isaiah 20:2; Jeremiah 13:1; Ezekiel 4:1, and others), and also best suited to the condition of the king and the circumstances of the case, that this message should be joined to a symbolic act as its sign. It would be impossible to misunderstand it, when Elisha bade Jehoash take bow and arrows and put his hand upon the bow, while the prophet himself laid his hands upon that of the king. And when this had been done, the window towards the east was opened, or rather, its lattice removed, and the king at Elisha's command shot the arrow. Towards the east was Syria; in shooting the arrow thither, the king of Israel was acting at the direction, and with the symbolically assured helping Presence of the LORD. And so it meant: "An arrow of salvation [deliverance] of Jehovah [the deliverance being His] and an arrow of salvation from [against, over] Syria;" to which the prophetic promise was immediately added "For thou shalt smite Syria in Aphek to destruction [complete annihilation]." The latter statement, it need scarcely be said, referred only to the Syrian host at Aphek, since this first was followed by other victories. But Aphek was a significant name, marking the locality where by Divine prediction and Divine help Israel had once before defeated the overwhelming might of Syria (1 Kings 20:26-30).

But the interposition of God, although direct, is not of the nature of magic. If any success granted by Him is to be complete, it implies moral conditions on our part. To put it otherwise: the full reception of God's benefits has for its condition full receptivity on the part of man. This was the meaning of Elisha's further behest to the king; this also the explanation of Jehoash's failure. The prophet bade him seize "the arrows" which he had already taken from the quiver, and "strike (that is, shoot, hit) towards the earth."

Instead of obeying fully and literally, or at least shooting five or six times, the king struck only thrice. It was a symbol he could not fully understand, and which therefore had not any real meaning for him. Of simple, unquestioning, and persevering obedience of faith he had not any conception. So far as his capacity reached he did obey. He may have dimly perceived that it meant the shooting at the enemy prostrate on the ground. But then "three times" indicated in ordinary Jewish parlance that a thing was completely and fully done (as in Exodus 23:17; Numbers 22:28, 32, 33; 24:10; 2 Kings 1:9-14), and three times he had "smitten." This also was symbolic of the king's moral incapacity for full deliverance. That at such a moment he should have failed in the test of faith and obedience, perhaps grown weary of what seemed meaningless in its continuation, and that this failure should have involved the delay of Israel's full deliverance, filled the prophet and patriot with holy indignation. It should be to him as he had done - only thrice, according to his obedience, but not to complete and final victory would Jehoash smite the Syrians.

We cannot help connecting the brief notice of the miracle after Elisha's death and burial with this interview between the king and the prophet. It was not as the king in his faint-heartedness had cried, or as Israel might have feared, that with the disappearance of the living prophet from among them "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof" were gone. It was the God of the prophet, and not the prophet's god, that was Israel's defense and might. It needed not a living prophet - the same power which stood behind him in life could work deliverance through him after he was dead.

The main point was not the man, but his mission, and to it - that he was a prophet - this miracle after his death gave the most emphatic attestation; such also as would both in itself and from its surrounding circumstances specially appeal to that time and generation. This, without overlooking its other possible symbolic application,³⁰ seems to us its chief meaning.

³⁰

It need scarcely be said how absurd would be any inference from this miracle in regard to the use of "relics," - still more, to their veneration. The two cases have not anything in

It appears that "at the coming in of the year" - probably in the spring - after Elisha's burial, they were carrying a man to his burying, as was the wont, on an open bier. But lo, as the procession reached the last place of rest, one of those predatory Moabite bands, which, like the Bedawin of modern times, desolated the land, was seen swooping round to where the mourners were gathered. Only a hasty flight could save them from death or bondage. There was not time for hesitation. Rolling away the stone which barred the entrance, and opening the door of his sepulcher, they laid the dead man upon the bones of the prophet, and then hastily fled. But lo, life came again to the dead man by touch of the dead prophet - and "he stood on his feet," the only living man in the silent home of the dead; safe in the sepulcher of Elisha from either flight or the Moabites. But whatever its immediate meaning, who can in this prophetic history refrain from thinking here of the life that comes from touch of the crucified Christ; of the raising of the young man carried at Nain on his bier to the burying; or even of the dim dawning of thoughts of a resurrection, the full blaze of whose light comes to us from the empty tomb on the Easter morning?

At its close the narrative again returns to what is its keynote (in vers. 4, 5). Again comes the record of the LORD'S compassion, of His faithful remembrance of the covenant with the Fathers, and of His merciful delay of that final punishment of Israel's sin which would sweep them far from their land. It was as God had promised. Hazael was dead. Once and again, nay three times, did Jehoash defeat Ben-hadad (III.), the son and successor of Hazael, and take from him those cities which had been captured in the reign of Jehoahaz.

But as from the rock-hewn sepulcher of Elisha came attestation of his Divine mission, so comes there to us from the monuments of Assyria confirmation of this defeat of Ben-hadad in fulfillment of Divine promise. For whereas his father is repeatedly referred to as a bold warrior even against the overwhelming might of Assyria, Ben-hadad (III.) is not even mentioned. This is

common; since if anything is clear, it is the unique character of this miracle.

most significant; evidently, his reign was smitten with weakness, and his power had been wholly broken.

VII_04 - Amaziah, (Ninth) King of Judah. Jehoash, (Thirteenth) King of Israel

2 Kings 14:1-20; 2 Chronicles 25

It has been well remarked that Jehoahaz of Israel had on his death left to his son and successor Jehoash, amidst the sore troubles of his country, this priceless inheritance the promised answer to his prayer. How largely his promise had already been fulfilled appears from a comparison of the condition to which Hazael had reduced the army of Israel in the time of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:7), with the three brilliant victories which Jehoash gained over Ben-hadad III. Nor were the military successes of Israel confined to foreign enemies. Jehoash proved as victorious against Judah as against Syria.

In the second year of the reign of Jehoash over Israel, Joash, king of Judah, was succeeded by his son Amaziah. The reign of that monarch, who ascended the throne at the age of twenty-five, extended over twenty-nine years. Its beginning was marked by a continuance of what on the whole might, as in the case of his father Joash, be characterized as doing that which was "right in the sight of Jehovah:"³¹ To this the Book of Kings adds, however, the qualification, "Yet not as David his father," which the Book of Chronicles explains by the expression, "not with a perfect heart."

In truth his religious bearing during that period was (as both the historical records note) like that of his father Joash, and included the toleration of worship and services in "the high places." But even this qualified adherence to the religion of his fathers did not continue during the latter part of his reign.

Ascending the throne after a palace-revolution to which his father had fallen victim (2 Kings 12:20, 21), it must have been some time before "the

kingship [royal rule] was confirmed in his hand."³²

So soon as this first necessity was secured, he punished the authors of the late revolt by executing the murderers of his father. The sacred text especially notes that in so doing he spared their children, in conformity with the Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 24:16), which in this, as in so many other respects, differed from the common practice of ancient times.

But the promise of this good beginning failed only too soon. As one has aptly remarked, "with a perfect heart" Amaziah was only a soldier, and even this rather in the sense of a cruel and boastful Eastern monarch than of a wise or brave general. It seems not improbable that the successes of the king of Israel against Syria had awakened in Amaziah lust for military glory. For the attainment of this object he made preparations of the most extensive character. His first aim was again to reduce Edom to the vassalage which it had cast off during the reign of Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20-22).

In prospect of this expedition, he reorganized the forces of Judah, that had been shattered by the Syrians in the time of his father Joash (2 Chronicles 24:23, 24). From the account in 2 Chronicles 25:5, 6, he seems to have made a levy en masse, calling to arms the whole population capable of military service.

The national character of this measure appears even from the circumstance that the officers of the new army were first appointed according to the old arrangement of tribe, clans, and families (2 Chronicles 25:5), and that these chiefs then conducted the levy of the people. The grand total so called to arms appears large; but it is considerably smaller than that in the time of Abijah (2 Chronicles 13:3), in that of Asa (2 Chronicles 14:8), or in that of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:14-8).

Besides raising a native Judaeen army, Amaziah had recourse to the novel device of hiring 100,000 Israelitish mercenaries, at the enormous cost of

³¹ We mark, as regards this and other Judaeen monarchs of this period, that their mothers were "of Jerusalem."

³² This explanation is both natural and sufficient. There is not any reason for thinking of a "confirmation" of his accession by the king of Assyria, or that Judah was at that time "a fief" of that empire.

100 talents - presumably silver talents, amounting to about 37,500 pounds of our money.

Such aid could only lead to defeat, since Jehovah was not with Israel. Of this even their hiring themselves out for a foreign warfare in which they were not in any wise concerned affords fresh evidence. Had Amaziah possessed spiritual insight, he would not have sought such help. As it was, "a prophet" was commissioned to warn him that if he went to battle relying on such aid he should surely succumb.³³ God would show that He had power not only to help, but also to cast down. The answer of the king was characteristic. It indicated that while he rightly appraised the character of these mercenaries,³⁴ he was chiefly concerned about the money which had been spent upon them.

The dignified reply of the man of God, pointing him upwards to Him who could give far more than this, at least silenced the king, and he dismissed his auxiliaries. But the matter ended not there. Disappointed, no doubt, of their hope of plunder and ravage, the Ephraimires returned to their homes "in burning anger" (2 Chronicles 25:10). Josephus, although telling the story with his usual embellishments, adds what seems a historical notice to the effect that these Israelites laid waste the land as far as Beth-horon, taking much cattle, and slaying 3,000 men (Ant. ix. 9, I). If this account be trustworthy, we can scarcely be mistaken in tracing to this the later war between Judah and Israel, with its disastrous consequences to Amaziah. If Amaziah had hitherto proved himself anything but what his name implied, "the strong one of Jehovah" [or perhaps, "Jehovah strengthens"], his true character was soon to appear, alike in his success and in his defeat. The

³³ The very difficult verse, 2 Chronicles 25:8, is generally explained by supposing that al "not," or alw has dropped out from the second clause, and that the verse should read, "But rather go thou, do - that the LORD may not make thee fall - " This, however, seems an arbitrary solution, and we would propose to render the verse as it stands, translating sa yk by "or else" (see Ewald, *Lehrb. d. hebr. Spr.* p. 861, first line): "Or else (viz. if thou wilt persist), go thou, do, be strong," etc.

³⁴ He styles them (ver. 9) "the band of Israel," the same expression as in 2 Chronicles 22:1; 2 Kings 13:20; and often in the same sense.

dismissal of the Israelitish auxiliaries did not delay the preparations for the war. The south-eastern limit of "the land" may be roughly marked by the lower end of the Dead Sea. Here, east of the mountain of rock-salt (the Khashm Usdum), stretches southward that continuation of the Jordan-gorge (the Ghor) known as "the Valley of Salt" (the Sabkah). The valley, which extends about eight miles (about three hours), trends southwards to the white chalk cliffs,³⁵ which rise 50 to 150 feet. They are formed from the debris washed down from the higher soil of the Arabah - here especially that part of "the plain" which stretches from Jericho downwards on both sides of the Jordan as far as the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea.³⁶

The "salt valley" itself formed the southern boundary of Judaea towards Edom. In its western and central parts it is wholly desolate, the clay soil being often flooded by the Dead Sea, and even the watercourses which traverse it being impregnated with the salt which encrusts the district. It is otherwise as regards the southern part of the valley, and especially the eastern, which is covered with vegetation, and where we still trace the sites of ancient towns. Here indeed we have an oasis that formed the ancient boundary between Edom and Moab.

In this "salt valley" had Joab, or rather Abishai, his brother, defeated Edom in the time of David (2 Samuel 8:13; 1 Chronicles 18:12, etc.), and here again did the Edomite army encounter the host of Amaziah. Although we know not the precise spot where the battle was fought, we may well suppose that it was in the southern part of the valley. The Edomites were within their own territory; their retreat would not be difficult, and, owing to the surrounding heights, comparatively safe. On the

³⁵ It is at least doubtful whether these cliffs are identical with the Akrabbim, or "scorpion-stairs," of Numbers 34:4; Joshua 15:3; Judges 1:36.

³⁶ At present the part south of the bounding ridge of chalk-hills bears specially the name, Arabah. Our description of the country is based chiefly on Robinson's *Bibl. Res.* ii:pp. 121-173; Badeker-Socin's *Pal.*, p. 181, etc., notices in other works (so far as accessible) being also taken into consideration, Riehm's *Hand-Worterb.* gives, as generally, a very good, albeit brief, summary of information.

other hand, if the Judaeen army had been beaten, it is not easy to imagine how any considerable remnant could have escaped, either by crossing the treacherous "valley," or by skirting it. Nevertheless the Edomite army was defeated, with a slaughter of 10,000 men, and the capture of other ten thousand.

The account in the Book of Kings (2 Kings 14:7) adds that the victorious Jewish army marched on to Sela, or Petra, where, according to 2 Chronicles 25:12, the wretched prisoners were "cast down from the height of Sela." Needless objection has been taken to the transport of prisoners over what is sometimes described as so long and difficult a journey.

Chiefly for this reason, the localization of the "Valley of Salt" has also been called in question. But if we suppose the battlefield to have been the southern part of the valley, these objections are removed.³⁷ And obviously it would be the policy of the victorious army to penetrate into the heart of the conquered country, take its capital,³⁸ and by an act of terrible vengeance to strike terror into the people.

It must have been a marvelous sight which met the Jewish host as they descended from the east into that surpassingly grand defile which opens into the so-called Wady Musa - the "Valley of Moses" ³⁹ - the site of the ancient, Sela, "rock" - better known by its later name of Petra. The "cleft," or Sik, which formed the only access to it, passes between perpendicular rocks of red sandstone, rising to a height of from 100 to 300 feet.

³⁷ According to Badeker, the whole journey from Jebel Usdum to Petra occupies only from 18 to 20 hours; and if from this we subtract about four and a half hours to the chalk cliffs which bound "the valley," we have little more than thirteen hours to travel, of which only two or three could really be called difficult. Besides, the Arabah south of the chalk cliffs bears marks of having been, when Ezion Geber stood, the road of communication from the Gulf of Akabah into Jewish territory.

³⁸ Sela was less than forty miles from the Dead Sea.

³⁹ For the origin of the name, and indeed for a detailed account of Petra, we must refer to the special literature on the subject, only specially naming Badeker's Handbook, and the late Dean Stanley's Sinai and Palestine. Upon the description of the latter (pp. 86-90) our brief account is based.

It follows the winding course of a torrent which rises in the mountains half an hour thence, at a spot said to be that where the rod of Moses had brought the water from the smitten rock. For an hour and a half we pass through this gorge, between rocky walls that "overlap and crumble and crack," their intervening heights "throughout almost as narrow as the narrowest part of the defile of Pfeffers." At the entrance we pass under an arch that spans the chasm. Our progress is along what had once been a paved way, where the torrent had been "diverted," "along troughs in the rocks, into a water-conduit for the city." Festoons of the caper-plant and wild ivy and oleanders fringe the road, which winds like a river, affording at every turn the surprise of new views. The cliffs are red - in the sunshine, scarlet; in the shadow, black. Then through a narrow opening, where the rocks here overarch, we find ourselves suddenly at a turn of the road in face of a temple, with its pale pink pillars, all hewn into the rock. For all here is rock - rock graves, streets of rock, rock dwellings, rock temples, rock monuments; gorgeous rocks, dull crimson streaked with purple, over which seem to flow ribbons of yellow and blue. Again the road narrows through the streets of tombs, till it passes into the bottom of the rock-enclosed hollow or valley, with its branching valleys of rocks. This is the site of Petra now a desolation, but once a city of splendor and wealth, the central station for the commerce from India.

For further description this is not the place. It was into the midst of all this wondrous glory of nature and wealth of man that the Jewish army marched with its ten thousand captives. There cannot be doubt that the victorious host plundered and laid waste Sela. This explains how Amos does not mention it, but only Bozrah⁴⁰ (Amos 1:12), which seems to have become the capital of Edom.

Similarly, it is not named by the later prophets, except in Isaiah 16:1 and 42:11; and it only again emerges into importance in the fourth century before our era. But the most terrible scene yet remained to be enacted in the conquered city. We can scarcely be mistaken in supposing that the victors marched or drove their captives through its

⁴⁰ About sixteen miles south-east of the Dead Sea.

streets across to the western bank of the rivulet. There up the western cliffs mounts "a staircase" of broad steps "hewn out of the rocks." "High up in these cliffs, between two gigantic walls of cliff, stands a temple." It must be here, or on the cliffs above and around - or perhaps on the Acropolis somewhat to the south of it that we have to look for "the height of Sela" (2 Chronicles 25:12 - lit., "the top," or "head"), whence the ten thousand Edomite captives were hurled, their shattered limbs dashing from cliff and rock, and their mangled remains strewing the heights and covering the ground beneath. But as they that long afterwards laid waste Jerusalem changed its name to Aelia Capitolina, so did King Amaziah change that of Sela into Joktheel, "the subdued of God" (2 Kings 14:7). Yet neither the one nor the other name, given by man in his pride, did long continue.

It is a horrible, heart-sickening scene of history, so utterly un-Jewish in character that we can only account for its enactment by the state of moral degradation which the contemporary prophets Hosea and Amos describe in such vivid language. Yet another terrible inheritance, besides the guilt of this deed, did Judah bring back from the campaign against Edom. We can readily imagine how deeply the rock-city had impressed the mind of the king. But one of its chief features, which still first attracts the traveler, is the startling appearance and weird location of its temples. An Eastern mind, not religious, but superstitious, would readily come under the spell of these divinities whose temples were so weird and grand, so thoroughly in accord with nature around.

Be this as it may, on his return from Edom King Amaziah brought with him its idols, and did worship to them, although the notice of it in 2 Chronicles (25:14) seems to imply personal rather than national or public idolatry. None the less was Divine anger kindled against such a Jewish and Davidic king. In vain was Divine warning sent to him by "a prophet." The king replied by coarse sneers and threats, which, needless to say, so far from silencing the Divine messenger, only led to

the announcement of near judgment.⁴¹ And the sacred narrative expressly marks the connection between this and the later conspiracy which cost the king his life (2 Chronicles 25:27).

Two characteristics which have so often impressed us in the course of this Divine history appear in this narrative also. For, first, the Divine decree, in this instance of judgment, was not immediately carried out, and to some it might seem to tarry. And, further, the execution of this decreed destruction came not in sudden or miraculous manner, but in what might be regarded as the natural course of events, through popular dissatisfaction at gratuitously provoked national disaster. Thus, however real the connection between the Divine agency and Amaziah's destruction, it would, on both the grounds above mentioned, require the eye of faith to perceive it. And this also is of permanent meaning: that the teaching of God is only to those who are capable of learning it.

It might almost seem as if the victory over Edom had infatuated the king and his council, filling them with unbounded self-confidence and overweening self-esteem. For, since they discarded God, was it not the prowess and might of Judah which had wrought the victory over Edom? Very significantly, the account of Judah's defeat by Israel in the Book of Chronicles is introduced by the notice, "And the king took counsel." He had taunted the prophet as not being a counselor to the king, and the prophet had announced to him the

⁴¹ We mark as significant of the state of Amaziah, that the prophet appeals in his first message not to higher duty, but to the common sense and experience of the king (2 Chronicles 25:15). The first part of the king's reply, "Have we [viz., the king and his advisers] made thee counselor of the king?" is taken up in the reply of the prophet: "I know that God has counseled [so lit., using the same word as the king - the meaning being "determined"], because thou hast done this, and not hearkened unto my counsel" [again the same word]. To the threat of the king, "Forbear - why shouldest be smitten?" the prophet replies by announcing the king's destruction. We note, first, that the prophet does not appear to have had any previous commission to that effect; secondly, that his prediction seems an inferential prophecy, based on his knowledge of the Divine dealings; thirdly, that it was necessary, not only for the vindication of the prophet's mission, but for that of the authority of Jehovah; and, lastly, that the king's destruction was dependent on his disobedience. All these inferences embody permanent principles.

counsel of God to his destruction. It would now appear how the king's own chosen counselors would themselves bring about this "counsel" of God.

As we have suggested, it is not unlikely that the war between Judah and Israel really grew out of the dismissal of the Israelitish auxiliaries from the host of Judah. This would be the more probable if the account of Josephus is trustworthy, that Amaziah had hired these soldiers directly from the king of Israel, and that on their return to their homes they had laid waste Judaeen territory. And this would also better account for the challenge to fight which Amaziah, with advice of his council, addressed to Jehoash, king of Israel, than to view it as a demand for submission and return to obedience to the Davidic rule, which, according to Josephus, formed the burden of this message.

If the challenge of Amaziah was peculiarly Oriental and boastful in its tone, the reply of Jehoash equaled and even surpassed it in these respects. The allegory which he used about the "thorn" in Lebanon that had sought a family alliance with the cedar, meant that it was absolute folly on the part of Amaziah to regard himself as the equal of Jehoash.

Yet this was implied in his purpose of measuring himself with him. A contest between them! Why, a beast of the field in Lebanon passing over the thorn would crush it down. Then followed the mocking application of the simile:

"Thou hast indeed smitten Edom make thyself glorious [enjoy thy glory], and abide at home' why shouldest thou meddle with evil, that thou fall, thou and Judah with thee?" (2 Kings 14:10.)

The advice was sound, though extremely provocative to one in the mood of Amaziah. But Jehoash did not await his attack. Marching southwards, he met the Judaeen army at Beth Shemesh, the south-eastern point in the ancient possession of Dan, close to the border of Philistia,⁴² situated in a beautiful valley only eight or nine hours west of Jerusalem. The battle was most disastrous for Judah. The army fled; Amaziah was

⁴² Here the Philistines first deposited the Ark (1 Samuel 6:12-14).

taken prisoner; and the Israelitish host advanced unopposed to Jerusalem. Here they made a breach in the wall 400 cubits (or about 600 feet⁴³) wide, from the northern gate of Ephraim (or Benjamin, the present Damascus gate) to that in the north-west corner of the wall, where it runs southward.

Thus the city would be laid open towards the north, or the land of Israel. Josephus (Ant. ix. 9, 3) has it that Jehoash through this breach made triumphal entry into Jerusalem, carrying his royal prisoner with him.⁴⁴ The victor plundered the Temple of what treasures it still contained in charge of one Obed-Edom.⁴⁵ He also stripped the royal palace of its valuables, and taking with him "hostages" - probably from the chief nobles - returned to Samaria.⁴⁶

The war between Judah and Israel probably occurred quite near the close of the reign of Jehoash, king of Israel. As Amaziah of Judah reigned altogether twenty-nine years (2 Kings 14:2), and survived Jehoash for fifteen years (verse 17), we conclude that the Judaeo-Israelitish war had occurred in the fourteenth, and the Edomite war probably in the thirteenth, year of the reign of Amaziah. The fifteen years which followed after the death of Jehoash were full of trouble to the king of Judah. At last the general dissatisfaction, caused by the disasters of the war and the attempted introduction of foreign rites, culminated in a revolution at Jerusalem. Amaziah escaped to Lachish, in the low country of Judah

⁴³ The ancient Jewish cubit was two spans, each of three hand-breadths, the handbreadth being four fingers wide, i.e., a cubit = 6 handbreadths, = 24 fingerbreadths.

⁴⁴ Less credit attaches to his notice that Jehoash had threatened to kill Amaziah unless he persuaded the inhabitants of Jerusalem to open the city to him. Evidently there could not have been any idea of holding out but Josephus may have felt it desirable thus to account for an easy capture of the city which offered such stubborn resistance to the Romans.

⁴⁵ 2 Chronicles 25:24. But probably the booty from the Temple was inconsiderable. Comp. 2 Kings 12:18. Perhaps the name Obed-Edom, as treasurer of the Temple at that time, may in itself be significant. In any case, the special mention of the name marks this as a contemporary notice.

⁴⁶ That Jehoash left Amaziah on the throne indicates how completely the power of the latter must have been broken.

(Joshua 15:33, 39), on the road from Hebron to Gaza.

Lachish has sometimes been erroneously identified with the present Tel-el-Hasi. Its more correct location seems to be, passing from Eleutheropolis [the Biblical Libnah] westwards to Ajlan, the ancient Eglon, whence at a distance of about forty-five minutes the ruins of Umm Lakis - the ancient Lachish are - reached.

As usually, the ancient city lay on the top of a hill. Among its ruins many cisterns are found. The country around is undulating, and two great wadys open on either side. Lachish was, as we know, strongly fortified (2 Chronicles 11:9); it was besieged by Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:14, 17; Isaiah 36:2); and could offer a stout resistance to Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 34:7). In short, it was one of the strong fortresses towards Egypt, although, from the friable nature of the building materials, its ruins, as those of other similarly-constructed places, are not considerable. In the time of Solomon, Lachish had been one of the "chariot-cities," for which alike its situation near the Egyptian emporium of horses (1 Kings 9:19; 10:26-29), and the plentiful pasturage around, would specially fit it. From the prophecies of Micah (1:13), it appears to have been the first Judaeon city to adopt the idolatrous worship of the northern kingdom, which thence passed into Jerusalem.

But the strong walls of Lachish could not afford security to Amaziah. The conspirators from Jerusalem followed the king, and his dead body was brought back to Jerusalem - perhaps in the very chariot in which he had made his escape.⁴⁷ Yet even this circumstance, as well as his honorable burial with his royal ancestors, and the elevation to the throne of his son, "by all the people of Judah," indicate that although the discontent was not confined to the capital, yet the people generally were wholly averse to any

change of dynasty, such as had characterized every revolution in Israel.⁴⁸

VII_05 - Azariah or Uzziah, (Tenth) King of Judah. Jeroboam II., (Fourteenth) King of Israel 2 Kings 14:21-29

It would seem that a peculiar meaning attaches to the notice that all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father, Amaziah" (2 Kings 14:21). With the exception of the name, this statement is literally repeated in 2 Chronicles 26:1, indicating that the writers of the two books had copied it from the same historical record. But considering the youth of the new king on the death of his father, Amaziah, at the age of fifty-four (2 Kings 14:2), he could scarcely have been his eldest son. Probably there was, therefore, a special reason for his selection by the people. Possibly there may be some connection between it and the twofold name which he bears in Holy Scripture. In 2 Chronicles - written, as we may say, from the priestly point of view - the new king is always called Uzziah, while in the Book of Kings he is designated during the first part of his reign as Azariah, while one notices of the latter part of that period he appears as Uzziah (2 Kings 15:13, 30, 32, 34).

The usual explanations either of a clerical error through the confusion of similar letters, or that he bore two names, seem equally unsatisfactory. Nor is the meaning of the two names precisely the same - Azariah being "Jehovah helps;" Uzziah, "My strength is Jehovah." May it not be that Azariah was his real name, and that when after his daring intrusion into the sanctuary (2 Chronicles 26:16-20), he was smitten with lifelong leprosy, his name was significantly altered into the cognate Uzziah - "My strength is Jehovah" - in order to mark that the "help" which he had received had been dependent on his relation to the LORD.

This would accord with the persistent use of the latter name in 2 Chronicles - considering the viewpoint of the writer and with its occurrence in the

⁴⁷ 2 Kings 14:20: "And they carried [lit. brought] him upon the horses," with the definite article, probably to mark the chariot as that in which he had gone.

⁴⁸ Similarly, the murder of Joash, the father of Amaziah, had not been followed, as in Israel, by the enthronement of one of the conspirators.

prophetic writings (Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1; Isaiah 1:1; 6:1; 7:1). And the explanation just suggested seems confirmed by the circumstance that although this king is always called Uzziah in 2 Chronicles, yet the Hebrew word for "help," which forms the first part of the name Azariah, recurs with marked emphasis in the account of the Divine help accorded in his expeditions (2 Chronicles 26:7, 13, 15).

At the accession of Uzziah (as we shall prefer to call him) the throne of Israel had been already occupied for fourteen years by Jeroboam II., the son and successor of that Jehoash who had inflicted such defeat on Amaziah of Judah (2 Kings 14:23). His exceptionally long reign extended over fifty-one years,⁴⁹ being the longest of that of any Israelitish king."

Holy Scripture gives only the briefest sketch of outward events during that half-century in Israel. Religiously, it was marked by a continuance of the wrongful institutions of the founder of the Israelitish monarchy (Jeroboam I.). Politically, it was distinguished by the complete defeat of Syria, and the recovery of all the territory which had, in the most flourishing times of united Judah,⁵⁰ been conquered by David or occupied by Solomon' in the language of the sacred text, "from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain" (2 Kings 14:25).

Indeed, the conquests of Jeroboam seem to have extended even beyond this, and to the boundary of Moab (see Amos 6:14, where for "river of the

wilderness," read "of the Arabah "). The Dead Sea unquestionably marked on that side the southern boundary originally of united Palestine, and afterwards of the trans-Jordanic kingdom of Israel, while the "entering in of Hamath" equally indicates the northern limits of the realm (Numbers 13:21; 34:8; Joshua 13:5; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Chronicles 7:8; Amos 6:14). The precise locality designated as the "entering of Hamath," has not yet been accurately ascertained. But it must be sought in that broad rich plain, flanked towards the west by the Lebanon, and watered by the Orontes, which ascends for a distance of about eight hours from Homs to Hamah, the ancient Hamath the Great (Amos 6:2).

In all likelihood it is in this general sense that we are to understand what seems the parallel notice of these conquests (2 Kings 14:28): "Damascus and Hamath." The expression seems to refer to the whole of the broad plain just described the words bearing the same general meaning as when David is stated to have put garrisons in Syria of Damascus (2 Samuel 8:5, 6), and Solomon to have occupied Hamath (2 Chronicles 8:3, 4).⁵¹

Here again welcome light comes to us from the monuments of Assyria. Thence we learn, on the one hand, that the kingdom of Israel was tributary to the king of Assyria, and, on the other, that that monarch conquered Damascus, took prisoner its king, who, having embraced his knees in submission, had to pay a ransom of 2,300 talents of silver, 20 of gold, 3,000 of copper, 5,000 of iron, together with garments of wool and linen, a couch and an umbrella of ivory, and other spoil numberless. The disastrous war of Syria with Assyria, and the tributary alliance of Israel with the latter, would sufficiently account for the conquests of Jeroboam II.

And yet here also there is a higher meaning. If, on the suggestion just made, the instrumentality used to bring about the victories of Jeroboam II. was not the direct help of Jehovah, but the prowess of

⁴⁹ In 2 Kings 14:23, the number is 41 - am - which must be a clerical error for 51, an . For a comparison of the date in 2 Kings 14:23 with that in 15:8, gives 15 + 38 = 53 years, or deducting one at each end (the years not being full), fifty-one years. Commonly the numerals are conciliated by assuming an interregnum of ten or eleven years after the death of Jeroboam II. (2 Kings 15:8). But of this there is not the least indication in 2 Kings 14:29 - rather the contrary. Again, according to Hosea 1:1, that prophet's activity extended from the reign of Jeroboam II, to that of Hezekiah of Judah - a period almost impossible if Jeroboam II. had only reigned forty-one years.

⁵⁰ The expression in 2 Kings 14:28: "which belonged to Judah," need not be struck out, as proposed by some. It indicates that it was part of the ancient territory of Judah, before the two kingdoms were divided, although it was now recovered for Israel (the northern kingdom), within whose territorial limits it was.

⁵¹ Hamath itself may have been occupied by the Jews, at the time of Solomon, and in that of Jeroboam II.; but it is scarcely credible that they ever held Damascus. Hamath lies in a narrow valley between high cliffs, open only to the east and west, where the stream passes through them. The territory, as we shall see, soon passed out of the possession of Israel.

Assyria, we ought to bear in mind that direct interposition on the part of the LORD in behalf of such a king could not have been expected. And yet, as noted in the sacred text (2 Kings 14:25), the promise of the LORD given through the prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, was literally fulfilled - only in the natural course of political events. And the more clearly to mark the agency of God in what might seem the natural course of events, the connection between these successes and the original promise in 2 Kings 13:4, 5, is indicated in 2 Kings 14:26, as well as the higher meaning of all (in ver. 27).

It still remains to point out the strict accuracy of the Biblical account, alike as regards the prosperous internal condition of the land at that period (2 Kings 13:5), and the moral and religious decay of the people (2 Kings 13:6). If the victories of Jeroboam had, as on grounds of contemporary history seems likely, been gained in the early part of his reign, the rest of that long period was one of almost unprecedented wealth and prosperity, but also of deepest moral corruption. To both facts the contemporary prophets, Amos and Hosea, bear frequent witness - to the prosperity in such passages as Hosea 2:8; 12:9 [A.V. ver. 8]; Amos 3:15; 6:4-6; to the corruption, in many passages and in varied particulars.⁵²

A more terrible picture of religious degeneracy and public and private wickedness could scarcely be imagined than that painted by the prophets in this the most prosperous period of Israelitish history. Thus the goodness of God, misunderstood by an apostate people, which attributed all to its own prowess (see Amos 6:13), was only abused to further sin (Hosea 13:6). A people which could not be humbled by judgments, and to which every mercy became only the occasion for deeper guilt, was ripe for that final doom which the prophets predicted.

On some other points of interest scattered notices may here be put together. Firstly, Jeroboam II. was

certainly the most warlike king and the most successful administrator of all who occupied the throne of Israel. Of this even the new registration in the re-conquered trans-Jordanic provinces affords evidence (1 Chronicles 5:11-17).

Secondly, this history is another proof of how little real success could attend such a re-action against the foreign rites of the house of Ahab as that which had been initiated by Jehu. The worship of the golden calves speedily led to that on high places, and even to the restoration of the service of Baal (Hosea 2:13, 17; Amos 2:8; 4:4; 5:5; 8:14). Nay, Jeroboam and his priest at Bethel proceeded to actual persecution of the prophets of the Lord (Amos 7:10-17). Lastly, we may derive from a study of the prophetic writings much insight into the political relations of Israel and Judah at the time, more especially as regards Syria and Assyria.⁵³

But there is one subject which claims special attention. Even a superficial study must convince that from a religious point of view, and particularly as regards Israel's future and the great hope of the world entrusted to their keeping, we have now reached a new period. We are not now thinking of the general religious and moral decay, nor of the national judgment which was so soon to follow, but the other and wider aspect of it all. God's great judgments, when viewed from another point, are always seen to be attended with wider manifestations of mercy. It is never judgment only, but judgment and mercy - and every movement is a movement forward, even though in making it there should be a crushing down and a breaking down. Even here, so early in the history of the kingdom of God, the casting away of Israel was to be the life of the world. For with this period a new stage in prophecy begins. Hitherto the prophets had been chiefly God-sent teachers and messengers to their contemporaries - reproving, warning, guiding, encouraging. Henceforth the prophetic horizon enlarges.

⁵² An analysis would occupy too much space; but we may select from the opening chapter the following charges: Idolatry: Hosea 2:8, 13, 17; 3:1, 4; 4:12, 13, 17; Amos 4:4, 5; Lasciviousness: Hosea 2:4; 4:10, 11, 18; Wickedness and violence of every kind: Hosea 4:1, 2, 14; 6:8-10; Amos 2:6-8; 3:10; 4:1; 5:7, 11.

⁵³ This must be left to the study of the reader, since our limited space renders it impossible to analyze the contents of these prophetic books. They will be found to cast considerable light on the political history of the time as described in the strictly historical books, with which alone we are concerned in this Volume.

Beyond their contemporaries who were hardened beyond hope of recovery, their outlook is henceforth on the great hope of the Messianic kingdom. They have despaired of the present: but their thought is of the future. They have despaired of the kingdom of Israel and of Judah; but the Divine thought of preparation that underlay it comes increasingly into prominence and clearer vision. The promises of old acquire a new and deeper meaning; they assume shape and outlines which become ever more definite as the daylight grows. It is the future, with Israel's Messiah-King to rule a people restored and converted, and an endless, boundless kingdom of righteousness and peace which in its wide embrace includes, reconciles, and unites a ransomed world, obedient to the LORD, which is now the great burden of their message, and the joyous assured hope of their thoughts. For doomed apostate Israel after the flesh, we have Israel after the spirit, and on the ruins of the old rises the new: a Jerusalem, a temple, a kingdom, and a King fulfilling the ideal of which the earthly had been the type. It is not meant that these prophets had not their message for the present also: to Israel and Judah, and to their kings, as well as regarding events either contemporary or in the near future. Had it been otherwise, they would not have been prophets to, nor yet understood by, their fellow-countrymen.

Besides, God's dealings and discipline with Israel still continued, and would of necessity continue - primarily to the coming of the Christ, and then beyond it to the final fulfillment of His purposes of mercy. Hence their ministry was also of the present, though chiefly in warning and announcement of judgment. But by the side of this despair of the present, and because of it, the ideal destiny of Israel came into clearer minds, the meaning of the Davidic kingdom, and its final spiritual realization in a happy future; and along with denunciations of impending judgment came the comfort of prophetic promises of the future.

Two points here specially present themselves to our minds. The first is, that with this period commences the era of written prophecy. Before this time the prophets had spoken; now they wrote, or - to speak more precisely - gathered their prophetic utterances and visions into permanent

records. And, as connected with this new phase of prophetism, we mark that it is rather by vision and prediction than by signs and miracles that the prophets now manifested their activity. But the importance of written records of prophecy is self-evident. Without them, alike the manifestation and establishment of the Messianic kingdom in Israel and its spread into the Gentile world would, humanly speaking, have been impossible. Christianity could not have appealed to Messianic prediction as its spring, nor yet could the prophetic word of God have traveled to the Gentiles. With this yet a second fact of utmost interest seems intimately connected. On the boundary-line of the two stages of prophetism stand two figures in Jewish history: one looking backwards, Elijah; the other looking forwards, Jonah, the son of Amittai (2 Kings 14:25). Both are distinguished by their ministry to the Gentiles. Elijah, by his stay and ministry at Sarepta, to which might, perhaps, be added the ministry of Elisha to Naaman; Jonah, by that call to repentance in Nineveh⁵⁴ which forms the burden of the prophetic book connected with his name while, on the other hand, his contemporary message to Jeroboam is apparently not recorded. Thus the great unfolding of prophecy in its outlook on the inbringing of the Gentiles was marked by symbolic events.

Without attempting any detailed account, the prophets of that period, and the contents of their writings, may here be briefly referred to. The earliest of them was probably Joel, "Jehovah is God" - a Judaeon whose sphere of labor was also in his native country.

His "prophecy" consists of two utterances (1:2-2; 18; 2:19-3:21), couched in language as pure and beautiful as the sentiments are elevated. From the allusions to contemporary events (3:4-8, 19), as well as from the absence of any mention of Assyria, we infer that his ministry was in the time of Joash, king of Judah, and of the high-priest Jehoiada, - with which agree his temple-

⁵⁴ This, whatever view may be taken of his mission, or of the time when the prophetic book of Jonah was published (see note at the end of this chapter). If the Book of Jonah be regarded as a grand allegory of the message of God's grace to the Gentiles, reluctantly borne to them by Israel: this will only increase the significance of the fact referred to in the text.

references, which indicate a time of religious revival. But here also we mark the wider Messianic references in chapters 2 and 3. The prophecies of Joel seem already referred to by Amos, "the burden-bearer" (comp. Amos 1:2; 9:13 with Joel 3:16, 18, 20). Amos himself was also a Judean, originally a "herdsman of Tekoa" (Amos 1:1; 7:14). But his ministry was in Israel, and during the latter part of Jeroboam's reign, after the accession of Uzziah (Amos 1:1). There in Bethel, where the false worship of Israel was combined with the greatest luxury and dissipation, the prophet was confronted by Amaziah, its chief priest. Although apparently unsuccessful in his accusations of political conspiracy against the prophet, Amos was obliged to withdraw into Judah (Amos 7:10-13). Here he wrote down his prophetic utterances, prefacing them by an announcement of coming judgment (Amos 1:2.) through a nation, evidently that very Assyria on which the confidence of Jeroboam had rested (comp. Amos 5:27; 6:14). Yet, amidst all his denunciations, Amos also looked forward to, and prophesied of the glorious Messianic kingdom (Amos 9:11-15). A third prophet of that period was Hosea, "help" - the Jeremiah of the northern kingdom, as he has been aptly designated. From certain allusions in his book we infer that he had been a native of the northern kingdom (Hosea 1:3; 6:10; comp. 7:8). His ministry was probably towards the end of the reign of Jeroboam, and extended to the rising of Shallum and of Menahem (comp. Hosea 6:8; 7:7). His prophecies give special insight into the political relations and dangers of the northern kingdom, and into the utter corruption of all classes. Frequent, too, are his references to Judah. Yet here also we mark the persistence of the outlook on the better Davidic kingdom (Hosea 3), with much concerning it scattered throughout his prophecies. Lastly, as yet another prophet of that period, we have again to refer to Jonah, the son of Amittai, a native of Gath-hepher, in the tribal possession of Zebulun,⁵⁵ and therefore in the northern part of Israel.

⁵⁵ It lay on the eastern boundary of Zebulun (Joshua 19:13), and is probably represented by a modern village (El Meshed) about an hour north of Nazareth. (A strange historical coincidence this.)

Without entering on the critical questions connected with the story which forms the burden of the Book of Jonah, or discussing the precise date of its publication in its present form,⁵⁶ a deep significance surely attaches to its association with the prophet contemporary of Jeroboam II.

It is not only that it points to a preaching of repentance to the Gentiles also, and to their ingathering with believing Israel into the family of God, but the circumstances of the time give it a special meaning. From apostate, morally sunken Israel, such as we have learned to know it from the descriptions of the prophets, Jonah, the very messenger who had announced coming deliverance to Jeroboam, turns by Divine commission to the Gentiles: to that great world-empire which was representative of them. And from this comes to us a fresh and deeper meaning in regard to the application of this history by our Lord (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32). It had been "a wicked and adulterous generation" of old that had heard the prophecy of Jonah, and understood not the sign; nor was other sign to be given to it. So would it be to those who heard and saw the Christ, yet craved after other "sign" suited to their unbelief. None other than the sign of Jonah would be theirs - yet even this, "a sign" sufficient in itself (Matthew 12:40), a sign also not only of judgment, but of wider mercy (Matthew 12:41).

⁵⁶ This is not the place for critical discussions. But in the political relations between the northern kingdom and Assyria, such a mission as that of Jonah to Nineveh seems certainly both possible and credible. Again, modern researches have confirmed the account of the size of Nineveh in Jonah 3:3. Objection has been taken on the ground that the Hebrew of the book contains words of later formation (Aramaisms). But competent authorities have contended that these words and forms are purely north-Israelitic, and hence not indicative of a later period. In any case such objections could only apply in regard to the precise date when the book in its present form was published - not to its connection with the prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, as its author. And, as Bleek has pointed out, the book does not anywhere mention Jonah himself as the actual writer of it, at least, in its present form. On the question of the historical character of its details, or else of its being only a great prophetic allegory, founded, however, on a substratum of historical fact, we do not feel called upon here to enter. In either case the point would not affect its Divine authority, its reality, or its lessons.

VII_06 - Azariah, or Uzziah, (Tenth) King of Judah

2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26

WHATEVER motives had determined the selection of Uzziah by all the people of Judah as successor to his murdered father (2 Kings 14:21), the choice proved singularly happy. To adapt the language of the prophet Amos (9:11), which, as mostly all prophetic announcements of the Messianic future, takes for its starting and connecting point reference to the present, easily understood, and hence full of meaning to contemporaries - Uzziah found, on his accession, "the tabernacle of David," if not "fallen" and in "ruins," yet with threatening "breaches" in it. Never had the power of Judah sunk lower than when, after the disastrous war with Israel, the heir of David was tributary to Jehoash, and the broken walls of Jerusalem laid the city open and defenseless at the feet of the conqueror. This state of things was absolutely reversed during the reign of Uzziah; and at its close Judah not only held the same place as Israel under the former reign, but surpassed it in might and glory.

There can be little doubt that Jeroboam II. retained the hold over Judah which his father Jehoash had gained; and this, not only during the fifteen years after his accession, in which Amaziah of Judah still occupied the throne, but even in the beginning of the reign of Uzziah. For "breaches" such as those that had been made are not speedily repaired, and Uzziah was, at his accession, a youth of only sixteen years (2 Kings 15:2). We therefore incline to the view that the otherwise unintelligible notice (2 Kings 15:1), that Uzziah acceded "in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam" bears reference to the time when he had shaken off the suzerainty of Jeroboam, and "began to reign" in the real sense of the term.

This would make the period of Judah's liberation the twenty-seventh after Jeroboam's accession, and the twelfth after the elevation of Uzziah to the throne, when that monarch was twenty-eight years of age.

Important though the reign of Uzziah was - chiefly from a political, but also from a religious point of view - the writer of the Book of Kings gives only a few and these the briefest notices of it. In fact, he

may be said only to single out the leading characteristics of that period. As regards political events, he marks the beginning of the recovery of Judah's power in the occupation of the important harbor of Elath, and the rebuilding of that town (2 Kings 14:22). This, as we shall show reason for believing, probably in the early years of the accession of Uzziah.

As always, he records the age of the new king and the duration of his reign, as well as the name of his mother (2 Kings 15:2). If the suggestion previously made is correct, he also notices the exact time of the recovery of Judaeans independence from Israel (2 Kings 15:1). Again, the religious character of this reign is described; while, lastly, the unhappy fate and end of the king are recorded, although without mention of what led to it. Manifestly the point of view in the Book of Kings is simply "prophetic" - not, as in Chronicles, priestly - and the writer hurries over events alike of a political and a personal character, to indicate what seems to him of main importance' the theocratic relation of the people to Jehovah.

The brief outline in the Book of Kings is amply filled up in that of Chronicles (2 Chronicles 26.). Here, also, the first event recorded is the taking of Elath. This important harbor, from which, as from the neighboring Ezion-Geber, Solomon had sent his fleet of traders to Ophir (1 Kings 9:26-28; 2 Chronicles 8:17, 18), lay on the north-eastern end of the Gulf of Akabah, and at present bears the same name. Of its ancient greatness only a tower remains for protection of the pilgrims to Mecca.⁵⁷

Around it are ruins and wretched hovels; but abundance of date-palms still betokens the former fertility. For half-an-hour beyond the town stretch, along the blue gulf, sands covered with beautiful shells; the view being finally shut off by granite and sandstone mountains. Such is the present aspect of "Elath" (or Elath) "the strong trees." There can be little doubt that when in the days of Joram of Judah "Edom revolted" (2 Kings 8:20-22), Elath recovered its independence. The conquest of Edom by Amaziah had apparently only extended as far as Petra, about half, way between the Dead Sea and Elath. In occupying it

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It is the tenth station on the road from Cairo to Mecca.

again and rebuilding it, Uzziah therefore completed the subjection of the country by his father. Such an expedition could not, in the state of Edom, have offered any real difficulty, however much its success must, after the late disasters, have raised the courage of Judah and inspired the people with confidence. These circumstances, as well as the place which the narrative occupies in the sacred text, lead us to infer that this was the first military undertaking of Uzziah. And, in view of his ultimate purpose as regarded Israel, the king would naturally begin with what was not only certain of success, but would also secure his rear in any future expedition. Nor was this all. A wide-reaching plan of national restoration would embrace the revival of commerce. And what prominence the new Tarshish mercantile marine held in public thought, and how it affected life in Judah in the days of Jotham, the successor of Uzziah, appears from the allusion in Isaiah 2:16.

As regards the religious condition of the country it is significant that, as the reign of former kings, so the present was characterized by a combination of doing "the right in the sight of Jehovah," with a continuance of "the high places," and their sacrifices and worship. It seems to indicate that this strange mixture in religion marked the highest point attained by the people. But even this qualified adherence to the worship of the Lord was only temporary, as the text explains: "in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God" ⁵⁸ (2 Chronicles 26:5). This prepares us alike for the later history of the king, and for what we shall learn of the condition of the people.

But the first or religious period of the reign of Uzziah was one of continuous and progressive prosperity. Although it is not possible to determine the precise chronological succession of events, it

⁵⁸ For the present Masoretic text: (in the A.V. "understanding in the visions") we have evidently to read (the second word), "in the fear" - as many Codd., the LXX., Syr. Targ., the Jewish, and mostly all Christian interpreters. The first word should then be rendered either "understanding" in the fear of God (so the LXX.) or "instructing" in it. We prefer the latter interpretation. The expression occurs in the same sense in Nehemiah 8:9. This Zechariah is not otherwise known. Needless to say that he was not the "prophet" of that name; nor even he that is mentioned in Isaiah 8:2, who lived a generation later.

seems likely that the expedition against the Philistines soon followed that to the Red Sea. The object of it was finally to break up the great anti-Judean confederacy which, in the days of King Jehoram, had wrought such havoc in Judah, after the successful revolt of Edom (2 Chronicles 21:8-10).

The defeat of Edom must have rendered this expedition also one of comparative ease. One by one the great Philistine cities fell; Gath, which, in the reign of Joash, had been wrested by Hazael of Syria, and made the starting-point of his incursion into Judah (2 Kings 12:17); Jabneh (Joshua 15:11), afterwards Jamnia, and about nine miles to the northeast of it, and three miles from the sea, Ashdod. It was probably owing to the importance of this strong town, which commanded the road from Egypt, that the sacred text specially mentions this district as one in which the king "built cities" (2 Chronicles 26:6). The general policy seems wisely to have been not to destroy nor depopulate the Philistine cities, but to render them harmless by breaking down their fortifications, and founding by their side throughout the Philistine territory, cities, inhabited no doubt by Judaean colonists. And from Philistia the expedition naturally extended to, and reduced to submission, the Arab tribe to the south "in Gur-baal" and "the Meunim" (or Meunites). ⁵⁹

We have now probably reached the period when either luxury and corruption had so demoralized Israel as to render it incapable of resisting the extending power of Judah, or else the government of Jeroboam II. had become paralyzed. For although the subdual of the Philistines and the other tribes to the south and south-east explains the statement that "the name" - here, presumably, the authority - of Uzziah "went to the going down into Egypt," more is implied in the notice that "the Ammonites gave gifts." This tribute imposed on

⁵⁹ On this tribe and the confederacy generally, compare Vol. 6. It seems to me likely, that even if Gur-Baal is not identical with Gerar, about three hours to the south-west of Gaza (see the Targ.), it must be sought in that neighborhood. From Philistia in the S.W. evidently a line of defense is drawn to the extreme S.E. - the territory of Ammon. Near Gerar - the localization of which is not, however, absolutely certain, opens the wady which, starting from Hebron, stretches down to Beersheba.

Ammon evidently presupposes the occupation by Uzziah of the intervening trans-Jordanic territory belonging to Israel.⁶⁰

And its possession seems implied in the further notice (2 Chronicles 26:10), that the herds of Uzziah pastured "in the low country," that is, on the rich Philistine downs by the Mediterranean (1 Chronicles 27:28), and "in the plain," that is, on the wide grazing lands east of Jordan, in the ancient possession of Reuben (Deuteronomy 3:10; 4:43; and Joshua 13.).

But by far the most important undertaking of the reign of Uzziah was the restoration and the fortification of the northern wall of Jerusalem, which had been broken down in the time of Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:23). Drawing an almost straight line along the north of the ancient city, Uzziah built three towers: "at the lower gate," in the north-western corner of the city, whence the wall slopes slightly southwards, and towards the west; at "the valley-gate," the present Jaffa gate; and lastly, at the opposite extremity of the northern wall (and again slightly south), to protect the so-called "horse gate" (Nehemiah 3:28; Jeremiah 31:40), where the northern wall forms to the east "a turning" or angle, whence it runs southwards (comp. Nehemiah 3:19, 20, 24, 25). Thus, as the "upper city" had, besides that just mentioned, not any other gate towards the west, nor yet any to the south, the entrance into the city was defended on the north, west, south, and at its north-eastern angle. Moreover, these forts were armed with new and powerful engines for projecting arrows and great stones upon any besieging host (2 Chronicles 26:15). Lastly, in accordance with all this, we read of a re-organization of the army, "according to the number of their enrollment (mustering) by the hand of Jeiel, the scribe, and Maaseiah, the officer (superintendent?), under the hand (direction) of Hananiah one of the king's captains" (2 Chronicles 26:11). The levy was again made in accordance with earliest national custom - although in even more systematic manner than before. Under two

thousand six hundred "heads" or "chiefs of houses," "mighty men of valor," an army of not less than 307,500 men was gathered, and completely equipped by the king - the heavy infantry being furnished with shields, cuirasses, and helmets, the light infantry with bows and "stones for slings."

This specially indicates the completeness of the armament, which, this time, was not only furnished by the central authority, but with such care that even the slings and the stones generally picked up by the men were served out to the troops.⁶¹

An attempt at conciliation of the two chronologies (by Oppert), see at the close of Hommel, *Abriß d. Bab. Ass. u. Isr. Gesch. Comp.* also H. Brandes, *Abh. zur Gesch. d. Orients im Alterth.*

In these circumstances we do not wonder that the warlike fame of the king "went forth unto far," although we specially note how carefully the sacred text throughout emphasizes the Divine help extended to Uzziah in each part of his undertakings. Nor was the internal prosperity of the realm less marked. We have already seen how the reoccupation of Elath led to a revival of shipping and commerce which must have brought wealth to the country. Similarly, the king took a deep interest in agriculture. In the mountains of Judah the ancient terraces were repaired for the culture of the vine; in the more flat portions, as in the district of Carmel (1 Samuel 15:12; 25:2, 5), agriculture was carried on; whilst, alike in "the

⁶⁰ Possibly Hosea 5:10 may contain an allusion to this, although perhaps more likely to events in the reign of Jotham (comp. 2 Chronicles 27:5).

⁶¹ We purposely omit reference to the Assyrian inscription, which records an attempted alliance between Hamath and nineteen cities of the district, and Azriyahu - Azariah or Uzziah (Schrader, V. 5, pp. 217-227). It is quite possible that in their revolt from Assyria these cities may have sought an alliance with Uzziah, into which, however, that monarch did not enter. But the reference to Uzziah in the boastful record by Tiglath-pileser of this Syrian coalition is too shadowy to admit, in our view, any certain inference (comp. Nowack, *Assyr. Bab. Inschr.* p. 27, Note 8). Are we to regard the introduction of the name of Azriyahu as meaning literally that monarch, or only in a general sense as referring to him in his successors - just as Omri is introduced in the inscriptions? Again, are we to regard the reference as indicating a strictly historical event? This seems scarcely possible. Or is it a general reference to, or inference from, a later policy - or does it express a suspicion, or is it only a boast? On the Assyrian chronology, in its bearing on that of Scripture, we purposely forbear entering for reasons previously indicated.

wilderness" of Judah, in "the low country" of the Philistine downs, and in the rich "plain" across the Jordan, numerous flocks and herds browsed - provision and security for the operations of "husbandry" being afforded by hewing out many cisterns and building watch-towers (2 Chronicles 26:10).

It has previously been stated that this was the flourishing period of prophetism in Israel. This perhaps the more, because now the last warning voices were raised among a people sunk in idolatry and corruption, and nigh to judgment. From the prophetic allusions the state of matters in Judah seems, at least during the first period of this reign, to have been somewhat better. But here also, alike owing to increasing prosperity and to success, "pride" and its resultant vices, soon became apparent (Amos 2:4; Hosea 5:5, 14; comp. also Isaiah 2:5, etc.; 3:12, 15; 7:10-13; 28:7-10).

This chiefly on the part of the king himself. In the expressive language of Holy Scripture, "when he was strong his heart was lifted up unto destruction" - that is, until he did that which was wrongful and destructive. Intolerant of any power in the land but his own, he sought to combine the chief functions of the priesthood with those of royalty.⁶²

The holiest service of the Temple was when the incense was offered on the golden altar within the Holy Place. It symbolized the offering of Israel's worship by the great High Priest. Regardless of the express Divine ordinance (Exodus 30:7, 27; Numbers 18:1-7), Uzziah penetrated into the Holy Place to arrogate to himself this holy function. In vain Azariah, "the chief priest" (2 Chronicles 26:17, 18), and with him eighty other brave men, no doubt priests of "the course" then on service, sought to arrest the king. Their remonstrance, really their warning, that the issue would be other than his pride had anticipated, only served to incite the wrath of the king. Such utter misunderstanding

and perversion alike of the priestly functions in their deepest meaning, and of the royal office in its higher object - and that from motives of pride - must bring instant and signal judgment. While yet the censer with its burning coals was in his hand, and looks and words of wrath on his face and on his lips, in sight of the priesthood, he was smitten with what was regarded as pre-eminently and directly the stroke of God's own Hand (comp. Numbers 12:9, 10; 2 Kings 5:27). There, "beside the altar of incense," the plague-spot of leprosy appeared on his forehead.

Hastily the assembled priests thrust him, whom God had so visibly smitten, from the Holy Place, lest the presence of the leper should defile the sanctuary. Nay himself, terror-stricken, hastened thence. So the king, whose heart had been lifted up to the utter forgetfulness of the help hitherto given him by Jehovah until he dared the uttermost sacrilege, descended living into the grave in the very moment of his greatest pride. Till death released him he was a leper, dwelling outside the city, separated - "in a house of sickness" - or, as others have rendered the expression, with perhaps greater probability, in "a house of separation" (comp. Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2; 2 Kings 7:3) Cut off from access to the house of the Lord, where he had impiously sought to command, and debarred from all intercourse with men, the kingdom was administered by Jotham, his son - for how long a period before the death of Uzziah it is impossible to determine. His punishment followed him even into the grave. For, although he was "buried with his fathers," it was "in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings," probably the burying ground of the members of the royal family; he was not laid in the sepulcher where the kings of Judah rested; "for they said, He is a leper."

Of the record of his deeds by Isaiah, to which the sacred text refers (2 Chronicles 26:2), no portion has been preserved. Although the activity of the prophet began during the reign of Uzziah (Isaiah 1:1; 6:1), yet, considering that it extended into that of Hezekiah, Isaiah must have been still young, when the leprous king died. Jewish legend has fabled much about the stroke that descended on the sacrilegious king. In his clumsy manner of

⁶² Some critics have endeavored to maintain that, in this, Uzziah only aimed to act as David and Solomon had done, and to reassert the ancient royal right of chief conduct of the religious services. But there is absolutely not a tittle of evidence that either David or Solomon ever arrogated to themselves any strictly priestly functions, least of all that about to be mentioned.

attempting to account for the directly Divine by natural causes, Josephus connects the sudden leprosy of the king with that earthquake (Amos 1:1) of which the terrible memory so lingered in the popular memory as almost to form an era in their history (Zechariah 14:4, 5).

In that earthquake, which Josephus describes, he tells us: "a rent was made in the Temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately." Other Jewish

writers strangely identify the death of Uzziah referred to in Isaiah 6:1, with the living death of his leprosy, and the earthquake with the solemn scene there pictured. Yet this application of theirs is certainly true when they rank Uzziah with those "who attained not what they sought, and from whom was taken that which they had".