

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the November Synod of the Philippine Independent Catholic Church in **2001**, the now late **Bishop Lewis Lucea** made known to me an immediate need amongst the Bishops for Theological educational material. The PICC now had need of a central training unit for the formation and preparation of its ordinands, and all the areas of Theology were to receive comprehensive coverage. During his visit to Great Britain in **February 2002** **Bishop Lucea** reiterated this need, and again asked the author, now Vicar General of then PICC Diocese in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Europe to field what he could for the Autumn Term. Such a request at the best of times would be a tall order, but its urgency was all the more underlined when the author found himself not only appointed Vicar General of the newly emerging Diocese, but having also on behalf of **Archbishop Armando dela Cruz** its Acting Diocesan to train its ordinands.

What you have before you was designed essentially to meet the requirements of a University course. This Course studies the *Old Testament* from the time of the Division of the Kingdom of Israel at the time of **King Solomon's** death (**922 B.C.**), to the arrival of **King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon** at the gates of Jerusalem in **587 B.C.** It also touches on the subsequent exile of Judah and destruction of the Lord's Temple at Jerusalem. The approach is academic, and designed to fulfil the requirements of undergraduate university degree or diploma work in this area. Further and supplementary material is needed to enable the expository possibilities of the corpus to be put before the student. This is being produced in due course.

The author would like to pay tribute to the late **Revd. J.W.McKay M.A.(Aber et Oxon) Ph.D. (Cantab)** who first engendered his interest in the primary Biblical sources and more recent secondary Theological literature relating to this period, and what God is saying to us today through it, during his undergraduate study. The **Revd. Professor R. Norman Whybray M.A. D.Phil. B.D. D.D. (Oxon)** also gave great input, particularly in the realm of Wisdom Literature and the relationship between Old Testament Hebrew and its cognate Ancient Near Eastern cognate Semitic Languages and cultures.

Because of the urgency of **Bishop Lucea's** request, this course had been packaged 'immediately' for use in the Philippines. It was due a revision, and if you are studying after **2015** revised material is slowly being incorporated. The purpose of this course as with all ICPICJC courses is to furnish resource to enable an ordinand to be formed and trained under the tutorship of their local bishop, parish priest, or other clergy. Incidentally, it is not always the most up to date literature that is best. However, what is presented here takes account of what is useful in the subject areas touched upon. This course is only the beginning. All participants should visit and re-visit and re-work across their lifetime of ministry the fields within *Old Testament* studies that it touches upon.

My thanks to all concerned with the delivery of this course, especially **Revd. Dr. Benjamin McNair Scott** who kindly helped me with the initial e-delivery of this work during his Philippine visits with us in **2004**. The Bishops of the ICPICJC and I pray for the Lord's richest blessing on you as you study His word and prepare for His service. More than ever the *Old Testament* is relevant today. The *New Testament* brings it to completion.

May we encourage you to pursue those studies as well. The Lord bless you as you commence and sustain your studies.

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COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

The only requirements of this course are a reasonable ability to work with Biblical and Theological technical English, and a desire to be able to listen to the text of the *Old Testament* with the tools that this course provides. A working knowledge of *Old Testament I/Judaism I* whilst desirable is not essential. *Old Testament II/Judaism II* stands as a course in its own right.

This edition is a condensed edition, i.e.: most of the Bible references are not printed out: tutor and student will have to look them up.

UNIT 1: SOLOMON AND THE DIVISION OF ISRAEL

A. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON: I KINGS 3 - 11

1A. External Politics and Solomon's context

1. Introduction

During the period of weakness in Egypt and Mesopotamia at the end of the second millennium B.C. and the beginning of the first, **King David** (ruled **1000 – 960 B.C.**) had transformed Israel from being a tribal confederacy into a united empire. **King David** not only had extended his rule over Israel and Judah, but he drove the Philistines down to the narrow strip of the coastal plain, had subjected Edom, Moab, and Ammon to his rule, and had taken over the northern territories of Canaan as far as Kadesh. He left to his son **Solomon** (ruled **960 B.C.-922 B.C.**) an empire that extended from Ezion-Geber in the Gulf of Aqaba in the South East to Kadesh in the South West, to the border of the River Euphrates to the North of Damascus; and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Syrian desert (c.f.:map in **N. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations* /197**). **King David's** immediate neighbours were now Egypt in the South, and the Syro-Phoenicians on the northern coastal plain – both of which were to play an important role in the reign of **King Solomon**. Although the borders remained without significant change throughout reign of Solomon, the internal structure of the state changed to a considerable degree – some of the changes not being entirely for the better.

2. Solomon's Foreign Policy

(a) Egypt

The evidence of *I Kings* is interesting: Here is *I Kings* 3:01: “**Solomon made a marriage alliance With Pharaoh king of Egypt, he took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her to the city of David.**” So begins the account of **Solomon's** reign and sets the tone of the record. The prestige value of such a recorded marriage must have been inestimable. Egypt, though now weak, was still one of the great powers with an imperial heritage. Such a recognition of the state of Israel shows how important Israel was at the time. **Solomon** certainly regarded this alliance as of great importance, for he built a special palace for the Egyptian princess in Jerusalem. *Pause to read I Kings 7:08.*

(b) Tyre

Read *I Kings* 5:01-5:12. This describes how **Solomon** came to make a treaty with **Hiram King of Tyre**. Tyre was an ancient city on the Phoenician Sea Coast, and the greatest mercantile city on the Eastern Mediterranean sea-board. Her influence extended in Solomon's time over Cyprus, Sicily, Sardinia, and even parts of Spain. Carthage, the great enemy of Rome in later days was at this time a Phoenician colony, and it was under **King Hiram of Tyre** that the colonisation of the African coast began. This agreement with Hiram was for the supply of timber from the Lebanese mountains for the construction of the temple of the Lord, Solomon's and his family's palaces, and other buildings. The wood was cut and floated down the sea coast to Israel (*I Kings* 5:09). In return Solomon gave oil and wheat to Tyre. Thus by diplomacy and trade, Solomon was able to maintain peace with his great neighbours, and so the borders of the Davidic Empire stood throughout his reign.

2A. Internal Policies of Solomon's Reign

1. Solomon's Building Operations

(a) Direct 'Biblical' evidence: The text of *1 Kings* 6:5-7:1

The details of Solomon's buildings are to be found in *1 Kings* 6:05 to 7:01. Please pause to read the text in full.

(b) The Temple

It is the temple to which the Deuteronomic Historians give most attention. (Discuss briefly its shape, location, fittings. Use maps diagrams.) For details cf. **A. Parrot**, *The Temple of Jerusalem* (old but reliable). The Temple's Cosmic significance is outlined well in **Robert Murray's** *The Cosmic Christ*, and **Margaret Barker's** works more generally.

(c) **The palace:** The Palace took thirteen years to build (*1 Kings* 7:01) whereas the temple took but seven years. The Palace included all the administrative offices of state, libraries, scribal schools etc.. Nothing is known of the palace save that it was near to the Temple and North of the old city of **King David**.

(d) House of the Forest of Lebanon

(cf. *1 Kings* 7:02-7:05). The 'House of the Forest of Lebanon' was of massive structure with three rows of cedar pillars supporting it (hence its name). It was used as an armoury, and **King Solomon** kept a large number of shields there (*1 Kings* 10:17).

(e) The Hall of Pillars

Little is known of this building, save its proportions (*1 Kings* 7:06).

(f) The Hall of the Throne

Also known as 'The Hall of Judgement'. **Solomon's** throne is described in considerable detail in *1 Kings* 10:18-10:20. The throne was of ivory, covered in gold and ornately decorated. The throne room was an important place in the ancient world, for there people would come for judgement. (Discuss). *1 Kings* 3:16ff describes one such of Solomon's Judgements given to two women with a quarrel over the right to possess a certain infant.

(g) The Palace of Pharaoh's Daughter:

cf. *1 Kings* 7:08.

2. Solomon's Commercial activities

(a) Solomon's horse and chariot trade

We have already noted that **King Solomon** had a trading agreement with Tyre. However: **King Solomon** also acted as a middle man in the horse and chariot trade. The location of Palestine between Assyrian and Egypt, and South of the Phoenicians was ideal for extricating revenue by taxation from passing trade, and for importing and exporting. Solomon exploited it. The chariots were bought from Egypt, and the horses from Cilicia, and traded with the Syrian and Hittite States to the North (*1 Kings* 10:26-39).

(b) Solomon's shipping trade

Solomon also developed shipping and nautical trade in the Gulf of Aqaba. The Eastern Mediterranean coast was not particularly suited to Mediterranean trade by sea, and Israel was not a sea-faring nation. But Solomon employed Phoenician sailors in his refinery ships (known as 'Ships of Tarshish') along with his own men to teach them the trade (*1 Kings* 9:26-29). (N.B: 'Ships of Tarshish' probably denotes the kind of ship – a sort of man-of-war with a long prow for ramming.) The wealth accruing from his sea trade is well known from the description of the injuries that it brought

into the country, – gold, silver, ivory, apes, peacocks (*I Kings* 10:22). These probably came as a result of trade with Saudi Arabia or with the East African coast, although sandalwood, peacocks, and apes are more Indian than African. For further information on these matters, cf. the book by **R.D. Barnett** *Illustrations of Old Testament History* and page 42.

3. The Queen of Sheba visits Solomon

Sabea in Southern Arabia was suddenly awakened from Nomadism at the end of the second millennium by the domestication of the camel and the growth of Sea trade. Archaeology shows the beginning of urban settlement and the development of trade, particularly in spices and incense. Thus the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon would have been partly a trading visit and partly a visit from curiosity about her new rival trading nation to the north. It is one of the illustrations of the fame and wealth that Solomon was amassing.

4. Culture

Fame never derives solely from wealth. Solomon was famed far his Wisdom, and not without cause, for his reign marked a high point within the cultural life of Israel. It was during this period that Psalmography, Wisdom, and Theological Writing appear to have taken firm root in Israel. The so-called 'J' narrative' of the Documentary Hypothesis was conjectured as being from as early as the time of **Solomon's** reign, and it was this period that saw the matrix of the Court History of David (cf. *II Samuel* 7 - *I Kings* 2) (N.B.: The Court History of **King David** is dealt with in Unit 10 of PICC B.A./B.D./B.Min./B.Th. course *Old Testament I/Judaism I*).

5. Solomon's reign one of peace and prosperity

Solomon's reign was therefore basically one of Peace, Security, Prosperity, and Culture. As the historian in *I Kings* 4:20 writes: **"Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy."** The picture is one of a veritable golden age – but is it an accurate picture? We remember that upon Solomon's death the Kingdom was split into two and was never properly re-united in a peaceful relationship until well after the exile. What caused this split? We will tackle this problem in a moment. But first to the theory of the 'Solomonic Enlightenment'.

3A. G.VON-RAD: Wisdom as the heritage of the Solomonic enlightenment

1. G.VON-RAD: Israelite 'royal schools'

It was **Gerhard Von-Rad** who dotted the 'I's and crossed the 't's of this theory, and turned it into what was to be virtually a consensus for some years. As the result, initially, of a study of the *narrative* traditions of the Old Testament, he came to the conclusion that the period of **David** and **Solomon** was a period of very rapid cultural development in Israel: the period of what we call the 'Solomonic Enlightenment'. It was the establishment of the monarchy and of the Davidic empire which was Israel's cultural turning point; and it was especially under **Solomon** that Egyptian influence, already prominent in the establishment of **David's** kingdom, became dominant in the cultural field. According to **Von-Rad** both the court and the administration of the kingdom were modelled on those of Egypt; and one of the elements of this was the establishment of schools for training officials, in the Egyptian manner. At first, Egyptian experts may have been personally employed by Solomon for this purpose; and so it was here that the Israelite wisdom tradition such as we find expressed in the Book of *Proverbs* took shape under Egyptian auspices.

2. Wisdom as subversive 'protest literature'

This theory of foreign influences also helped to explain the *Sitz-im-leben* of the later Wisdom Books, *Job* and *Ecclesiastes*. These books correspond to another feature of Egyptian and Mesopotamian wisdom literature, the phenomenon of what may be called ‘protest literature’. Particularly in times of crisis, when the cosmic order (expressed in political and social terms) appeared to be breaking down, (as in the intermediary periods in e.g.: the Kassite period in Mesopotamia), literary works appeared in both these countries which *questioned* or *denied* the traditional view that the Order is immutable and that therefore those who conform to it will be safe and prosperous while those who flout it will suffer. They express the misery of their times. That *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* in some sense share this characteristic of ‘protest literature’, though they are usually dated much later, is clear. (Note *Job* type literature in Canaan). On the theory that the institution of ‘wisdom schools’ established by **Solomon** continued in one form or another throughout Israel’s later history, it was possible to see this protest literature also in the context of the school, although it was not clear just how ‘subversive’ literature arose and functioned in that context. But at any rate its similarity to foreign literature is clear.

3. Critique 1: R.N.WHYBRAY: ‘There were no Israelite schools’

In recent years this ‘consensus theory’ of the close connection between wisdom literature and schools in Israel has been severely questioned. While it is not impossible that Israel had such schools from the period of the early monarchy, it cannot be denied that their existence is entirely inferential: there are no passages whatever in the *Old Testament* that directly refer to them. (For further discussion cf. **R.N. Whybray** *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*). In a very late period such as that of *Ecclesiastes*, perhaps under Greek influence, there may well have been schools of some kind; but there is not really any direct evidence of their existence in pre-exilic times. Education was a matter, it seems, of parental instruction (cf. *Proverbs* 1:08). Note the difference between Israel and the great powers. However, on the other side, there were probably schools in pre-Israelite Canaan. Moreover, for various reasons many scholars now believe that **Von Rad**’s theory of a ‘Solomonic Enlightenment’, which is also based on conjecture, is at the very least overstated.

4. Critique 2: Old Testament Wisdom, at least in part, arose within Israel

Perhaps an even greater weakness of Von-Rad’s theory, at least if it is held to be a *complete* explanation of the origin of Israel’s wisdom tradition, is that it ignore completely the possibility that some of the impetus towards its formation may have come from within Israel itself. **Von-Rad** in his book *The Wisdom of Israel* admitted that there might be a little truth in this, but brushed the idea aside, saying that in any case we can know little about it: the wisdom books as they have come down to us are ‘school wisdom’. Recently, however, there has been a strong tendency to take seriously the notion of a native Israelite ‘wisdom’.

6. Recent research and the ‘King’s’ account of the Solomonic era

Much attention has focused on the way *1 and 2 Kings* presents Solomon’s reign in the light of *Deuteronomy* 17 and what **Martin Noth** called the ‘Deuteronomistic History of Israel.’ Old Testament studies has, however, moved beyond what we now call this ‘pan-Deuteronomic’ phase of its history.

B. THE DIVISION OF THE ISRAELITE KINGDOM IN 922 B.C.

1B. Theological and natural considerations

1. Theological considerations

The editor of *I Kings* blames the division on the consideration that Solomon in his later years worshipped pagan gods (*I Kings 11*) with the result that the LORD punished him by dividing his kingdom after his death. However, there are other considerations with respect to the narrative in Chapter 11 that point in another direction. The troubles in Edom and Damascus in *I Kings 11:14-25* appear to have occurred soon after **King David's** death, and not simply at the end of **King Solomon's** reign – cf. *I Kings 11:21f; 11:24f*. However: there were other causes of internal disturbances in Solomon's reign.

2. Natural Topographical and Geographical Divisions

Judah in the South was a land of hills and storm torrents (wadis). Her soil was poor and difficult to cultivate. Hence her inhabitants were mostly sheep and cattle breeders. **Israel** in the North, by contrast, was rich in fertile valleys and well suited to agricultural life. North and South were basically very different in outlook. Furthermore, in a hilly, rocky land where the country is part desert, communications were slow and difficult, whilst there was also the ever present menace of marauding bedouins. It must have been most difficult to hold this country together in a unity. In the Philistines, **King David** had had a foe that was common to all Israel, and which demanded unity. **King Solomon**, by contrast, ruled in an era of peace and prosperity when discontent easily arises. And **King Solomon**, unfortunately, gave cause for discontent.

2B. Solomon's Policies

1. Solomon's Militia

King Solomon's peace and prosperity were not bought without cost. To preserve his borders against the inroads of the Aramaeans in the North and to hold the non-Israelite trans-Jordan in subjection required a strong army. Thus we are told that Solomon maintained a chariot force of 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen (*I Kings 10:26*). (N.B: each chariot had a driver, shield bearer and archers). We are also provided with a list of key cities in the land which he fortified (*I Kings 9:15*) – Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Beth-Horan, Baalath and Tadmor. Excavations at Megiddo have uncovered a large complex of chariot stables, but it seems that some of them may belong to a date later than that of **King Solomon**, possibly the reign of the wayward King Ahab who married the notorious Tyrian princess **Jezebel**.

2. Solomon's Administration

(a) Kings David and Solomon compared

King David had been a military leader in time of war. **King Solomon** grew up a courtier and diplomat. **King Solomon** was a very different person from **King David** and a different kind of ruler. **David** had built his kingdom by military activity. He had started life almost like a Robin Hood, and when he took Jerusalem he did so with his private militia. **King Solomon**. On the other hand, was born to the purple. He inherited an Empire from his father **King David**.

(b) The need to maintain the new Israelite State machinery

Further: **Solomon** built the institutions of the Israelite state. This had consequences: (1) His foreign alliances required the upkeep of embassies; (2) His trading ventures required a finance department; (3) His building programmes required a ministry of public works; and (4) His massive military system required a ministry of defence. Thus under Solomon, there grew a complex system of bureaucratic government, mainly on the pattern of the Egyptian state. A list of the chief officials in Solomon's cabinet is given in *I Kings 4*, and it is of interest that religious officers are represented.

3. The Corvee

Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the forced labour. *I Kings* 5:13-5:18 tells how Israelite levies were compelled to work in the Lebanon timber forests and the Judaeen stone quarries. Such was the cost of **King Solomon's** building work that free-born Israelites were forced to work in this way for the state.

4. The Division of the State

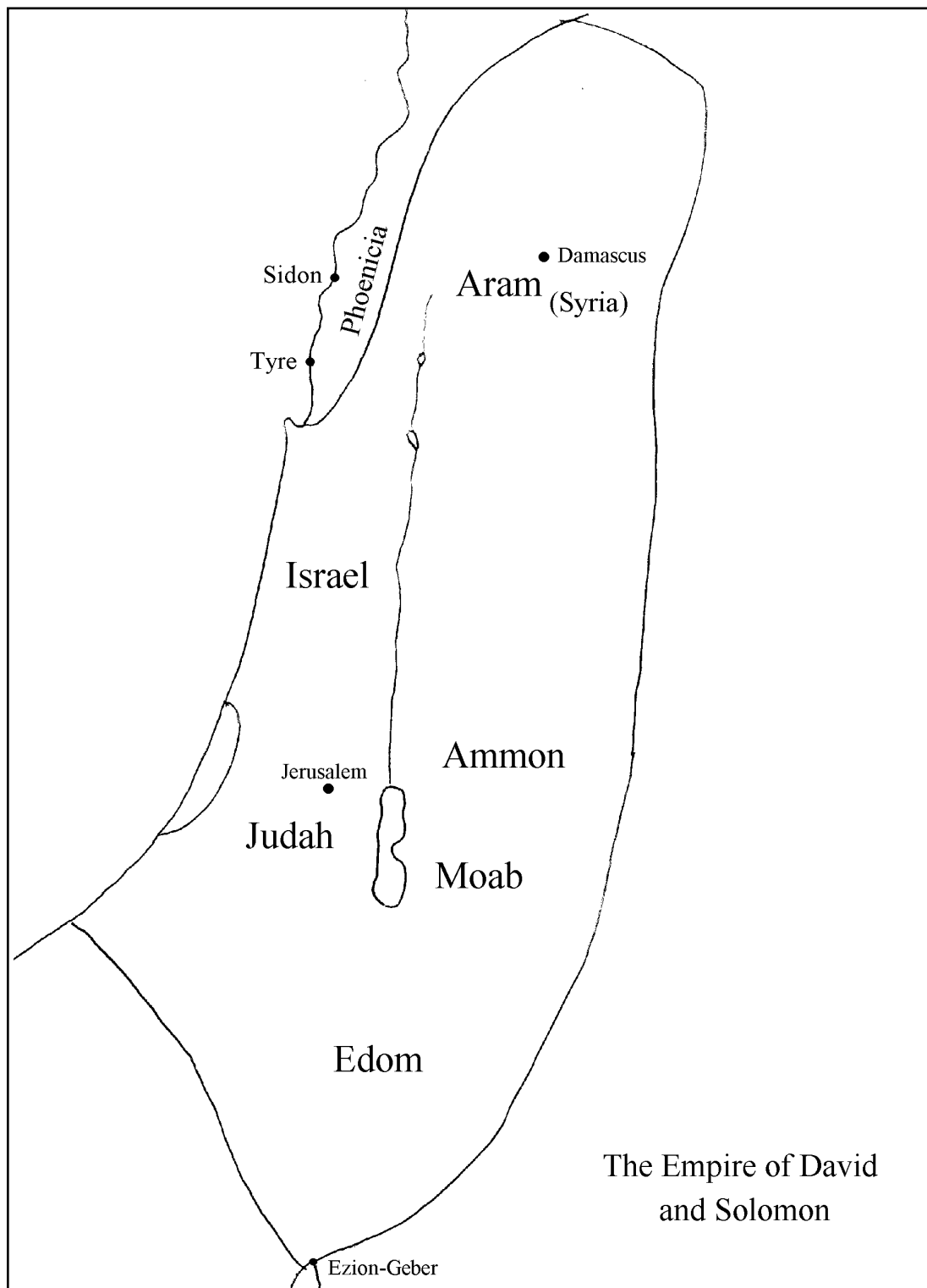
The cost of supporting **King Solomon's** lavish court was economically excessive. *I Kings* 4:22ff. gives a rough idea of the amount of provisions that were necessary daily to feed his vast civil service. In order to raise the money and provisions necessary, Solomon divided the state into twelve taxation districts and appointed officers in charge of each district (*I Kings* 4:7ff).

5. The beginnings of discontent

Already during **King Solomon's** reign discontent was spreading. **King Solomon's** taxation districts allowed little respect for the old tribal areas in Israel, and it was only under his father that Israel had emerged from tribalism. The Northern tribes must have felt that Judah was trying to impose its authority and annihilate others. Thus the prophet **Ahijah** hands over the northern kingdom to **Jeroboam** (*I Kings* 11:26ff) who then ruled the ten Northern tribes as **King Jeroboam I**, known in *I Kings* as '**Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin.**' The cost of Solomon's glory was more than the state could bear. Heavy taxation and forced labour were too high a cost to pay for the empire. Thus the elders of the north demanded of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, a relief from their burden. When it was refused at the Council of the young and old at the beginning of **Solomon's** son **Rehoboam's** reign in **922 B.C.**, they separated. The sheer avarice of the state machine was well illustrated in *I Kings* 10:11f where we find that Solomon was compelled by the need for revenue to sell twenty northern towns to Tyre.

6. The Division of the state: Israel and Judah

On **King Solomon's** death (**922 B.C.**), the northern elders sent for **Jeroboam** the young officer in **King Solomon's** army who had already attempted a revolt and failed. He had fled to Egypt but now returned on Solomon's death (*I Kings* 11:20ff, 12:01ff) and demanded that Rehoboam lighten the burden of **Solomon. Rehoboam**, on the advice of the younger men in his court council refused to do so whereupon the North came out in open revolt under the leadership of **Jeroboam** who became king in Shechem, an earlier cultic centre of Israel and the place where the Ark first rested in the time of **Samuel**. The schism lasted until both kingdoms were eventually destroyed – the Northern 'Israel' by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the Southern Judah based on Jerusalem with the hereditary Davidic kingship by **Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon** in **587 B.C.** But, that was not to be the end.



UNIT 2: I & II KINGS & THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

A. RESOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF *I & II KINGS*

1A. Commentaries

1. Older commentaries

I shall make what I humourously call, 'scurrilous remarks' to accompany the commentaries as I list them. (1) **J.A. Montgomery & H.S. Schuman** *The Book of Kings* International Critical Commentary, T and T Clark, **1951**, This is old and serviceable, and sometimes links *Kings* with the classical world but it is too source-critically minded; (2) **John Gray**, *I and II Kings*, Old Testament Library, London: SCM Press, **1964** contains many mistakes and should never have been published as it stands; (3) **N.H. Snaith** *I and II Kings* **1954** is concise and competent by a Hebrew scholar who was at the time Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament in Bangor College of the University of Wales; (4) **R.C. Denton**, *I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles*, Layman's Bible Commentary, is slender but perceptive; (5) *Peake's Bible Commentary* edited **H.H. Rowley**, c.f.: entry on *I and II Kings* is a standard concise workhorse; (6) *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, and again, the entry on *I and II Kings*, is Roman Catholic, and comprehensive within the strictures of the space of a one volume commentary and to be preferred to (5).

2. A more recent all round technical commentary:

II Kings *Word Biblical Commentary* Series 13, by **T.R. Hobbs**, though dated (**1985**), is probably the best all round useful commentary currently available for our purposes here.

3. Introductions to the Old Testament

'Introductions' are about, 'Who wrote what, why, when, and how?' Read one with a Bible in one hand and it in the other.

Otto Eissfeldt, *Old Testament Introduction* is a **1962** translation by **P.R. Ackroyd** of its **1929** German original in its then most recent German edition, published by Blackwells, Oxford. The original *OTI*, it is thorough, concise and encyclopaedic in its treatment. An essential starting point.

Georg Fohrer, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, SPCK Large Paperbacks, **1974**

Artur Weiser, *Old Testament Introduction*.

Norman Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations*.

R.K. Harrison, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, **1977**

Conservative, thorough, with a useful section on Old Testament Theology.

4. Hebrew Text

C.F. Burney *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the book of Kings*. **1907**

N.H. Snaith *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Kings*, **1955**

B. THE CONTENTS AND SOURCES OF *KINGS*

1B. *I & II Kings*: Their outline and dimensions in Hebrew and Greek

1. A Preliminary Note

I & II Kings is a history book and is continuous upon *I & II Samuel*, and as a block they remained undivided in Hebrew manuscripts until **1442 A.D.** The *Septuagint* refers to *I & II Samuel* and *I & II Kings* as *I – IV Basileia* ('Kingdoms' or 'Reigns'). Some manuscripts of the *Septuagint* carry *II Kingdoms* through to *I Kings* 2:11 (the death of **David**) or to *I Kings* 2:46 (the establishment of **Solomon's** throne). So there is one history book comprised of the English *I and II Samuel* and *I and II Kings*; but this also includes *Deuteronomy*.

Chronicles is a later history using *Kings* as its source – omitting some material and adding other. It is, as with all history, written from a particular perspective, but further details of this can wait for now. *I & II Chronicles* are the last Books in the Hebrew *Old Testament* Canonical order.

2. *Kings*: A simple outline

Our concern in these lectures is with *Kings*. *Kings* is in three divisions: (a.) *I Kings* 1 – 11: The Empire of **Solomon**; (b.) *I Kings* 12 – *II Kings* 17: The Divided Kingdom; (c.) *II Kings* 18 – *II Kings* 25: Judah's last century.

2B. The Contents of *I & II Kings* in outline

1. *I Kings* 1-11: Solomon's Empire

I Kings 1 – 2: The last days of **David** and the accession of **Solomon**. An end to the palace intrigues. *I Kings* 3-5:14:**Solomon's** dream at Gibeon: a Divine authentication of his accession. The case of 2 harlots – an illustration of **Solomon's** Justice and Wisdom. Other notes occur in this chapter concerned with **Solomon's** Wisdom etc.

I Kings 5:15 -9:09:The building of the Temple. Information on **Solomon's** administration and on Israel's Worship.

I Kings 9:10-11:43:Details of **Solomon's** public works. Visit of the **Queen of Sheba**. Troubles at the close of **Solomon's** reign.

2. *I Kings* 12 – *II Kings* 17

The thread of history remains with the Kingdom of Judah, but the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel is also included.

I Kings 12-13:The division of the Kingdom, and the reign of **Jeroboam I**, the schismatic king.

I Kings 14-16- *II Kings* 10:32-17:41: The histories of the two kingdoms down to the fall of Northern Israel in **722 B.C.**

I Kings 17- *II Kings* 10:31:**Elijah** and **Elisha** stories and the history of the period.

3. *II Kings* 18 – 25

II Kings 18-20: **King Hezekiah**.

II Kings 21: **Manasseh to Amon**.

II Kings 22-23: **King Josiah**.

II Kings 23-25: The last years of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem; the Exile etc.

4. The Content of *Chronicles*

By way of comparison: *I & II Chronicles* is a history from **Adam** to the exile cast in both narrative and genealogy. History from **Adam** to **King David** is traced by genealogy, and that from **King David** (ruled 1000-960 B.C.) to the exile in narrative, although this only includes elements of history from the Southern Kingdom. *I & II Chronicles* omits the **Elijah-Elisha** cycle of stories.

3B. The Sources of *I & II Kings*

1. Introduction

The *Books of Kings* use several sources in compiling its historical accounts. We shall look first at those of the Kingdom; and then those that recount the history of the Divided Kingdom (922 B.C.)

2. Sources of material on the Kingdom to its division

(a.) *The Court History of David*

For further details on '*The Court History of David*, c.f.: ***R.N. Whybray** *The Succession Narrative*' Studies in Biblical Theology Second Series, London; SCM Press. This source appears to have furnished the material for *II Samuel* 9 – *II Samuel* 20 and *I Kings* 1 – 2. Now, *I Kings* 2:46 is at the close of this source, which, **Whybray** argues, dates from the time of **Solomon** – **"And the Kingdom was established at the hands of Solomon,"** (*I Kings* 2:46).

(b.) The book of the *Acts of Solomon*

I Kings 11:41 reads as follows: **"Now the rest of the acts of Solomon and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the Acts of Solomon?"** This is obviously a well known book and probably the source of much of the materials of Chapters *I Kings* 3-11, but it is impossible to trace that material in them which comes from this source. The source is old when compared with the date of the compilation of *I & II Kings*.

3. Sources utilized by *I & II Kings* for History from the division of the Kingdom

(a.) The Book of the Chronicles of Judah/Israël

Two distinct sources of similar name have clearly been used in the compilation of *I & II Kings*:

i) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israël.

ii) The Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah.

The first references to these sources are at *I Kings* 14:19, 14:29. They cover the period of the divided monarchy and are often referred to at the end of the king's reign with this formula:

"Now the rest of the acts that X did, are they not written in the book of the ... "

(b.) The Elijah and Elisha Narratives

These are obviously constituted from a separate source, although there is an overlap with the Historical Sources of the times.

Elijah Narratives: *I Kings* 17; 18; 19:01-19:18; 21; *II Kings* 1 (Are these two the 'perfect kings'?)

Elisha Narratives: *I Kings* 19:19-19:21; *II Kings* 2:01-8:15, *II Kings* 13:14-13:21.

(c.) The Isaiah Narratives

II Kings 12:13-20:19 makes mention of Isaiah. In *Isaiah* 36-39, **Isaiah** is referred to in the third person, so that is not referred to as being by **Isaiah of Jerusalem**.

(d.) Other Sources

Other sources left unmentioned were probably also used: e.g. for the anecdotal details of *II Kings*

17:24-17:28; 23:04-23:14. For the last years that the history covers, it is possible that the memory of eyewitnesses and oral tradition was the source.

4. A working axiom

There were therefore many old sources used in the compilation of *I & II Kings*, some possibly almost contemporary with the events which they describe. Hence, there is no prima-facie reason to question the basic historical value of *I & II Kings*, rather, it may be confidently asserted.

C. THE AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF *I & II KINGS*

1C. The Authorship of “Kings”: Three clues from *Deuteronomy*

1. A first clue: ‘The place the Lord your God shall choose’

A first clue to the authorship of *I & II Kings* comes from *Deuteronomy* 12:05: **“You shall seek the place which YHWH your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His Name and make His Habitation there.”** This is the first law in *Deuteronomy* 12-26, often called the ‘D’ Code by its literary critics. It is also the basis for many other Laws in *Deuteronomy* viz.:

- a. The tithe Law. (*Deuteronomy* 14:22 ff).
- b. The firstlings Law. (*Deuteronomy* 15:19 ff).
- c. The Passover and festivals. (*Deuteronomy* 16).
- d. The law of firstfruits. (*Deuteronomy* 26:01).
- e. The supreme court of Justice. (*Deuteronomy* 17:01).
- f. The Levitical Priesthood. (*Deuteronomy* 18:01 ff).
- g. The law of the cities of refuge. (*Deuteronomy* 19:01).
- h. The Law of the third year tithe. (*Deuteronomy* 26:12 ff).

2. A second clue: The demand for a central sanctuary i.e.: the Jerusalem Temple

A second clue is found in the underlying demand for a central sanctuary that is to be found behind the literary scope of *I & II Kings*. We will discuss centralisation more fully in the unit related to *Deuteronomy*. Meantime note that prior to the Law in *Deuteronomy* 12, a multiplicity of altars at different places was the norm (*Exodus* 20:24-20:26), and to this ‘norm’ many disapproving references are made by the prophets (c.f.: *Isaiah* 27:09; *Micah* 5:10-5:15; *Jeremiah* 2:20; 3:13; 15:27 etc.), also **Jeremiah’s “on every high hill and among every green tree.”** So the Law in *Deuteronomy* 12 legislates a permission of profane slaughter locally in the absence of the village and rural altars.

3. The place where the Lord will cause His name to dwell

A third clue is found in the central sanctuary where **the LORD** will cause His Name to dwell. – He will choose – c.f.: *Deuteronomy* 19:05; 12:11; 12:21; 14:23; 14:24; 16:02; 16:08; 16:11; 26:02.

The pre-history of this Deuteronomic idea is uncertain if it had one for it is the direct command of God; but it seems to have been foreshadowed in *Exodus* 20:24 (DISCUSS BRIEFLY). This probably stands as a corrective to the Jerusalem Theology of **the LORD’s** Glory dwelling in the temple bodily, and the excesses of dogmatic belief that that Theology when overemphasised could bring. It is then an attempt to preserve **the LORD’s** transcendence whilst asserting His Immanence.

2C. Name Theology: *I Kings* 8:25 ff; Solomon’s Dedictory Prayer

1. The Lord’s transcendence

In *I Kings* 8:27, **God's** transcendence is reasserted: **"But will God dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much more this house which I have built!"** Here is a direct counter to any acceptance of a naive idea of **God** sitting enthroned in His Temple. **God** dwells in Heaven, His only dwelling place.

2. The Lord's Temple

In *I Kings* 8:28-8:30, **God** said of His Temple: **"My Name shall dwell there,"** and, **"When prayer is offered toward this house, or toward this place, then the LORD will hear in Heaven."**

Now, you will find that the whole of **Solomon's** prayer is permeated by this Name Theology, and it is reasserted in **God's** reply to **Solomon** in *I Kings* 9:03. **"I have heard your prayer ... I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put My Name there forever."**

3. A working conclusion

We can safely conclude therefore that *I Kings* 8 ff. presupposes *Deuteronomy*, and hence was written by a Deuteronomist.

3C. The Judgements on the Kings of Israël and Judah

1. Formulaic introduction of the reigns of each king in the Divided Monarchy

Passing on to the period of the Divided Monarchy, we find that the reigns of each of the kings are introduced with a characteristic formula as follows: **"In the Xth year of Y, king of Judah began Z to rule over Israël. He reigned n years in Jerusalem."** Similar formulae are used in conclusion: **"And the rest of the acts of X and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of Judah/Israël. And Y his son reigned in his stead."**

2. What the king did ... and didn't do

But, there is more to these 'formulae'. Particularly important are the additional words:

1. " ... and he did that which was evil in the sight of **YHWH**."
2. " ... he did that which was right in the sight of **YHWH**, but the high places were not removed."
3. " ... he did that which was right in the sight of **YHWH**."

There are other variations of these three formulae, but they are all essentially similar in that they are 'Judgement formulae'. The 'Judgement formulae' are either:

- i) Absolute condemnation.
- ii) Modified approval.
- iii) Total approval.

The criterion of Judgement is the removal or non-removal of the essentially pagan high places.

3. The Northern Kings

The Northern kings are *always* condemned because they perpetuated, **"the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat which caused Israël to sin."** **Jeroboam I** was the schismatic king who led the North out from the Solomonic Kingdom in **922 B.C.** and set up rival sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan with golden bulls, thus breaking the centralisation laws.

4. The Southern Kings

In the South, some kings are condemned, because they wholeheartedly followed the paganism of the land and cared little for the purity of Yahwism. Some kings have modified praise because they were good Yahwists but did not try to centralise. Four kings, however, required special notice:

(a.) **Asa:** (*I Kings* 15:09 ff) carried out a Cultic Reformation and so is praised: but he did not centralise;

(b.) **Joash:** (*II Kings* 11-12). **Joash's** reign was also marked by Cultic reforms and so the king was praised, but again, the high places remained.

c. **Hezekiah:** (*II Kings* 18 ff). **Hezekiah** was the first to attempt centralisation and he is praised quite unconditionally.

d. **Josiah:** (*II Kings* 22-23). **Josiah** also centralised, and likewise was accorded the highest praise.

5. A conclusion

Now, we can see that the standard by which the editor of *Kings* judges the monarchy is that of the primary law of *Deuteronomy* 12 – namely the law of Centralisation. It is to be concluded that the editor of *I & II Kings* and its sources was a Deuteronomist.

4C. The Date of *I & II Kings*

1. *Kings* closes at approximately 550 B.C.

When we come to study *Deuteronomy*, we shall see that its first draft (which consists of much ancient material) can be dated fairly accurately to **622 B.C.**, about 25 years before the exile. *I & II Kings* must post-date *Deuteronomy*, but clearly not by much. The last event recorded in *Kings* is the rehabilitation of **Jehoiachin**, the exile; king of Judah, in Babylon (*II Kings* 25:27 ff). This gives us a date sometime during the exile, probably in the second half of the sixth century. Such a date is consonant with the closing remark of *Kings* concerning the 37th year of exile.

2. DIETRICH's Thesis: The Interaction of Canaanite and Israélite Society in *Kings*

W. Dietrich, in his *Israël und Kanaan: Vom ringen zweier Gesellschaft-systeme* has proposed a helpful conceptualisation for understanding the phases through which this relationship passed. You will remember that it was the command of God to Israël to exterminate the Canaanite, but this they did or could not do. **Dietrich** has conceptualised the interaction of the two societies as follows:

1. The Conquest– Disposition
2. Judges and the Early Monarchy – Confrontation
3. David's Empire– Integration
4. Solomon's reign– Co-operation
5. The Divided Kingdoms to Omri – Digression
6. The Omrides– Infiltration
7. The Jehu Age– Reaction
8. The Great Empires– Assimilation
9. Manasseh– Repression
10. Towards the wall– Revision

D. THE 'D' HISTORY: THE THESIS OF MARTIN NOTH

1D. An Introduction

1. A Terminological Note

Please distinguish carefully between “Deuteronomic” and “Deuteronomistic”. Not all scholars are careful to do so.

2. Background and Introduction to NOTH's Thesis

(a) A possible process behind the composition of *Kings*

Although we have arrived at an Exilic date for the final composition of *I & II Kings* we must remember that much of the material contained in the History is old, and derives from sources which we have already surveyed. Some scholars believe that the Book of *Kings* itself went through several editions. A first edition was pre-exilic and ended with the account of the Reformation of **Josiah** in *II Kings* 23. Then, a second edition in the exile brought the history up to date. You will find a fairly comprehensive discussion of the arguments in the Introductions of Commentaries that I have recommended, and I shall not go into detail here. The arguments are not difficult to understand.

(b) The Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch

Older scholars believed that the Pentateuchal ‘J’, ‘E’, ‘D’, ‘P’ hypothetical sources could be traced beyond the Pentateuch into the Historical Books. Indeed some, especially **Holscher** have argued that ‘E’ goes right through *Kings* (**Holscher** regards ‘E’ alone as being historical – his views are notoriously dated and methodologically badly founded as we have seen).

2D. An outline of the ‘D’ History in summary form

1. MARTIN NOTH's THESIS: *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I*, 1950

In 1950, **Martin Noth** published a book in the German language with the title *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I* in which he proposed a new theory, and one which has since become widely accepted (contrast **Eissfeldt**) – the ‘D’ History. The *Deuteronomistic History* starts with *Deuteronomy*, according to **Noth**, and runs right through *Joshua*, *Judges*, *I and II Samuel* and *I and II Kings*. It is a history of Israel from the time of the wilderness wanderings and the giving of the Law through to the Exile. We should remember that much of the history is old and so does not bear the stamp of the Deuteronomist's style – but much of the editorial work is thoroughly Deuteronomistic. The narrative thread runs from the giving of the Law, through the Conquest, Settlement, Judges, establishment of the monarchy, the Empire, the Divided Kingdoms, and then documents the fall of both its portions. The history is arranged in episodes or chapters, and these chapters are tied together with speeches, sermons, or reflective essays.

2. D.J. MCCARTHY's THESIS: *II Samuel 7 and the structure of the Deuteronomistic History*

Noth's Thesis has been supplemented by **D.J. McCarthy**. (c.f.: **D.J. McCarthy**: “II Samuel 7 & the structure of the Deuteronomistic History” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 1965.) It is **McCarthy's** work that is followed for the rest of this lecture. Incidentally, **Noth** did not include *II Samuel 7* as one of the great Deuteronomistic speeches.

3. The ‘speeches’ of the ‘D’ History

(a) The speeches and their form

The ‘speeches/Sermons/Reflective Essays’ of Deuteronomy occur in *Joshua* 1:11-1:15; 12; 23;

Judges 2:11-2:23; I Samuel 7:12; I Kings 8:14 -8:61; II Kings 17:07-17:23. These speeches are an assessment of the progress of history in straight Deuteronomistic language, inserted at crucial intervals in history. They follow a basic form: (1.) The past considered; (2.) The future scanned; (3.) Sequence of events explained; (4.) Practical guide for Human activity given.

(b) A theme of Judgement according to obedience or otherwise

The dominant theme is that of Judgement according to the Law as follows:

- a. Obedience to the Law will bring blessing; b. Disobedience will bring disaster.
- All of the past and future is judged in the 'D' History by this standard.

4. The Division of the 'D' History: D.J. McCARTHY's THESIS

The History divides as follows:

Programme	Event
A. Moses commands the conquest and distribution of the land (<i>Deuteronomy 31</i>).	
A1. Joshua undertakes Conquest (<i>Joshua 2</i>).	
A2. Joshua conquers and prepares distribution (<i>Joshua 11-13</i>).	
B. Joshua commands a Covenant and proposes a programme of life in the land (<i>Joshua 23</i>).	
B1. The people break the Covenant (<i>Judges 2</i>).	
B2. The people reject YHWH for a human king (<i>I Samuel 12</i>).	
C. Nathan's oracle gives a new scheme for a human monarchy under YHWH (<i>II Samuel 7</i>).	
C1. Promise fulfilled in Solomon (<i>I Kings 8</i>). C2. First failure of Kingship (<i>II Kings 17</i>).	

3D. A Deuteronomistic Theology of History

1. Deuteronomy's Theology of History

The whole of the 'D' History is prepared by the Book of *Deuteronomy* which provides:

- a. A programme for the history to follow.
- b. The norm for the Judgement of Israël.

Deuteronomistic History is undergirded by a Theology of failure or success within the Covenant relationship between God and His People.

- A. Moses' initial scheme in *Deuteronomy 31* is successfully completed.
- B. The new era of Settlement requires supplementary conditions which **Joshua** gives (*Joshua 23*), but this time there is failure. *I Samuel 12* sees Saul's monarchy as the culminating national sin.
- C. The third era begins with the acceptance of kingship and its accommodation to Yahwism. After initial success, there is final failure (*II Kings 17*).

The whole history is one of Israël's reaction to the Law, and of Israël's failure to obey.

2. Orientation to Units 3-6, and trajectory to Unit 22

We shall be returning to the Theology of *Kings* when we come to discuss the Exile, but for the present we have a source book for history which is basically reliable, and which presents an interpretation of history based on that found in the Book *Deuteronomy*. It is important to understand its judgements therefore in this light.

UNIT 3: PSALMS

A. ISSUES OF 'INTRODUCTION'

1A. The Books and Enumeration of the Psalter

1. The title *Psalms* in the English Bible

Our English title ‘Psalms’ derives from the Greek Septuagint title for this Book: *yalmoi* i.e.: ‘Psalmoi’, hence *Psalms*. These songs of worship are so referred to in *Acts* 1:20, and *Luke* 20:42. *yalmoi* can mean ‘stringed instruments’ or ‘collection of songs’, and so it is literally something like ‘songs to be sung with a stringed instrument’. By contrast, the Hebrew title is *Tēphelim*, i.e.: ‘song songs of praise’. So there is nothing mystical about the title of the Book or about the nature of the collection it comprises – they are simply religious songs – or as we would call them – ‘Hymns’.

The title “*Tēphelim*” is not ideal, for not all Psalms are ‘songs of Praise’. There are many laments in the Psalter. individual Psalms are often entitled – e.g.: ‘a song accompanied by stringed music’.

2. Five Books of *Psalms*

A sign that there is an editorial order to the present Psalter is its division into five Books, probably according to the structure of the five Books of the Law (i.e.: the Pentateuch).

Book I	Psalms 1-41	Book IV	Psalms 90-106
Book II	Psalms 42-72	Book V	Psalms 107-150
Book III	Psalms 73-89		

There is no apparent internal reason for this division. It is not clear, for example, why *Psalms* 106 and 107 should be in different books. Yet each Book is marked off from the next by a concluding Doxology. There is one interesting point that emerges from a closer study of these Books. Book I shows a distinct preference for the use of the Name **YHWH**, and Book II for the term **Elohim**. This may be seen best in the comparison of the otherwise identical Psalms 14 (using **YHWH**) and 53 (using **Elohim**). This distinction may reveal traces of older independent collections, but more than that it has not been possible to say until recently, and I will return to this matter in the Commentary section.

3. The Enumeration of the Psalter

The Psalter contains 150 Psalms, but their enumeration and division differs in the *Old Testament* Massoretic Text (Hebrew) when compared with the Greek *Septuagint*, the official translation of the Hebrew *Old Testament* (as we now call it) into Greek at the request of a Seleucid Monarch. Here are the main differences:

- (a) *Psalms* 9 and 10 and *Psalms* 114 and 115 as found in our English Bibles and the Hebrew Bible are both one Psalm in the Greek Septuagint (known as LXX).
- (b) But: *Psalms* 116 and 147 are divided into two parts by the LXX.
- (c) *Psalms* 42 and 43 are divided and exist as two Psalms in both the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament, but in reality they seem to constitute one Hymn – there is a common recurrent refrain in both Psalms: **“Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God.”**
- (d) On the other hand, *Psalm* 19 which is one Psalm in both Hebrew and Greek Old Testaments looks more like two:

A first: *Psalm* 19:02-19:07: Hymns of Praise to YHWH as Creator of all, especially of the sun.

A second: *Psalm* 19:08-19:15: A Hymnic Praise-teaching about the Law.

- (e) Similarly, the Psalter contains ‘Doublets’:

Psalm 14 is almost identical with *Psalm* 53.

Psalm 108 is a combination of *Psalms* 57:07-57:11 and *Psalm* 60:06-60:11, whilst

Psalm 70 repeats the final portion of *Psalm* 40.

4. An interim conclusion

The Psalter is a Hymn Book divided into 150 Hymns, but there seems to have been something of a process behind its compilation, for it is divided into five parts, and not simply compiled from 150 different Hymns.

2A. *Psalms* and their authors

1. *Psalms* outside the Psalter

The question that we must now ask is how this arrangement came about. A glance through the *Old Testament* will show that the Psalter does not contain all the *Psalms* known to the Israelites: e.g: The Song of **Miriam** in *Exodus* 15; The Psalm of Habakkuk in *Habakkuk* 3, (but interestingly omitted from *Habakkuk* by the (Qumran) Dead Sea Scroll community; and The Song of **Hannah** (*I Samuel* 2). This is simply a sample of some of those *Psalms* that are better known. It seems then that 150 may have been a fixed number. There were other Hymns used in Israelite Worship, but only the 150 in the Psalter were included for the 'Hymn Book'. We shall return to this later.

2. The Authorship of the *Psalms*

(a) *The New Testament*

The *New Testament* ascribes the authorship of *Psalms* or at least certain *Psalms* to King David (reigned 1000-960 B.C.) at *Matthew* 22:45, *Luke* 20:04, *Acts* 1:16, 4:25, *I Corinthians* 4:06, and *Hebrews* 4:07).

(b) Further information in the *Old Testament*

In the *Old Testament* further information is found: (1) **David** is **Saul's** court minstrel; (2) *Amos* 6:05: “ ... like **David** make for themselves instruments of music;” (3) In *I Chronicles*, **David** is the organiser of Temple Worship. Further: (4) The title of the Psalter is simply ‘songs of Praise’, and does not use **David's** Name; (5) *Psalm* 72 ends Book II and concludes with the sentence, “**The Prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended;**” (6) Some *Psalms* bear the words (“**1^e Dawid**”) in their title, and it is to the titles that we now look.

3. (L^e Dawid)

This title could mean several things in Hebrew:

- (a.) It could mean “To/for **David**”, i.e: A Psalm dedicated to **David**.
- (b.) Also, it could mean ‘By **David**’ i.e: A Psalm composed by **David**.
- (c.) It could also carry the connotation of ‘concerning **David**’ i.e.: A Psalm telling of an episode in **David's** life etc.

4. Davidic and other authorships

(a) Ascriptions to sundry authors in psalm titles

There are other clues to help us decide, and this title could mean different things for different *Psalms*. If the title implies only Davidic authorship, then the Book of *Psalms* as a whole could not have been written by **David**, because some *Psalms* are ascribed to **Asaph** (*Psalms* 50 & 73-83), some to the **Sons of Korah** (*Psalms* 42-49, 84-85, 87-88), one to **Jeduthun** (*Psalm* 39), one to **Moses** (*Psalm* 90), two to **Solomon** (*Psalms* 72 and 127), one to **Heenan the Ezrahite** (*Psalm* 88), and one to **Ethan the Ezrahite** (*Psalm* 89).

(b) Ascriptions to David

The largest number of ascriptions are to David (*Psalms* 3-41, 51-71), However: From the Ugaritic texts we discover that *Psalms* were ascribed lb’l, lkrt, l’aqht; and it does not clearly mean that Ba’al

was a Psalmographer. Although many of the *Psalms* headings attempt to relate the individual Psalms to episodes in the life of **David**, there is nothing in the Psalms themselves that give any hint that they originated in this way. The most plausible solution seems to be that these Psalm's titles indicate original *Psalms* collections. The *Songs of Asaph*, of Korah, of Heman, and of Jeduthun were those of Temple singers known to the Chronicler (*1 Chronicles* 25:01). It seems likely that these groups of Temple singers would have had their own collections of Hymns – and probably there was also a large Davidic group with its collection. Of interest is the fact that the Greek Old Testament (*LXX*) accredits a larger number to his name than does the Hebrew, and to this matter and the interpretation of the evidence from these observations about the title '1^o Dawid' I will return when we examine the thesis of **M.D. Goulder**.

B. THE DATE; HEADINGS; & POETRY OF PSALMS

1B. The Date of the Psalms

1. Psalm 137 and the theory of a late date for most Psalms

A very large part of the Psalter is ascribed to **King David**. But, can we say more about the question of the date of the Psalms? *Psalm 137*, for example, is clearly post-exilic for it refers to the Babylonian Captivity with some vehemence and bitterness and asks, **“How should we sing the Song of YHWH in a strange land?”** This Psalm is obviously far later than the time of **David**. Scholars at the end of the last century acquired a mania for dating things late. There was a general mistrust of historical reliability, and Old Testament historians had recently re-discovered the late pre-Christian era of the Maccabees. Some of the Psalms refer to the king, and these Psalms were generally related to the Maccabean dynasty. Now, Israel had been without a king since **587 B.C.** Some Psalms were clearly post-exilic, such as *Psalm 137* already mentioned, so the Kingship Psalms were related to the post-exilic monarchy – that of the **Maccabees**, as they were the only true post exilic Judaeon monarchs. There was a degree of value in this theory, for some Psalms do appear post-exilic: e.g.: *Psalm 1* extols the Law and fits well into a post exilic setting where the Law had become central to Judaism; *Psalm 119*: The structure of this Psalm is obvious to any Hebraist who will see that it is acrostic – i.e: each section's lines begin with consecutive letters of the alphabet.

2. P.R.ACKROYD: A pre-exilic date for the majority of Psalms

However, the components of the view that the Psalms were largely post-exilic carried their thesis to extremes when they titled the Psalter, 'The Hymn Book of the second Temple', for it seems to be clear that many of the Psalms are in fact pre-exilic. For a clear exposition of this older view, c.f.: **R.H. Pfeiffer** *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. For an overwhelming case against it, c.f.: **P.R. Ackroyd** *The Case for the Early Dating of the Psalms*, Ph.D., Cambridge University. More recently, there has been a swing back to the traditional view that the *Psalms* are mostly pre-exilic, and this has been consolidated in the last ten years. As such they constitute the Hymn Book of the first temple. It is, however, very difficult to give specific dates to Hymns. If you were to read through a Hymn or Chorus Book attempting to date its content, you would find it a tiresome and futile task. Expression of Worship cannot be dated in this way, and it belongs to a very different dynamic than that of historical-time sequence.

2B. The Heading of Psalms; Hebrew Poetry

1. The Psalm's Headings

Apart from the ascriptions “to David” etc., there are two further features of the *Psalms*’ headings worthy of note. Not all Psalms have headings, but some have historical notes which attempt to tie the Psalm to some extent into an event in the life of **David**: c.f.: *Psalms* 18, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63. To these and the thesis of **M.D. Goulder** I shall return, but scholarship has tended to give minimal historical value to such headings as clues for the setting of the original utterances of these Psalms. There are reasons: *Psalm* 51, for instance, ends with a call to re-build the walls of Jerusalem – hence many have thought the Psalm to be post-exilic, or at any rate, from centuries later than **David**. Or, is the language metaphorical? To this we shall return.

2. Musical terminology in Psalm headings

But, there are other headings which are musical notes. Sometimes the Psalm describes itself as a song, prayer, poem, etc. Among terms of this kind are the metonyms: “**Shiggaion**,” “**Miktam**,” “**Maskil**,” “**Mizmor**,” “**Shir**,” “**Tephillah**”. For further information on these c.f.: **A.A. Anderson** *The Psalms*, New Century Bible Commentary, New Series, Oliphants **1972**. There are also notes about musical accompaniment, e.g: ‘**On the Gittith**’, or ‘**On the eight-stringed instrument**’, or references to the tunes to be used, e.g.: ‘**According to the Lilies**’, ‘**According to the beautiful youth**’. These tunes must have been either religious or folk tunes that were popular in their day, but are now lost to us. We have a similar scheme in our Hymn Books where we give lists of tunes that can be used by title: one of the most famous being “Cwm Rhondda”.

3. Hebrew Poetry

The Psalms were written in verse, not in prose. There is a good but old outline of the structure of Hebrew verse in the Introduction to **Oesterley**’s *Commentary on the Psalms*, London: S.P.C.K. **1931**. The principle of Hebrew poetry is ‘parallelism’. Verses are arranged according to structure so that one half of a verse runs parallel in content with the second half.

- i) Synonymous: “**When fire kindles in the forest, as when flame blazes on the hills**,” (*Psalm* 83:14).
- ii) Antithetic: “**In the morning it blossoms and flowers; at evening it drops and withers**,” (*Psalm* 90:06).
- iii) Synthetic: “I have set my king on Zion my holy hill,” (*Psalm* 2:06). There are many varieties on these basic categories. Hebrew verse also has meter, but to understand that a knowledge of Hebrew is necessary.

UNIT 4: THE PSALMS & THE FESTIVAL CULTUS

A. THE FESTIVALS IN ANCIENT ISRAËL

1A. The Festivals in *Old Testament* Law

1. *Exodus*

In Ancient Israelite Law the people are required to appear before **the LORD** three times in the year according to the 'Covenant Code' of *Exodus* 23:14 ff.:

- i) At the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Spring Equinox) in Abib;
- ii) At the Feast of Harvest or Firstfruits (Mid-Summer);
- iii) At the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year.

2. Deuteronomy

In the Book *Deuteronomy*, the stipulation has been adjusted and requires:

- i) At the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Deuteronomy* 16).
- ii) At the Feast of Weeks seven weeks later (*Deuteronomy* 16).
- iii) At the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles in the Autumn.

2A. The Feast of the Passover/Unleavened Bread

1. Pre-Exilic mention of Passover

In *New Testament* times this was the primary festival, but it was not always so. We have very little information about the Passover in our Pre-Exilic material: (a.) An Exodus Passover: *Exodus* 12; (b.) An Exodus Passover: *Joshua* 5:10-5:12; (c.) **Josiah's** Passover: *II Kings* 23:21-23:23; (d.) **Hezekiah's** Passover: *II Chronicles* 30. The Passover is not mentioned in the 'Covenant Code' section of *Exodus*, and the only other brief reference to it in the Cultic Decalogue (*Exodus* 34:25) has on other grounds been considered late. Interestingly, the Prophets never mention the Passover.

2. The heart of the Passover Feast

(a) The Feast

It seems that the time of the spring equinox was Abib/Nisan 14th. It was at this time that the Passover occurred. A lamb was slain at evening. Its blood was smothered on the lintels and door posts of the house. The flesh was roasted and eaten at night, and the remains were burnt.

(b) Unleavened bread

Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were eaten with the meal which the family consumed attired in travelling clothes in memory of the hasty exit from Egypt. After the night of the Passover, there followed the seven days of unleavened bread lasting from the 15th to the 21st of the month. All old leaven was consumed or destroyed before the festival, and only unleavened bread was eaten during this period.

3. The Origins of the Passover Feast

Was there already some sort of Festival celebration which lay behind the pattern of God's instruction to the Israelites at the Exodus? The origins of the feast back beyond these are uncertain, but the Passover may originally have been a nomadic festival, something to do with young lambs in spring. 'Unleavened Bread' was probably an agricultural festival which marked the end of the old grain and the beginning of the new. All old leaven was destroyed and only the new leaven was used in the new year. When **God** gave the instructions for the *Exodus*, both would have been historicised into that context.

3A. The Feasts of Weeks and Booths

1. The Feast of Weeks

This was a harvest festival celebrated about mid-Summer. *Exodus* 23:16 calls it “Qasir”, or “Harvest Festival”. It was the celebration of the end of the wheat harvest (*Exodus* 34:22). So, in *Numbers* 28:26 it is called the feast of the firstfruits – wheat being the first of the grains to be harvested. *Deuteronomy* 16:09-16:10 explains the name ‘weeks’: ‘seven weeks after unleavened bread’. It was the farmer’s festival when leaven was re-introduced with the new wheat loaves; and as an act of ceremonial, two wheat loaves were baked with new flour and were offered. Later, it was also historicised and associated with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai – for which see *Exodus* 19:01.

2. The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles

In the earliest calendars, the ‘Feast of Booths’ or ‘Feast of Tabernacles’ was called the ‘Feast of Ingathering’ (“’asip” *Exodus* 23:16,34:22), but in *Deuteronomy* 16:23, *Leviticus* 23:34, it is called ‘Tabernacles’. Again it was the farmer’s feast. It was the final feast of the year at about the time of the Autumn equinox, when the crops, fruit, vegetables, grapes, etc.; were all gathered in. It was the vintage harvest when the wine flowed freely – a time of great rejoicing and of many sacrifices (*Numbers* 29:12-29:34). Perhaps the last description of it is found in *Nehemiah* 8: 13-8:18.

B. HERRMAN GUNKEL’s THESIS: A FORM CRITICAL APPROACH TO PSALMS

1B. HERRMAN GUNKEL’s Thesis defined

1. GUNKEL: Worship and Liturgy as the *sitz-im-leben* of Psalms

Modern trends in the study of “Psalms” began in the last century with the work of **Herrman Gunkel**. **Gunkel**’s premise was that the Psalms as Hymns must have their setting in life within the worshipping community of Israëel. The technical term for ‘setting in life’ is the German expression ‘Sitz-im-leben’, to which I shall often refer. So: Instead of looking for the history or event that lay behind a Psalm, **Gunkel** looked for the *Act of Worship* which was the Psalm’s setting. He brought about something of a revolution in *Psalms* scholarship because after his work History gave place to Liturgy and expression of Worship as the primary measure of a Psalm’s content.

2. Gunkel’s Method: Formsgeschichte

Gunkel also applied to *Psalms* the methods of form criticism which he himself largely pioneered. Thus he divided the Psalms, not according to their headings or their ‘Books’ etc., but according to their formal characteristics.

3. *Psalms* as classified by Gunkel

Gunkel defined the following types of Psalms as found in *Psalms*:

a. Major Types: Hymns, Communal Laments, Individual Laments, Royal Psalms, Individual Thanksgivings.

b. Minor Types: Songs of Pilgrimage, Communal Songs of Thanksgiving, ‘Wisdom’ Psalms, Prophetic Liturgies, Mixed Poems.

We shall examine each category in turn.

2B. Hymns

1. Hymns in the Psalter

For examples of Psalms that are Hymns c.f.: *Psalms* 8, 19a, 29, 33, 57:07-57:11, 65, 66:01-66:09 and several others after *Psalms* 90. Hymns are psalms of pure praise – the description of God’s great dealings with humankind in history, life, nature, Israël etc.

2. The Literary Form of Hymns

(a) A first part of the Hymn

Their form is normatively this:

- a. Call to Worship: **“O Come let us sing to the LORD.”** (*Psalms* 95).
- b. Reason for the Call: **“For the LORD is a great God.”**

(b) A second part of the Hymn

The second part is the main theme of the Psalm, for here the glory, might, graciousness of God are recounted in worship and a sense of His presence experienced. Their content can be schematised:

- a. Praise of God as Victor (*Psalms* 8, 19a, 104 etc.)
- b. Praise of God as Lord of History (*Psalms* 33:10-12, 78, 105).
- c. Emphasis on means of Praise (*Psalms* 95, 100, 145, 148, 150).
- d. Festival Praise with reference to Ark, Kingship etc. (*Psalms* 24, 132, 118 107, 47 etc.)

3B. Personal or Individual Laments

1. The Form of the Personal or Individual Lament

- a. The plaint of the individual sufferer is a **call to God for Mercy, Deliverance or Protection**. It may open, as with *Psalms* 13, with a question like, **“How long O Lord,”** – a question doubtless resulting from prolonged suffering and pain.
- b. The opening lament may then be followed by a **petition to God**; **“Consider and answer me,”** or **“Lighten my eyes.”** (“Cheer me up”)
- c. The third element may be a **confession of Faith**, **“But I have trusted in They Steadfast Love.”**
- d. As a conclusion there may be a **promise of better things to come**, thus turning the lament into a concluding Song of Praise.

These individual elements are not all always present in each individual lament, and other elements may be found in their place. This simple fourfold plan is a general basis. The emphasis may fall on one or other element, often to the exclusion of the rest.

2. The Psalmist’s suffering is not always specified

It is not always obvious to what specific suffering the laments are responding. A Hymn must be adaptable for the use of different persons and so its language must be fairly general. Vivid though the language may be, it is often almost impossible to tie it to specific interpretations. We find such themes as ‘sickness’ in *Psalms* 22, 38, 102, false accusation in *Psalms* 7, 35, 37, 69, but usually the language is of oppression by human or spiritual enemies: e.g.: They set snares for the Psalmist (*Psa.* 140:05 ft); They threaten him like a wild animal (*Psalms* 17:11). They attack him like warriors, and ridicule him, or gloat over his misfortune. These enemies are treacherous men, blasphemers, fools, and contemptuous of God. But, the language is so general that it seems it is impossible to be more specific about these enemies, and various scholars have seen them differently as demonic powers,

opponents in law-suit, religious persecutors, – so general is the language. At the end of the day it is probably deliberately figurative.

4B. Personal Psalms of Thanksgiving

1. Examples of Personal Psalms of Thanksgiving in the Psalter

c.f.: *Psalms* 9, 18, 30, 31b, 32, 34, 40:01-40:12, 66:13-66:20, 92, 116, 138.

The sufferer who has been rescued from trouble will enter the sanctuary with an offering and tell before the congregation what God has done for him.

2. A specific example: *Psalms* 66

Psalms 66. Is instructive. (READ: *Psalms* 66:13 ff). The sufferer will recall how he has gone down to the gates of Sheol, or death, or the grave, how he cried to God, and God heard him and delivered him. The Psalm will then turn to ascription of Praise to God.

5B. National Hymns of Praise or Thanksgiving; & National Laments

1. National Hymns of Praise or Thanksgiving

This group corresponds to the National Lament. God's Deliverance is celebrated with a joyous sense of release from danger. e.g. *Psalms* 120-134, and *Exodus* 15.

2. National Laments

(a) National Lament Psalms

It is often difficult to discern when a Psalm is an individual, and when it is a corporate Psalm. The distinction between the use of I/We' is not always helpful, for 'I' can be used of the community and 'we' of the individual; e.g.: 'When I survey the wondrous cross,' or 'Our Father...' However, the following are usually designated 'National Laments' (*Psalms* 44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89 and parts of *Psalms* 85, 88, 90, 106, 115). National Laments are also found in the Book *Lamentations* and occasionally in the prophets, c.f.: *Jeremiah* 14, *Isaiah* 63, *Joel* 1, *Habakkuk* 1. The occasion of Lament may be drought, plague, defeat in war, oppression etc., and the form of the lament is similar to that of the individual laments.

(b) The form of Psalms of National Lament

a. Complaint.

b. Petition.

c. Confession of Confidence. The confession may be replaced by a recital of God's former Saving Acts: e.g.: Heilsgeschichte.

d. The concluding promise is usually replaced by some form of anticipation of Divine Response.

e.g.: **"Let me hear what God will say; for He will speak Peace... ."**

6B. Pilgrimage Psalms & Hymns of Zion

1. Pilgrimage Psalm: *Psalms* 122

Psalms 122 is the only Pilgrimage Psalm.

2. Hymns of Zion

But, a number of Psalms were classified as ‘Hymns of Zion’ by **Gunkel**, namely (*Psalms* 46, 76, 84, 87). These Psalms uphold Zion as the Great city of God. Here the Theology is invariably Zion centred and centred on her inviolability. Zion is the Mountain of **the LORD** whose House is on His Hill. Zion, therefore, has God’s Protection, and no evil can befall it. Outside the gates the nations battle, but **YHWH** emerges victorious and enters triumphant in possession of Jerusalem.

7B. Wisdom Psalms

1. Introduction

In later Israēl, Wisdom and Piety coalesced. There was a great emphasis on the Wisdom of Virtue, and the Folly of vice. Certain Psalms uphold the virtue of Wisdom and warn against the folly of the prosperous evil-doer. C.f.: *Psalms* 37, 49, 93.

2. Classification of Wisdom Psalms

Commentators vary as to exactly which Psalms should be in this category. However: Usually *Psalms* 1, 8, 49, 78, 119, 127, 128 are among the selection.

8B. The Way Ahead

1. A concluding remark & orientation to Units 5 & 6

These ‘formal types’ proposed by **Gunkel** et al. by no means exhaust the content of the Book of *Psalms*. There are further minor categories, including mixed poems, which need not delay us here. However, I have omitted two major categories with which I propose to deal shortly: The Royal Psalms, and the Enthronement Psalms. But, before dealing with these, we need to have some idea about festivals in Israēl. So far we have talked generally of the Psalms in Worship. However, questions arise: When and where were the Psalms sung? At festivals? On Sabbaths? Daily? Annually? In what kind of service were they used? There are many such questions to be answered, but first we must look at the cult of the pre-exilic Jerusalem temple (i.e.: before **587/586 B.C.**).

UNITS 5 & 6: THE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL; S. MOWINCKEL’S THESIS

A. THE GREAT FEAST

1A. The Great Feast in the Bible and amongst the feasts

1. Other Feasts

There were other festivals over and above the three that we have so far mentioned which are also mentioned in the *Old Testament* and *Apocrypha*; e.g.: **Hannukah, Purim, the Feast of Atonement** etc.; but these feasts are dealt with elsewhere in the course and need not delay us here.

2. SIGMUND MOWINCKEL: *Psalms* as a Hymnody of the Great Feast

The three that we have noted so far were the central acts of Israëġ's worship when all people were required to appear before **the LORD** at His Sanctuary. Thus it was to these festivals that **Sigmund Mowinckel** looked in an attempt to find a setting for the Psalms (although not all the Psalms!). Now, in the *Old Testament* it seems that one of these feasts held a position of prominence over the others, for *Leviticus* 23:29 and *Ezekiel* 45:25 (and elsewhere) refer to one of them as 'The Feast' or 'The Feast of **Yahweh**'. Further, *I Samuel* 1 shows that **Elkannah** went to **Shiloh** for the great feast once a year.

2A. The Great Feast: The Feast of Booths/Tabernacles

1. The Feast of Booths is the 'Great Feast'

Now, given that there is such a thing, which feast is it that is the great feast? It seems fairly clear that it was the Autumn Feast – the Feast of Booths when the pilgrims came to the sanctuary from far and near and spent the duration of the Festival in tents. It was the great harvest thanksgiving when Joy was the mark of the celebrations. The tents may have been an old agricultural feature from when the harvesters lived in tents beside the fields for the duration of the harvest, but in Israëġ the feast had been historicised and the tents became a symbol of the Exodus (*Leviticus* 25:43), the event which this festival now celebrated. According to Israëġ's "Heilsgeschichte" which was recited at the festival, it was the Exodus that made Israëġ a nation, and which gave to the nation the worship of **the LORD**. It was to celebrate this foundation event that the pilgrims came together, to re-unite in worship, and to re-assert their national solidarity under the banner of **the LORD**.

2. The Great Feast is at the turning of the year

The date of this festival is significant, for *Exodus* 23:16 puts it at "the outgoing of the year", and *Exod.* 34:22 at "the turning of the year." It is what we would call, 'The New Year Festival'. In Pre-Exilic Israëġ the year began in Autumn, but after the exile, under the influence of the Babylonian Calendar, it began in the Spring. So, the 'Great Feast' was the Autumn Feast of Booths which was the New Year Festival.

3A. The logic of Sigmund Mowinckel's Thesis

1. The universality in the A.N.E. of the New Year Feast

If the Feast of Booths was the 'Great Feast', took place at the New Year, and was so important, it must have been the 'Sitz-im-leben' for many of the Psalms. If so, it is important to discover what went on at this festival. Now, New Year Festivals were celebrated in Canaan, Egypt, Hatti, and almost everywhere in the Ancient Near East. However, we have far more information about the Mesopotamian New Year Festival than any others, especially those of Babylon. Thus it was to Babylon that **Mowinckel** looked. With the discovery of Ugarit, further information that was more directly relevant to Canaan was forthcoming.

2. Contents of Unit 5

We proceed by looking at the Babylonian, Ugaritic, and then *Old Testament* evidence that is concerned with the New Year Festival in these respective cultures.

B. THE GREAT FEAST / NEW YEAR FEAST IN BABYLON

1B. The New Year Festival in Babylon as an event

1. The festival programme

In **J.B. Pritchard** (Ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* **1946** /331-334 there is to be found a text describing the rituals for the Babylonian New Year Feast. It is not complete. The Festival seems to have lasted for twelve days, but only the rituals for days 2 to 6 survive. The rest of the text is now lost. It runs thus:

Day 2: Various Prayers and rituals in the temple of Marduk.

Day 3: Further prayers and rites. The priest instructs metal workers to make two images to be set up in the temple of Nabu, son of Marduk. On day 6 when the ‘god comes to the temple’, their heads are to be cut off.

Day 4: Further prayers and purification rituals in the early morning. In the afternoon the priest recites the ‘Enuma ‘Elish before Marduk. For further details of what this is about, please see the inset sheet accompanying this lecture.

Day 5: The rite of the purification of the Regalia.

A ram is slaughtered and a priest smears its blood over the temple. Priest and slaughterer then carry the ram’s head and body to the river and throw them in. They then go off into the wild, carrying the impurities with them and do not return until after the conclusion of the festival.

Day 6: The god (Nabu) arrives in his processional chariot. The king The priest takes the king’s sceptre, crown, and sword, and lays them before Marduk, and makes him bow down and recite a negative confession of innocence. The priest then blesses the king and restores the regalia. He then smites the king on the cheek – and if the king weeps the omen is good; – Marduk is pleased with his people.

2. An analysis of the Babylonian New Year Festival

Strange and confusing as these rites may seem, they are held together by a coherent theme and purpose, which is seen in the ‘Enuma ‘Elish. The ‘Enuma ‘Elish portrays a world created from chaos that is constantly in danger of returning to chaos if the powers of disorder prevail. In the New Year Festival, by the recitation of the epic and by the mimetic enactment of it in the temple, the creation of order, and hence the order of creation is reasserted and thus magically reassured for the coming year. Thus the god Marduk took up his throne and was acclaimed as the king of Babylon. Similarly, the king, acting the role of Marduk, is brought low or humiliated before the onslaught of chaos, but because of his virtue which he declares before the god, rises victorious and takes up his throne. He does so as a king who rules in justice, imposing order upon his chaotic people, and mediating in his person the benefits of an ordered creation in the natural realm. So peace and prosperity are assured for the coming year both within the political arena and the sphere of agriculture.

2B. The ‘Enuma ‘Elish

1. A brief bibliography

You will find details of the ‘Enuma ‘Elish conveniently in **J.B. Pritchard (Ed.)** *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* **1946** or more recent editions, /60ff.; you can find a commentary on its interpretation

and Ancient Near Eastern context in **S.H. Hooke** *Middle Eastern Mythology* /41 ff., or in **A. Heidel** *The Babylonian Genesis*, a book from much earlier in the Twentieth Century.

2. 'Enuma 'Elish: A Babylonian equivalent of Genesis 1

The 'Enuma 'Elish is the Babylonian equivalent of Israel's *Genesis* 1-3, i.e: it is a Babylonian Creation story. Before Creation there existed and were born various gods who were mostly of air or water. They were an unruly mob, constantly fighting. The chief dissident among them was **Tiamat** the monster serpent goddess who organises the other gods in some kind of military fashion under the lead of **Kingu** as commander-in-chief, and sets out to overthrow the ancient cosmic father 'Ea. 'Ea is perturbed, and his counsellors cannot advise him on the best course of action. But the young god of war, **Marduk**, the chief god of Babylon comes forward and agrees to stop and meet **Tiamat**. However, **Marduk** has to be made king first, and a banquet is held to celebrate his elevation. The ceremony reaches a climax when Marduk takes up his place on the throne, and the crowd says, "Marduk is king". **Marduk** now prepares himself for battle, and arrays himself with more weapons than any one warrior could possibly carry. He challenges **Tiamat** to single combat, and the fight begins. **Marduk** ensnares **Tiamat** in a net. She opened her mouth to devour him and he let the four winds loose into her belly which became extended. **Marduk** now fired arrows into her belly and slew her. With the leader slain, **Marduk** soon subdued her host, and out of these powers of chaos he produced 'cosmos', the ordered world. **Marduk** now took the tablets of destiny or judgement from **Kingu**; and split **Tiamat** into two, half of her he made the earth, and the other half the sky. He then created the stars etc., and finally, out of the blood of **Kingu** he created Humankind. **Marduk** built his temple, the Eslangia; called an assembly, & apportioned respectively the duties of men and gods.

C. THE CANAANITE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

1C. Ugarit: Ba'al and the cosmic battle

1. The city and civilisation of Ugarit

The city of Ugarit lies about 220 km to the North West of Jerusalem on the coast on the site of the ancient Roman Laodaeceia-ad-mare. In **1929** a peasant's plough struck some stone beneath the surface of a mound there, and a corbelled tomb was revealed. Subsequent excavation of two adjacent mounds each about 60ft high and a half a mile around their base by **Professor C.H.Schaeffer** of the University of Strasbourg revealed an ancient city. Its library, intact, dated between the **8th and the 12th centuries B.C.** Its works were written in a cunieform script whose language - called Ugartitic by scholars after the city's ancient name - is the closest known to 'Biblical Hebrew'. Found in the palace library of Ugarit were religious texts about the Ba'als which illuminate the background of *Psalms* & the Historical Books of the *Old Testament*. An alternative cunieform name for Ugarit was 'Rash-as- Shamrah'.

2. Ba'al in the cosmic battle

Let us now look briefly at a second Ancient Near Eastern example of the New Year Myth. The head of the Ugaritic pantheon, as with that of the Canaanites, was 'El who was similar to the Babylonian 'Ea – a somewhat remote and inactive god. The young active 'god' corresponding to **Marduk** was **Ba'al** and his opponents in the cosmic battle corresponding to **Tiamat** were **Lotan** (who appears in the *Old Testament* as **Leviathan**) and **Yam**, the so-called 'sea god.' We have no myth of the battle between **Ba'al** and **Lotan**, but this encounter is mentioned in the *Ras-as-Shamra texts*, and it seemed that **Ba'al** emerged victorious. However, there is a fairly detailed narrative of

an encounter with **Yam**. Yam demanded supreme power for the high gods who bowed low before him. But **Ba'al** came forward as the champion who challenged **Yam** to battle, going forth bearing the magic weapons given to him by the gods. The first encounter was inconclusive and so the gods made stronger weapons, and with one powerful blow of his new club, **Ba'al** subdued the chaotic, watery **Yam**. **Ba'al**'s position in the pantheon was now secured, and he set about building his home. This done, he celebrated his victory and kingship by inviting the gods to a banquet.

3. A note on the 'cosmic battle' in the *Old Testament*

(a) Introduction

The myth of the Cosmic Battle in which order subdues chaos was widespread in the Ancient Near East, and seems to be found or echoed again in the *Old Testament*.

(b) *Old Testament* references

Genesis 1: Some scholars have linked this text with our subject. In *Genesis* 1 the earth was shapeless and void before Creation, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: (It was the **Spirit of God** moving over the face of the water that brought order out of chaos.)

However, more vivid reminiscences are found in *Psalms* and in the Prophets.

Psalms 74:12-74:14: **"It was Thou who didst divide the sea by Thy Might, and didst shatter the heads of the dragons in the waters. It was Thou who didst crush the heads of Leviathan and didst give him as food for the jackals."**

Isaiah 51:09: **"Was it not Thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the dragon Was it not Thou that didst dry up the seas, the waters of the great deep?"**

2C. A Second Canaanite New Year Myth: **Ba'al** and **Mot**

1. Introduction

We now turn to a second New Year myth, that of the conflict between winter and summer, sterility and fertility, and drought and rain. We saw the importance of this motif in the Babylonian ritual, but again, it is widespread in the Ancient Near East.

2. **Ba'al** and **Mot**

We now turn to a second New Year Myth. As the season of drought approaches, **Ba'al** must yield to **Mot**. There is no battle, and **Ba'al** willingly goes to the underworld, declaring that he is **Mot**'s slave, and taking with him the clouds, the wind, the storm, and the rain. The searching heat of summer is now master, but before his descent, **Ba'al** ensures fertility for the future by taking the shape of a bull and copulating with **Anat** in the form of a heifer. The gods go with mourning, weeping for the dead **Ba'al**. **Anat** goes in search of **Ba'al** with the help of **Shemesh** the sun-goddess and brings him to the mountain of the gods, Zaphon, burying him there. The mourning now reaches a climax. No substitute can be found to take the place of **Ba'al** on the throne. **Anat** entreats **Mot** to restore **Ba'al**, but to no avail. Finally, as summer declines, she falls on **Mot** with her fury, cuts him in pieces with her sword, scatters him with a sieve, burns him with fire, grinds him with a millstone, and sows him in the fields. The mood now turns to one of anticipation: everyone looks for the return of **Ba'al**. Unfortunately the text is fragmentary at this point – we do not know what happens next. But, when the text continues, **Ba'al** has returned and assumed his throne, and fertility is restored.

3. The context of the Ba'al and Mot fertility myth

Now this myth is clearly associated with the seasons and with the ensuing fertility for the coming year. Notes in the text show us that the myth was not only recited in the festival, but also enacted. Similar myths abound in the Ancient Near East.

- a. **Egypt:** Isis's search for the dead Osiris. The conflict between Seth and Horus.
- b. **Mesopotamia:** Ishtar's weeping for Tammuz. Ishtar's descent to the underworld in search of him.
- c. **Later Syria:** The myth of Venus and Adonis.
- d. **Greece:** The rape of Proserpine.

3C. A Conclusion vis-à-vis the New Year Festival

1. Cosmos triumphs over Chaos

We can think of the general pattern of the Semitic (?) Ancient Near Eastern New Year Festival as follows:

- (a) A celebration of the triumph of Cosmos over Chaos.
- (b) The celebration of the victor god in the assembly of gods.
- (c) The establishment of order and justice in the cosmos by the declaration of the will of the god.
- (d) The assertion of the power of cosmos over all gods and men. i.e: the establishment of kingship in the moral and natural spheres.

2. An enactment of a fertility ritual by the king

- (a) The enactment of the fertility ritual by the king including his humiliation symbolising descent to the underworld and his deliverance from death by the favour of the supreme god.
- (b) A triumphal procession in which he is restored to his throne as ruler of justice and representative of the life-giving nature god.

D. A NEW YEAR ENTHRONEMENT FESTIVAL IN ISRAEL?

1D. The Ancient Near Eastern New Year Festival in Israel

1. Introduction

(a) The ritual drama at the turning of the year in Semitic Societies

We have just observed that the purpose of the whole ritual drama celebrated at the turning of the year in most Semitic Societies was to ensure for the forthcoming year the continuance of order in the fertilising of crops, the protection of territorial boundaries, and the safeguarding of discipline and moral justice within the state.

(b) The Autumnal New Year harvest festival in Israel

We have also observed vis-à-vis Israel:

- (a) One of the three great agricultural festivals in ancient Israël held a prominence over the others.
- (b) That that festival was the Autumn festival (New Year).
- (c) That the New Year festival amongst Israël's neighbours was an occasion of ritual to ensure fertility and cosmic order.

Now, can we go on from there and say that the New Year Festival in Israël, the feast par-excellence, also contained a ritual drama similar with that of her neighbour's cults, but at the same time 'Israëlitised'.

2. MOWINCKEL's THESIS: It's scope

Sigmund Mowinckel said, "Yes," but in saying so he has often been misunderstood. Let it be clear from the beginning then that **Mowinckel** did not regard the New Year Feast in Israël as a pagan fertility festival. Although he saw many parallels between Israël's religion and that of her neighbours, he still saw that the Faith of Israël was unique. Certainly he found a place for cosmic drama and for the fertility rituals, for the celebration of the divine office of kingship, and for the enthronement ritual; but he also saw that these rituals, myths, and dramas had been subjected to a wholesale Yahwistic censorship, and had been modified to such an extent that the festival was truly Yahwistic and not pagan. For example: **Mowinckel** strongly emphasised the celebration of the Exodus motif, the re-enactment of the giving of the Law at Sinai, and the re-assertion of **God's** Covenant with **David**.

3. Our focus: A form critical approach to *Psalms* in the light of Mowinckel's work

So, let us see what evidence the *Old Testament* holds for the existence in Israel of a festival such as this. After we have seen this evidence, we will look again at *Psalms* and see how **Mowinckel** and others have defined the Worship of this very important festival, and to see how the *Psalms* seem to fit into it. In so doing I shall consider two *Psalms* categories that I have assiduously avoided so far: The Royal *Psalms*, and The *Psalms* of Enthronement. It is in these form categories that we shall find the New Year Festival motifs most strongly expressed. But, just as in English Church Hymns we may find a reference to the Incarnation celebrated at Christmas, or the Atonement celebrated at Easter in general Hymns, so we shall find references to the New Year motifs throughout the *Psalms*.

2D. Survey of the *Old Testament* Textual Evidence

1. *I Samuel* 1

(a) The annual feast at Shiloh

"Now this man (Elkannah, Samuel's father) used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts at Shiloh," (*I Samuel* 1). If **Elkannah** went but once a year, it must have been to the Great Festival. Now, from what follows, it can be clearly seen that this was an occasion when **Hannah** (his wife) turned her mind to her childlessness and prayed for fertility of her womb, a motif common in the fertility religions of Canaan, and especially emphasised at the New Year Feast.

(b) Hannah, rejoicing and drunkenness

Furthermore, whilst she was at prayer, the priest **Eli** thought that she was drunk. The Autumn New Year Festival was notorious for over-indulgence in wine, partly because it was the occasion for the New Year Harvest Festival, partly because wine played a prominent part in the fertility cultus (c.f.: the Bacchanalia in Greece), and partly because it was the season of great rejoicing – the season of the New Year. That this would be so is in large measure borne out by *Judges* 21:16 ff where the women came dancing in the vineyards at the annual festival in Shiloh.

2. *Ezekiel 8:14-8:15*

Here is a condemnation of the temple ritual in which women wept for Tammuz. The weeping for his dead god, is as we have seen, a common motif in certain Ancient Near Eastern festival ritual, and it seems to have been practised regularly at a very early age.

3. *Judges 11:39-11:40*

Here is related the custom of annual weeping of women to an episode in history, but the connection of weeping over virginity or infertility suggests the prior motif of weeping for Tammuz or Ba'al.

4. *Psalm 132*

Psalm 132 hints at an annual ritual in which there was a procession to the temple with the ark. The Psalm is called a '**song of Ascent**' i.e: 'A Processional Psalm.' Here is its liturgy:

Psalm 132:01-132:05: **King David's** desire and promise to find a resting place for the ark of **God** is recalled.

Psalm 132:06-132:07: A Call to worshippers from far and near to ascend to the temple and worship before **God's** Throne – the Ark.

Psalm 132:08-132:10: The procession began at this point with the singing of the saying, "**Arise O Lord, and go to thy resting place, Thou and the Ark of thy might.**"

Psalm 132:11-132:18: The Ark is now in place in the sanctuary and **the LORD** reaffirms from His Throne His Covenant to uphold the Davidic Throne and to protect Zion His dwelling place, to bless her with abundance and fertility, and to protect her against all foes.

5. *I Kings 8*

Here a sister procession is described in which the Ark has a part:

I Kings 8:02 ff.: The feast takes place in the month 'Etnaim, which is the autumn New Year, and the Ark's procession is a part of this festival.

I Kings 8:05 ff.: The procession is led by Solomon who went before the Ark with the priests offering sacrifices on the way.

I Kings 8:06 ff.: The Ark was then brought into the sanctuary and set as **God's** throne in the Temple.

I Kings 8:14 ff.: **King Solomon** now turns to bless the people and the words of his blessing are strongly reminiscent of *Psalm 132*, recalling how **King David** desired to build a home for the Ark, and reasserting God's Promise to uphold the Davidic Throne.

6. *II Samuel 8*

(a) Introduction

The text describes a further procession with the Ark which is similar to that found in *I Kings 8*, but is more detailed. Here is an account of the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, but it is an occasion full of peculiar ritual.

(b) The procession of the Ark

II Samuel 8:05: Here we are told that **King David** and all the house of Israel were making merry before **the LORD** with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

II Samuel 8:13: During the procession the Ark paused after six paces so that a sacrifice could be offered.

II Samuel 8:14: David danced before the ark wearing a linen ephod, i.e: a priest's vestments.
II Samuel 8:16 ff.: When **Michal David's** wife saw him dancing, she despised him because he had
"uncovered himself today before the eyes of his servant's maids."

(c) Comment

It is quite clear that **King David**, clad appropriately, was enacting a fertility ritual before the Ark. Once the Ark was lodged, **King David** blesses the people in words similar to those used by **King Solomon**, and in *Psalms* 132. **David** also distributed raisin cakes, bread cakes, and meat. Now, raisin cakes especially are well known to belong to the fertility cultus, being so mentioned in *Hosea* 3:01, *Isaiah* 18:07, and especially in *Jeremiah* 7:18, 44:09 where they are a part of the ritual offering to the fertility goddess, the **Queen of Heaven**.

7. *I Kings* 12:25 ff.:

The schismatic king of Northern Israel, **Jeroboam I**, set up rival sanctuaries to Jerusalem in Bethel and in Dan. In each he set a golden calf, the symbol of fertility, as seen especially in the Ba'alic myth from Ras-Shamra, and declared, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods O Israel." **Jeroboam I** also appointed a rival New Year Festival at a different date in the autumn (one month later) – and at that festival he himself led the worship before the golden bulls.

8. Mowinckel's Thesis and *Psalms*

We could look at other passages of similar import in the *Old Testament*, but enough has been said to show that Israel did celebrate a New Year festival of fertility content in which the king played a part so far as **Mowinckel** is concerned. What do you think?

It is time, therefore, to look again at the *Psalms* and see how **Mowinckel** discerned that certain of them fitted into this festival.

UNIT 6: THE KING; PSALMS; I & WE

A. FORM CRITICISM OF *PSALMS* AND MOWINCKEL'S THESIS

1A. The Enthronement Psalms

1. 'Enuma 'Elish and *Old Testament* compared

You will remember that in the 'Enuma 'Elish, after the subjugation of chaos, **Marduk** took up his throne and the gods acclaimed him with the words, "Marduk is king". Similar events occurred in the **Ba'al** myth after the defeat of **Yam**. Similarly, the Enthronement Psalms in the *Old Testament* (*Psalms* 47,93, 96, 97, 98, 99 and 95) deal with the Enthronement of the victorious **Yahweh** who has subdued chaos and established the order of Creation. Just as **Marduk** fixed the destinies of gods and men, so **the LORD** enthroned proclaims and establishes Justice.

2. The Epiphany

The first cultic act celebrated in these Psalms is the advent of **the LORD** who appears in thunder, lightning, storm, earthquake, the sound of the trumpet, etc.; This power charged Theophany of the LORD is described in conventional stylised terminology appropriate to cultic signification, and its climax is the victorious enthronement of Him as **God**. He has come to take up His Throne in the

Temple in a manner analogous to Marduk so doing in the 'Engagalia. So the characteristic Cultic cry of the Enthronement Psalms is **"The LORD reigns."** (N.B.:These are examined more closely in ICPICJC B.A./B.D./B.TH./B.MIN 302 *Psalms 90-100 in Hebrew*)

3. 'The Lord reigns'

Now, this expression **"YHWH Malak"** can be translated in several ways:

- (1) The LORD is King; (2) The LORD has become King;
- (3) The LORD has ascended His Throne as king.

The notion of completed action implied in the Hebrew prophet suggests a ritual act and not simply a pietistic expression of **the LORD's** actual nature. Various synonyms accompanying the phrase **"YHWH Malak"** agree with this definition; e.g.: **The LORD** comes, **the LORD** goes up, **the LORD** makes himself known. In the Temple the Ark was the Throne of **the LORD** set between the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies. Thus, in the festival it must be assumed that the Theophany was centred on this sacred area and it seems likely that it was in this context that Isaiah said, **"I saw the LORD high and lifted up. His train filled the Temple"** (*Isaiah* 6:01 ff.)

2A. Creation: Order out of chaos; Securing world order

1. Creation: Subjugation of chaos

The fundamental 'myth' of the New Year Festival is the Creation myth. It is within the context of this event that **Marduk** and **Ba'al** were elevated to kingship. So also with **the LORD**. In the Enthronement Psalms themselves, the mythical element is not stressed in the Creation recital, but it is well known in other Psalms which probably had a New Year Festival setting. Further examples can be found in *Psalms* 74:12-74:17, *Psalms* 80:10-89:15, *Psalms* 104:05-104:09, 93:01-95:04. Note especially the battle with the watery monster and the creation and establishment of order.

2. Fixing destinies and establishing Order

(a) Securing world order in Morality and Nature

The third important element is the establishment and the securing of World Order in Morality and Nature for the ensuing year. In the '*Enuma Elish*' this is seen as the fixing of the destinies of God and Man. In the *Old Testament* it becomes the establishment of Justice, where 'Justice' is a word that stands synonymous with the Will of God. Thus, when **the LORD** comes He 'turns the destiny', or 'turns the fortunes' of His people. This is the season of the turning of the year when all things are made new or are renewed. The conjunction of morality and nature in the scheme of order are already seen in *Psalms* 85:11-85:14 (READ).

(b) The Lord overcomes the powers of chaos

But, the mythical element of the defeat and banishment of the disrupting gods is not entirely lost in Israélite absorption either (*Psalms* 58:01,58:02,58:06). Likewise the powers of chaos seen in the foes of Israël clamouring against the throne city of **the LORD**, are disclaimed and repulsed (*Psalms* 46, 48:04).

(c) Mishpot: Justice

The primitive aspect of this Divine Activity is frequently expressed in the use of the word "Mishpot". Our English versions usually render this by "Judgement", but the root notion is of harmony, Order, everything working properly, – not forensic or judicial activity. Thus when a Psalm declares that **the LORD** has established 'Judgement' on the earth, the implication is that orderliness according to His Will has been decreed and established.

3A. Israel's Election and Covenant with the Lord

1. The Election of Israel

However, for Israël, **the LORD's** Creative activity attained its climax in the choice of the nation as His Holy People. **The LORD**, unlike **Ba'al**, is not concerned solely with fertility in harvest and in nature. He is also the God of Sinai who proclaimed His Law to Israël when He took them out of Egypt to be His Holy People. The Exodus motif, or the 'Heilsgeschichte' is thus a prominent feature of the New Year Liturgies (*Psalms* 114, 15, 95, 97 etc.). The defeat of the sea monster becomes confused with and historicised in terms of the turning back of the sea at the Exodus (*Psalms* 114). **Rahab**, the chaos monster of *Psalms* 89:10 becomes identified with Egypt in *Psalms* 87:04.

2. Israël's Covenant with the LORD

For Israël, the fixing of the destinies has become conflated into the Declaration of the Law of God given at Sinai. When **Marduk** issued his decrees of order, he was establishing coherence in the natural and moral spheres. **The LORD** revealed his Will or his scheme of order to **Moses** on Sinai and in the New Year Festival His Will was declared anew in a ceremony of the reading of the Law and the Renewal of His Covenant with Israel. Thus the Enthronement Psalms contain frequent admonitions to Obedience, or references to the Law Giving on Sinai (*Psalms* 95:07 ff., 99:07, 89:50 ff., etc.).

4A. Other New Year Festival rituals associated with Enthronement

1. Introduction

There are many of these, and it is only possible to list a few here. But we'll have a quick look.

2. The Procession with the Ark

Psalms 68 and 132 seem to be the appropriate liturgies for this.

3. The Entrance Liturgies

Psalms 15 and 24 seem to have been used before going through the Temple Gates in procession. They contain a declaration of purity and innocence on the part of the worshipper whilst *Psalms* 24 seems to preserve the actual words of entry. **"Lift up your heads O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in."**

4. *Psalms* 118:27

Psalms 118:27 refers to a festal procession with torches. Such processions belong to the rituals of the fertility cult. By waving branches before the altar as a rite, it was believed possible to secure the subsequent waving of the corn in the fields.

5. The Teru'a

God has gone up with a shout (b^oTeru'a), *Psalms* 47:06, 98:06, etc.; at the sound of the trumpet (*Psalms* 47:06, 81:04, 98:06). This was the festal shout at the point where **the LORD 'took His Seat'** on His Throne in the festival.

B. THE PHENOMENON OF CORPORATE PERSONALITY IN ISRAEL & PSALMS

1B. The Problem

1. A well known name: H.Wheeler Robinson

Before we look at the Royal Psalms, it is necessary to have some understanding of the Ancient Israélite family, and the idea known to scholars since the work of **H. Wheeler-Robinson** as ‘Corporate Personality’ after his book *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*.

2. Corporate ‘I’ /Single ‘we’?

One of the problems facing the interpreter of the Psalms is the difficulty in discerning when “I” refers to the whole worshipping community and when “we” refers to the individual worshipper. We have already encountered something of this problem in our discussion of Individual and National Laments, and Hymns of Praise. But there is a further problem raised by these terms, namely that sometimes they seem to have been used on the lips of one person leading the worshipping community and representing it before God. We are familiar today with corporate worship led by a minister who represents the people to God in worship, but this notion was more meaningful in Ancient Israël than it is in the post-Renaissance Western Europe with our stress on Individualism. A thorough survey of scholarship surrounding this was made by **Steven Croft** in his book. *The Individual in the Book of Psalms*.

3. The father; the family, and corporate personality.

The social unit in Israël was no mere concept or notion, but a living reality. There are many facets to Ancient Semitic Corporate Personality, but they may best be understood by considering the role of the Biblical Father. The father was the embodiment of the family, for the children were all from his loins, somehow they were a part of him. So it was that the children were named ‘X’ ben ‘Y’, or ‘X’ son of ‘Y’; e.g: **Isaiah-ben-Amos**. In *New Testament* times the Hebrew “ben” is replaced by the Aramaic “bar”, e.g: “**Simon-bar-Jonah**” – and so closely is the son identified with the father that the first name can often be dropped, e.g: “Bar-Kochbah” “Son of Kochbah”. The unity was somehow understood to be in the name that was handed on.

2B. Aspects of Israelite Society and corporate personality

1. What’s in a Name?

In Semitic society a person’s personality was expressed by their name, which was to be either a designation of description. Knowledge of a name of someone gives one potential for a control over them. (Discuss Hebrew Names. Use Classroom Analogue/Control). This applies particularly to demons. If a man knows the name of a demon, he is able to mention it in prayer and in **the Lord’s** name able to have authority over it. To return to the human dimension, the passing on of the name from father to son became of primary importance in Hebrew society. This is the reason why there are so many tales which put the emphasis on the necessity of having a son, e.g: **Abraham** and **Sarah**, or **Hannah** and **Elkannah**. Without a son to carry on the name the father had no immortality in the temporal realm. Continuity is obtained only through the family unit, and especially the male lineage.

2. The authority of a father

Now, so close knit was the family unit that the father had an autocratic control. His word was law because his family was in his personality and what he dictated, they also dictated. Likewise the deeds of the family were the deeds of the father, and vice-versa. So, it was possible for Hebrew law of the Old Covenant to prescribe punishment for the children as well as the father for the sin of the father. In the Old Covenant therefore, we should not be surprised to find such biblical passages as, **“God will visit the iniquity of the fathers for the children to the third and fourth generation,”** (*Exodus 20:09, Deuteronomy 5:09*). The sin of **Achan** (*Joshua 7*) meant that his whole family had to suffer the death penalty. Under the New Covenant, and in *Ezekiel 18, Jeremiah 31*, and a part of *Deuteronomy*, God pointed out that this was not to be ultimately so for the People of God.

3. ‘Corporate Personality’ and the larger units of society

Now ‘Corporate Personality’ applied also to the larger units – that of tribe and nation. The tribal leader embodied in himself his own people, the king his nation. The King of Israël, therefore *was* Israël in some ways, not just as someone who could be sent on a world tour to visit foreign parts as the representative or emissary of his people. He *was* Israël, in the same way that the father was the family. If the king did evil, then a disaster befell not just the king, but the whole nation. If he did good, then prosperity comes to the people. Thus the editor of *Kings* could blame the King for the disasters that befell the land during her history.

3B. The Hebrew Jerusalem Cult and corporate personality

1. Corporate Personality and the Cult

What does this mean for the Cult? It means that in the Cult the worshipping community was led by the King as their representative and embodiment before God. Of course the king was a busy man and could not spend all his time in this way and so the daily service at the temple was delegated as far as he was concerned to the priesthood, who had anyway held that function long before there was a king in Israël. Now, at the Great Festival at least, he acted in his cultic capacity before **the LORD** as ‘Chief Priest’. We have seen how **David, Solomon, and Jeroboam** acted in this way. Other examples are **Ahaz** (*II Kings 16*), **Josiah** (*II Kings 23:01-23:03*), **Hezekiah** (*II Kings 16*) and **Asa** (*II Chronicles 15:09 ff*). We have also seen the central function of the king in the Babylonian festival and the importance of his negative confession of virtue. It was important that the king should have been virtuous, otherwise disaster may befall the nation.

2. Corporate Personality and the Royal Psalms

When we turn to the Royal Psalms, we can assume the speaker is the king in his sacral capacity, but here the line of distinction between the plaint of the individual sufferer or the Praise by the individual and the Psalms of the king become somewhat blurred. *Psalm 28*, for example, belongs to the type of the plaint of the individual, but it would seem possible that it was a plaint used by the king, possibly on occasions when disaster had befallen the people. This impression is derived from the prominent place given in the Psalms to the king as an object desiring the comfort and support of **the LORD** (*Psalm 28:08*). The same is even more true of *Psalm 61:06-61:07*. However, some belong in the festival, e.g. *Psalm 110, 2, 107, 72, 21, 89, 18, 45*.

C. THE ROYAL PSALMS

1C. King; New Year festival; and the Lord’s Covenant with the House of David

1. The King in the New Year Festival

Before looking at these Psalms, it must be remembered that the king in the New Year Festival cult is enacting a ritual drama to ensure order and fertility in the coming year, just as the king of Babylon did. However, there is a new feature in the Israëlite kingship ritual. The Israëlite king is a ‘son of David,’ i.e. of the Davidic line of Succession, and given that this ritual existed in Israel, it was important that the Davidic Covenant should be reasserted in its course.

2. The Davidic Covenant in *II Samuel* 7

Nathan the prophet declared the following oracle to **David** as a Revelation from **the LORD**: (READ: *II Samuel* 7:08-7:16). The oracle opens with a reminder of **the LORD’s** former assistance to **David** and continues with the promise that the assistance will never end. **David** will be made great, his foes will be kept in subjection, and the land will have peace. The succession will be established in the Davidic lineage irrespective of moral quality. If the king disobeys **the LORD’s** Laws, he will be punished – yes, but the dynasty will continue whatever as the medium through which God’s Covenanted love for Israël is to be expressed. The reminder of this promise played an important part in Israël’s New Year Festival ritual.

2C. The Royal Liturgy

1. The scope of the Royal Liturgy

We are now in a position to look at the Royal Psalms and to attempt to reconstruct the liturgy of the New Year Festival. This will take in *Psalms* 110, 2, 101, 72, 21, 89, 18, 45.

2. *Psalm* 110

(a) The *sitz-im-leben*

We can picture the king’s throne in the east of the Temple facing **the LORD’s** throne which is the Ark. Remember, that in the first episode of the new year festival ritual, **the LORD** would take up His throne as victor and the subduer of chaos. The king now enters after taking part in a procession and ascends the throne. At this point *Psalm* 110 would be sung.

(b) *Psalm* 110:1

The Psalm opens with the Divine Command, “**Sit at My Right Hand until I make your enemies your footstool.**” Note here the motif of subjugation of enemies who are the earthly representatives of the powers of chaos.

(c) *Psalm* 110:2, 5-6

The Davidic king has authority to rule these forces, and the people will gladly follow such a king where he leads them against the foe.

(d) *Psalm* 110:3

In this context of course, the setting is cultic. The king leads Israël up onto the holy mountain on which the temple stands (*Psalm* 110:03) and the battle with the foes is represented in dramatic form in the procession. Like **Marduk** and **Ba’al**, the king is brought low before the foes, but **the LORD** comes to his help, and he is brought forth victorious “**from the womb of dawn, like the dew of youth,**” – the victor king who will ascend the throne and take up his rule.

(e) *Psalm* 110:7

It is possible that 110:07 preserves a hint of some ritual of drinking at the spring of Gihon.

(f) *Psalm 110:4*

110:04: The second oracular utterance in verse 4 declares the king a priest for ever after the order of **Melchizedek**, **Melchizedek** being the (first recorded) pre-Israélite king of Jerusalem (*Genesis* 14:17 ff). It is possible, as **H.H. Rowley**, has suggested, that **David**, when he took Jerusalem, did not entirely reject the Jebusite priest there or the Jebusite cult, but adopted elements of it. **Zadok**, **David's** priest, may have been a cultic official of the Jebusite religion and the high regard for **Melchizedek** may derive from that same pre-Israélite cult. The pre-Israélite god of Jerusalem may have been called "Zadok". Anyhow that name appears in both the priestly names "Zadok", and "Melchizedek".

3. *Psalm 2*

It is important when studying this Psalm within a Christian context to approach its use through the *New Testament* material that relates to it. The Psalm is well known to religious piety of all ages – in the earliest church and today, and is probably best known popularly through its use in **George Frederick Handel's** *Messiah*.

This Psalm takes the form of an utterance of the king on the occasion of his enthronement. It recalls the battle outside the Temple with the powers of chaos, the enemies of Israël, and how their attempt to overthrow **the LORD's** Anointed One is in vain. **The LORD** laughs at them because the Davidic king is under His protection – He has set him on Zion His Holy Hill. Furthermore, **the LORD** has adopted the king as His own son (*Psalm 2:07*) whom He completely supports and protects. The kings of the earth are therefore advised to submit themselves to the rule of **David** (*Psalm 2:10-2:12*), just as the powers of chaos submitted themselves to the victor god.

4. *Psalm 101*

"I will sing of loyalty and Justice". This Psalm declares the king's charter or his intent to obey and uphold Righteousness. On taking his throne, the Babylonian god Marduk fixed the destinies of gods and men by proclaiming his decrees for his creation. At this point in the Israélite ritual, the king declares his innocent attempt to uphold the decrees of **the LORD** and to impose them on His people, so that order, peace, and fertility may ensue in the coming year.

5. *Psalm 72*

On hearing the king's decree, the people respond with this prayer to God that he may give the king the power and courage to uphold the Justice he has committed himself to (*Psalm 72:01-72:02*), and that the expected fecundity may ensue (*Psalm 72:05-72:06*). The prayer continues with a plea to uphold the king's cosmic rule, and the perpetual subjection of the nations (*Psalm 72:08-72:11*). The Psalm concludes with a repeated prayer for prosperity (*Psalm 72:15*) and for fertility (*Psalm 72:16*).

6. *Psalm 21*

The Psalm opens with a joyful cry that the victory of the king has been established (*Psalm 21:01-21:07*), and continues with a promise that the king's cosmic rule will be effective (*Psalm 21:08-21:12*). The 'Sitz-im-leben' is similar to that of the previous Psalm.

7. *Psalm 89*

(a) Introduction

Some would say that we are now leaving the New Year Festival context, for this Psalm takes the form of a lament on the occasion of a military defeat. It is not impossible, however, to see it also in the festival setting, especially since the mythical motifs are so strong, and there is an explicit reference to the *Teru'a* or festival shout in *Psalm* 89:15.

(b) *Psalm* 89:1-4

The Psalm opens with a reminder of the Davidic Covenant.

(c) *Psalm* 89:5-14

There follows (*Psalm* 89:5-14) a recital of the Creation ‘myth’ as a Hymn in the praise of God’s order.

(d) *Psalm* 89:15-18

Verses 15 ff. refer to the festival ovations which belong to the Creation context.

(e) *Psalm* 89:19-56

Verses 19ff. return to the Davidic Covenant with a strong emphasis on the motif of the subjection of the foes of Israë!l. Up to verse 57 we have what could hardly be a more precise statement of the promises of God to David.

(f) *Psalm* 89:57-89:50b

The rest of the Psalm continues the lament of which we spoke – a lament after defeat with a call to **the LORD** to uphold His Promises.

8. *Psalm* 18

(a) Introduction

This Psalm reads like a Thanksgiving of the king on the occasion of victory, but it also seems to take us right through the pantomime of the New Year feast.

(b) *Psalm* 18:1-5

The king reasserts his trust in **the LORD**.

(c) *Psalm* 18:4-5

The powers of chaos overwhelm him in the Cosmic battle.

(d) *Psalm* 18:6

The king calls to the LORD for help.

(e) *Psalm* 18:7-15

In reply to the king’s prayer, the LORD comes. The terminology here is of cultic Theophany, smoke, fire, earthquake, darkness, cloud, thunder etc..

(f) *Psalm* 18:16-19

The LORD rescues His Anointed from the raging waters of chaos. Note the mythological language of the battle with the waters of the deep (*Psalm* 18:15-18:16).

(g) *Psalm* 18:20-24

Contrast the king’s negative confession of innocence with the occasion of his elevation to the throne.

(h) Psalm 18:25 ff.

The rest of the Psalm is a Hymn of Praise for deliverance and a reassertion of trust in the righteous ways of **the LORD** who establishes order in the world and upholds his trusting servant the king.

9. Psalm 45

(a) The problem as to the ‘sitz-im-lebn’ of Psalm 45

The interpretation of this Psalm is one of the most vexed problems of Biblical scholarship. It is clearly a Royal Psalm, and the occasion seems to have been a royal wedding. But, the Psalm is addressed to the king and not to God. It is the only Psalm in the Psalter thus addressed. It spares no words in praising the king’s glory, his majesty, his beauty, and his power over his foes. The last part of the Psalm turns to the bride, and she is called upon to commit herself wholeheartedly to the splendid monarch.

(b) Psalm 45:6

The really enigmatic verse is *Psalm 45:6*, and the whole of the Psalm’s interpretation hinges on it. We have already seen that the king is thought of as a son of God (*Psalm 2:7*), but in *Psalm 45:06* it appears he is addressed as God: **“Your Throne O God is for ever and ever.”** The Psalm is addressed to the king – and here it seems that God Himself is the king. Is there a shift in addressee here from the king to God himself as part of the wedding liturgy? If not, we have to try and seek a translation for this verse that makes sense. Various alternatives have been proposed:

- a. “Your throne is the Throne of God for ever and ever!”
- b. “Your divine throne is for ever and ever!”
- c. “Your throne is like God’s Throne for ever and ever!”

Actually, to me none of these seem quite right. In *Hebrews 1* and following, *Psalm 45* verse 6 clearly applies to the Davidic King par-excellence up to whom all other kings lead – **Jesus Christ**. Surely this should be taken into account in our interpretation of *Psalm 45*. However: let me explain as much as possible the alternative conclusion to which *Old Testament* scholars have come.

(c) Conclusion vis-à-vis Psalm 45: A Hieros Gamos?

Now, if one of the latter three interpretations is correct (and there are many arguments for and against each), the Psalm is probably no more than a wedding hymn to be used on the occasion of the royal marriage. But if the king here is addressed as God, then he must be acting a part of the ritual drama of the New Year Festival – acting the part of God Himself. Now, the only setting possible is the New Year Festival, for such a Psalm is the setting of the “Hieros Gamos”. You will remember how Ba’al, before his descent to the underworld, copulated with Anat to ensure fertility. You will remember too that David danced half naked in a fertility rite before the Ark in Jerusalem. Thus it is possible that *Psalm 45* belongs to a cultic ritual in which the king played the part equivalent to that of Ba’al while the women played the part equivalent to that of Anat.

(d) Evaluation of the Hieros Gamos idea

There are many arguments for and against this thesis. For example: **The LORD** does not have a consort – but: The *Old Testament* is an expurgated piece of religious literature, and it seems that **the LORD** did have **Anat** as a consort in the beliefs of the Jews of Elephantine. Anyhow, the interpretation must remain disputed. More conservative scholars refuse to see here anything other than a wedding hymn, whilst others less so favour the “Hieros Gamos” motif. But, this question brings us face to face with the nature of Jerusalemite kingship which we shall study in Unit 7.

UNIT 7: JERUSALEMITE KINGSHIP

A. THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN KING AND ISRAËLITE KINGSHIP.

1A. Kingship in the nations surrounding Israel

1. Introduction: The request by Israel for a King in *I Samuel* 8:05.

“Make us a king like all the nations.” So cried the people to **Samuel** (*I Samuel* 8:05). The demand in context was for a military leader, but a king, as we have already noticed, can have a sacral capacity. However: The terms **‘son of God’** and **‘The Lord’s Anointed’** as used in the Psalms have shed a different and additional light.

2. Egypt

In Egypt the Pharaoh was regarded as the incarnation of the god Horus, the son of the dead god Osiris who had been the first king in Egypt after the organisation of primeval chaos into cosmos. At the annual New Year Festival, Osiris was ritually interred just as the dead corn has to be sown to bring new life. When a Pharaoh was buried this ceremony was doubly intense, and his successor had to await the next new year festival before a coronation could proceed. Pharaoh, as the incarnation of Horus, had complete control over all seasonal growth, all prosperity, and all famine. These were held to depend on his will and conduct.

3. Babylon

In Babylon, the king is a man – Marduk’s servant on earth. The king enacts in the New Year Festival ritual a drama of intuitive magic. When he reaches the point of ritual humiliation, he has to confer his innocence and trust in Marduk in the hope that the deity will rescue and reinstate him. Although he personifies the power of cosmos, he is not a god incarnate. His act in ritual portrays

what is desired, namely the continued prosperity and good order of the land. Thus playing on the 'mind' of the god in ritual, he must wait on it to respond.

4. Ugarit

(a) A contextual remark

It is uncertain how far the king in Ugarit was the leader of the cultic drama. However, the Keret texts give us some idea of the nature of kingship in Ancient Canaan.

(b) The Keret legend

Keret's family has been destroyed, and Keret is weeping bitterly. The god 'El appears to him in a dream and Keret begs for posterity to succeed him. 'El gives him his instructions for the finding of a new wife, Hurriya, in the land of 'Udum. Keret follows 'El's directions. He sends out messengers to Pubal king of 'Udum, asking for Hurriya as wife. From the marriage numerous progeny result, but when Keret grows older he becomes ill. His illness causes intense grief to his family, especially to his son 'Elthan and his daughter Thitmanet. Their words at this point are most instructive. They address Keret their father, "Wilt thou die then father, like the mortals? Or do gods die? The offspring of the kindly one shall surely live." The tale goes on to relate the recovery of Keret through the attraction of a female being elected by 'El for the purpose and to narrate an episode in which his eldest son Yassib suggests that Keret should abdicate.

(c) The significance of the Keret legend

There have been many varied interpretations of the Keret legend. **Ivan Engell** suggested that it contained the royal ritual of the "Hieros Gamos", but the majority of scholars have been more careful. The legend serves to show us that the Canaanite king was sometimes considered to be divine. The request to Samuel from Israël could then have had potentially serious implications.

2A. Kingship in *Old Testament* Israel and Judah

1. Interpreting the *Old Testament*

When we turn to the *Old Testament* we have several problems to face. The first is one of methods of interpretation. Scholars usually bring some kind of bias, more often than not a liberal one, to its interpretation. There seems to be a fear of ritual interpretation in certain sectors, but it must be remembered that we deal with a living tradition, not with a hypothetical philosophy. The *Old Testament* writers did not sit down and think up an ideal scheme. Rather, they recorded what was going on around them in the outliving of their Faith. But equally, one cannot rely solely on their deposit the *Old Testament* texts, for to do so would be to have peculiar results from a peculiar perspective. It would be impossible, for example, to reconstruct second and third century Christianity from the *New Testament* – living Faiths develop. So with the *Old Testament* we must consider development and environment. Furthermore, the *Old Testament* texts show that Israël borrowed much from her neighbours, just as Christians have done through the ages.

2. The Kingship in Ancient Israël and Judah

(a) Israel's Ancient Near Eastern context

In attempting to construct Israëlite religious belief, we need not therefore be afraid of ritual interpretations. We have already seen how the king acted in the ritual of the New Year Festival. But, three further questions: What did it mean? - Why did he do it at all? - Why in this way?

In Egypt the connection with the cycle of growth is clear, for the king is the fertility god incarnate. In Mesopotamia, the same connection is clear, for the king is the god's servant who must enact the correct magic rituals. But, what of Israël?

(b) *Psalm 45:6*

First, whatever the interpretation of *Psalm 45:06*, it is absolutely clear from the *Old Testament* that the king is not **God** incarnate. However, he has no power of his own, but only that which he derives from **God**, and, in Israë'l, prosperity and fertility are dependent of **God** alone. The king's function is one of Obedience to the Will of God. I cite here only one Royal Psalm, but the examples are many:

Psalm 45:02: “**YHWH sends forth from Zion your mighty sceptre. Rule in the midst of your foes.**” Clearly the Israë'lite King was not a king like the Pharaoh of Egypt.

(c) The kings of Israel and Judah are not ritual magicians appeasing a ‘deity’

Nor is the Israë'lite king like his Mesopotamian counterpart. He is not a magician performing rites in the cult to please a god. The will of prosperity is **God's** alone, but the king helps to secure it. The means of such security is not by ritual, but by private obedience.

3. AUBREY R. JOHNSON: *Sacral Kingship in Anceint Israel*

The Davidic king stood in a special unique relationship with **God** – A Covenant relationship. Although *2 Samuel 7??* declares that the Davidic throne will be eternal, it also proclaims that prosperity depends on the king. Now, **A.R. Johnson** in his *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israël* has shown that the Covenant relationship is basic to the Israë'lite idea of kingship in its cultic aspect. By his obedience the king ensures that God's Covenanted love (*Hesed*), His Righteousness (*Sadiq*), and His Trustworthiness, and His Order or Cosmos (*Mishpa'ot*) are upheld in the land. By his obedience the king righteous, and by the extension of his personality, the people are *Hasidim*. The basic notion is of Covenant, but the superstructure is of order and fertility. These are secured by obedience to the Covenant. Essentially it is this Covenant relationship that governs the whole of the New Year Festival, if Israel had one, and of the definition of Israël's kingship.

B. ARTUR WEISER's THESIS: THE COVENANT FESTIVAL & PSALMS

1B. GERHARD VON-RAD: *The Form-Critical problem of the Hexateuch*

1. Alt, Noth, & Von-Rad: An alternative to Sigmund Mowinckel

Quite naturally, not everyone agreed with **Sigmund Mowinckel's** interpretation of *Psalms*; and the German school that included **Albrecht Alt**, **Martin Noth**, **Gerhard Von-Rad**, and **Artur Weiser** have been outspoken opponents. The idea of Israël borrowing from other nations does not appeal to everyone, and some see a more-pure Yahwism in Israël's Worship. But, to appreciate **Alt**, **Noth**, and **Von-Rad's** interpretation, we must go back some distance.

2. G.Von-Rad: Israel had a Covenant Festival, not an enthronement of the king

You will recall that **Mowinckel** believed that after the king's assumption of the throne, a Covenant ceremony was performed in which the Law of Sinai was read and accepted by the people. **G. Von-Rad** in his essay *The Form Critical problem of the Hexateuch* (Available at Bacoar, Padre Burgos, and in Bishop Andrew's Library) took up this aspect of **Mowinckel's** work on the New Year Covenant Festival and elaborated it.

3. Heilsgeschichte recited: *Deuteronomy 26:5-9; Deuteronomy 6:20-24; Joshua 24:2-5*

G. Von-Rad believes that an ancient creed may be seen in many places in the *Old Testament* – a creed which recites the events of the Exodus and the Settlement, but makes no mention of Sinai.

Examples of this can be seen in *Deuteronomy* 26:05-26:09, *Deuteronomy* 6:20-6:24, *Joshua* 24:02-24:05, and elsewhere.

4. The separate Sinai Tradition was used in Israel as the New Year Festival cult 'legend'

But **G. Von-Rad** went further. Quite independent from this Credal tradition was the Sinai tradition. Now, the Sinai tradition, he maintains, is a cult legend (like the Creation myth) but one that is based in history. The occasion when this legend was used was at the autumn New Year Festival in which the Sinai event was recreated through reading, and the Law read anew, c.f.: *Deuteronomy* 31:10 ff.; and *Nehemiah* 8. The Sinai story takes the following form:

1. Exhortation (*Exodus* 19:04-19:06) and the historical recital of the events of Mount Sinai (*Exodus* 19:07 ff).
2. Reading of the Law (*Exodus* 20-25:19 = Decalogue and Covenant Code)
3. Promise of blessing (*Exodus* 25:20 ff).
4. Sealing of the Covenant (*Exodus* 24).

5. The Literary Form of *Deuteronomy*

A similar form, **Von-Rad** noted, is found in *Deuteronomy*.

- a. Historical presentations of events at Sinai with exhortation (*Deuteronomy* 1-11).
- b. Laws (*Deuteronomy* 12:01-26:15).
- c. Sealing of the Covenant (*Deuteronomy* 26:16-26:19).
- d. Blessings and curses (*Deuteronomy* 27ff.),

The setting of *Deuteronomy* is clearly in the cult, says **Von-Rad**, for it contains many hortatory sermons and frequently uses as the form of address, and also the word “**today**” e.g: *Deuteronomy* 5:02-504. (READ).

6. VON-RAD: *Exodus* & *Deuteronomy* compared

The difference between *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* is that *Deuteronomy* is speech-direct address, *Exodus* is narrative. The *Exodus* tells us of the Setting, but *Deuteronomy* of the context. The two overlap, however, to a considerable extent. The setting in *Exodus* is one of Theophany of the Mountain of God (in the cult this is ritually portrayed) and a Covenant ceremony.

7. VON-RAD: The Israelite New Year Festival

Thus **Von-Rad** proposed that the New Year Festival depicted the arrival of **YHWH** in a cultic Theophany accompanied by the recitation of the history of Sinai. The Law was then read to the people, who undertook in a cultic ceremonial festival to obey. The Covenant so sealed, blessings and curses were pronounced: blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience. This is the full content of the festival, and no mention is made of Creation stories, fertility, kingship rituals etc.. Examples of such Covenant ceremonies are seen in *Nehemiah* 8 and also *II Kings* 23:01-25:05, while *Isaiah* 2:02 ff shows knowledge of a Law reading festival in Jerusalem.

8. A pre-Jerusalem Shechem basis for the Israelite New Year festival

Now, **G. Von-Rad** believes that this festival pre-dated the monarchy and the Jerusalem cult and derived originally from Shechem in the time of the Judges (*Deuteronomy* 27, *Joshua* 8:24, set within the Covenant ceremonies at Shechem). **A. Weiser** took up **G. Von-Rad's** suggestion and

developed it in his commentary on *Psalms*. He sets up the majority of the *Psalms* in the context of such a festival in Jerusalem.

2B. ARTUR WEISER: *Psalms* in the Covenant Festival

1. Weiser's elaboration of Von-Rad's thesis vis-à-vis *Psalms*

A. Weiser's theory elaborates that of G. Von-Rad in great detail and adds then material that Von-Rad would have argued should not be there. For example, Weiser sees a place in the Covenant Festival for a recitation of the Heilsgeschichte or the creed of the Exodus and land giving. Indeed, it seems that he regarded the Credal recitation as the first element in the ceremony. The subsequent Theophany of YHWH and His Enthronement on the Ark he takes as a seal or assurance of the validity of the Creed. History and Law were the two pillars of Israëlite religion and society, and both elements appeared in the Covenant Festival.

2. The Liturgical order of the Covenant Renewal Festival

Following a Theophany came a proclamation of the Law and its ratification or acceptance by Israël. So the Covenant was sealed and the festival turned to judgement. Blessings and curses were uttered in the cult ensuring fidelity that continued to Yahweh; and the rejection of all other gods.

Now, Weiser does not deny the presence of borrowed elements such as kingship, agricultural motifs, the Creation myths, but he denies prominence to these and insists that they were purified and adapted to central Yahwistic themes.

3. The form-critical categories of the Psalms in the light of Weiser's work

Weiser has defined four main literary categories – Hymns, Laments, Thanksgiving, and Wisdom Psalms. His ideas are available in English in the SCM Old Testament Library Series of Commentaries in his work *The Psalms*. These we shall now review.

4. Hymns

(a) The Form of the Hymns

Hymns, Weiser observed, take the following form: (a.) A Call to Praise; (b.) A Response in Praise of God's nature and providence. (Sometimes this includes the statement of the worshipper's relationship to the LORD).

(b) HERMANN GUNKEL: *Die Psalmen*: The antiphonal factor

These are clearly liturgical hymns, for they require antiphonal usage, the call to Praise being uttered by the leader of the worship, and the response being congregational. The transition, as noted by Gunkel, was marked by the use of the particle “**ki**” (“for”).

Example 1: *Psalms* 40

(a) *Psalms* 40:1-5; A Call to Praise;

(b) *Psalms* 40: 6-44; A Response.

The response here takes the form of a recitation of the Heilsgeschichte and culminates in *Psalms* 40:45ff., which explains that the purpose of the foregoing recital was to ensure that “**they might keep His statutes and obey His Laws**”. This Hymn belongs to the earlier part of the Covenant festival's ceremony.

Example 2: *Psalms* 95

This Psalm illustrates a different scene in the festival. It falls into several parts, for there were two calls to worship, two responses, and a concluding admonition. The scene is set in the temple courtyard, and the leader issues a call to Praise, and an invitation to process up into the sanctuary.

Psalm 95:1: “O Come, let us sing to the LORD, Let us make a joyous sound to the rock of our Salvation. Let us come before His Presence with Thanksgiving.”

The Theophany then takes place. After it has taken place, **the LORD’s** presence has descends onto the Ark, and the people approach His Divine Presence with singing. Hence:

a. *Psalm 95:5*: Introduced by the antiphonal “ki” *Psalm 95:05* begins the congregational song sung during the procession into the temple.

b. *Psalm 95:6*: With *Psalm 95:6* we are inside the temple, and the leader calls again to worship and bow down before the throne of **the LORD** Our maker, i.e: before the ark on which the presence of **the LORD** is enthroned.

c. *Psalm 95:7*: Verse 7 begins with the antiphonal “ki” and is the congregational response of obeisance containing the admonition and recognition of the fact that Israël is **the LORD’s** Covenant people – ‘**the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.**’ Having thus accepted their Covenant status, the priest admonishes them to obedience with a reminder of past history which teaches the lesson required for the Covenant people.

Weiser includes the Enthronement Psalms in his reconstruction that were distinguished by **S. Mowinckel** and relates them to the Theophany of **the Lord** before the Covenant ceremony.

5. The Lament

(a) Form of The Lament

Weiser discerns the Form of the Lament in this scheme:

a. An invocation of God; b. A Lament; c. A Supplication; d. A Motivation; e. A Vow.

(b) Communal and individual lament one: Their Covenant Festival context

This type corresponds to **Gunkel’s** National and Individual laments. **Weiser** is not particularly interested in the distinction, because he sets them all in the Covenant festival, and in the Covenant Community the individual is incorporated into the nation. Anyhow, the vow of the individual is usually set in the context of congregational worship. Here is *Psalm 22*:

Psalm 22:22: “**I will tell of Thy Name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.**” (c.f.: similarly *Psalm 26:12*, *28:09*, *31:25f*, *35:27*, *52:09*, *109:50*, *140:12f*, and *142:07*). Furthermore, the language of Theophany is common in the laments and this also suggests a festival setting to **Weiser**

(c) The Godly and the wicked in the Psalms of Lament

The lament also features a marked interest in the contrast between the Godly and the wicked. These **Weiser** sees not so much in terms of personal enemies as in terms of people who are within and without the Covenant Community respectively.

(d) The vow element

The vow of Faith at the end in which the worshipper reasserts his trust in **the LORD** suits the context too. As one of the Covenant Community he sees **God’s** great works in the Heilsgeschichte and can be sure that if God can do so great things for Israël, He can do it for the individual suppliant now.

5. The Thanksgiving

This type need not delay us. It is closely related to the Hymn and the Lament, and often the Thanksgiving is used as a conclusion to the Lament. It recalls **the LORD’s** Saving Grace in

History and offers Praise and Thanksgiving, but again the context is of Heilsgeschichte, and so of festival.

6. The Wisdom Psalms

We already have seen how **Gunkel** dealt with this category and considered them the most artificial of all. But **Weiser** sees that they are also essentially cultic. The Contrast between the Godly and the unGodly, the righteous and the sinner is enough to suggest a Cultic setting, he argues. The fact that Righteousness is equated with Wisdom is surely a sign to hint that this category too belongs to the Covenant Festival.

3B. WEISER's THESIS: A Critique

1. MOWINCKEL & WEISER compared

First, it must be realised that **Mowinckel** and **Weiser** do not disagree entirely. They both discuss a New Year Festival, and both recognise the same elements in it. The difference is that **Mowinckel** magnified the Kingship element and motif, and **Weiser** the Covenant element and motif. Both works are a salutary balance to the other, and **Weiser's** work is perhaps a necessary corrective to **Mowinckel**, but it is rather sad that **Weiser** leaves so little room for **Mowinckel's** conclusions.

2. WEISER's Sitz-im-Leben for the Psalms is too limited

It is perhaps **Weiser** who should receive the fuller criticism, for he tries to fit all the Psalms, or as many of them as possible, into the context of this one Covenant Festival. **Mowinckel** did not do so with his kingship festival. He recognises that National Laments and Thanksgivings could also be used in private settings at different times of the year. A Hymn-Book is hardly something that will be used once a year, but it is something that will contain special set hymns for annual occasions.

3. A further factor: The distinctiveness of Israel

Mowinckel has been criticised for paying too much attention to non-Israélite influences from distant lands like Mesopotamia, and for giving too little place to indigenous Israélite belief and custom. **Weiser**, however, can equally be criticised for putting Israël into a vacuum. He gives little place to syncretistic effect, and the indirect witness of the prophets is that the religion of Israël was at times very syncretistic.

4. The Sinai Covenant and the Davidic Covenant: Both must be accommodated

Von-Rad's festival was that which celebrated the Sinai Covenant. The Kingship Covenant was the Davidic Covenant. **Weiser** puts little emphasis on Kingship, but the *Psalms* contain many references to the Davidic Covenant and they are not all to the Sinaitic Covenant. Somehow, both Covenants must be accommodated.

5. An interim conclusion

It is not now certain whether it is possible to define a Covenant Festival as easily as **Von-Rad** did. The form of *Deuteronomy*, we shall see later, corresponds well with the form of Ancient Near Eastern treaties, and it is not at all certain that the Law must be confined to the cult in the way that **Von-Rad** suggested.

C. ALBRECHT ALT'S THESIS: KINGSHIP IN ISRAËL AND JUDAH

1C. Introduction:

1. The Davidic and Sinai Covenants

Thus far we have considered only the nature of Jerusalemite kingship. We have already seen that there are two schools of thought on this matter, but that basically the problem arises out of the apparent conflict between the Davidic and Sinai Covenants. If the Davidic Covenant was central to Judaeon belief, then it is possible to follow **Mowinckel** wholeheartedly; but if the Sinai Covenant was central, it is more likely that **Weiser** is correct. We have suggested that the answer may lie in the middle path – that both Covenants were important and that a perpetual tension lay between the two.

2. The current scholarly consensus

Now, scholars are not agreed on these matters, but there is a general consensus that the Sinai Covenant was, if not overshadowed by, at least modified by the Davidic Covenant. However, the king in Northern IsraëL was not a Davidite, and it is to be expected that a somewhat different notion of kingship was in vogue a few miles north of Jerusalem. The investigation of this problem was pioneered by **A. Alt** in his essay, *The Monarchy in the kingdoms of IsraëL and Judah*.

2C. ALT: Kingship in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and Northern Kingdom of Israel

1. Kingship in the Southern Kingdom of Judah

Whilst he believes that the Davidic and Sinai Covenants co-existed in Judah in a constant state of tension, he is of the opinion that the Davidic Covenant obtained primacy of place. The principle of charismatic election which prevailed in the period of the Judges has passed in Jerusalem from king to dynasty. Charismatic election is: (a.) Divine designation, perhaps by a prophet; (b.) Popular acclamation, perhaps as a result of military victory. (c.f.: **J. Bright** *A History of Israel*, London: SCM Press, 1970 on the period of the Judges). With the establishment of the Davidic Succession it was no longer a question whether each king bore the Divine Charisma, but whether the dynasty did. Thus the designation of the dynasty, so strongly affirmed in the Davidic Covenant, became definitive of Judaeon Kingship. There were attempts in Judah to overthrow the Davidic dynasty (cf. *I Kings* 11 where **Athaliah** sought to usurp the throne) and there were more disturbances when a son sought to seek his father by assassination. Thus, **Azariah** succeeded his father as **Amaziah** (*I Kings* 14:21), and, **Josiah** succeeded his father **Amon** (*II Kings* 21;24). But, thanks to the fidelity of the Judaeon people, the Davidic throne continued and survived until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.. The success of the Davidic dynasty and its support for the people must have been a direct result of the prominence of the Davidic Covenant in the thought and life of Judah.

2. Kingship in the Northern Kingdom of Israel

(a) The reason for a Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam I

The whole scene was very different in Northern Israël. Here, dynasty succeeded dynasty in fairly rapid succession. **Alt** sees in this an attempt by the people of the North to re-assert the principle of charismatic elections of individual Israëlite leaders. It is notable that Jeroboam, first king of Israël, was appointed by prophetic designation (*I Kings* 11:29 ff) and by popular acclaim (*I Kings* 12:20). **David** and **Solomon** had destroyed the principle of charismatic choice by transferring it to the dynasty. This the north could not tolerate, and hence the schism and choice of **Jeroboam I**.

(b) Attempts by kings to found Northern dynasties failed

Now, every Northern king attempted to set up his son as king after him, but the North would not tolerate dynasties. Hence, when **Jeroboam** appointed his son **Nadab** to succeed him (*I Kings* 15:25-15:26), he was assassinated and replaced by **Ba'asha** (*I Kings* 15:27) who was also elected by prophetic designation (*I Kings* 14:07 ff. Again when **Elah**, **Ba'asha's** son took the throne (*I Kings* 16:08 ff) he was assassinated by **Zimri** who himself lasted only seven days and was succeeded by **Omri** (*I Kings* 16:15 ff).

(c) The charismatic kingship principal to King Omri

The charismatic principle thus far had survived in the North. There was no attempt to establish a strong dynasty with an imperial capital. The central sanctuaries were in Dan and Bethel, but the royal house was initially in Shechem (*I Kings* 12:25), later in Tirzah (*I Kings* 16:08) and under **Omri** in Samaria (*I Kings* 16:24). **Omri** proved a much stronger king than Israël could contain. He built a strong fortress city in Samaria and established a kingdom of some considerable wealth and military strength.

4. The Omride dynasty established and failed

Omri proved a much stronger king than Israël could contain. He built a strong fortress city in Samaria and established a kingdom of some considerable wealth and military strength. He developed relations with Phoenicia by a marriage alliance which resulted in a considerable influx of wealth. The military strength **Omri** developed is known from inscriptions. The Moabite stone (cf. **D. Winton Thomas** (Ed.) *Documents from Old Testament Times*) tells us how **Omri** held Moab in subjection, and it is remarkable that in later years the Assyrians refer to Israël as 'Bit-Humria' (House of Omri). **Omri** was well able, therefore, to establish his son **Ahab** on the throne after him, and **Ahab** continued the work of consolidation and expansion. It was in his reign that Israël contributed 2,000 horse and 10,000 men to an alliance of the west against an aggressive onslaught from the rising Assyrian power under **Shalmaneser**. The alliance met the Assyrians at the Battle of Qarqar on the Orontes (**853 B.C.**) and the flow of the Assyrian tide was held at bay for several decades. But the North continued to object to the dynastic principle, and in the third generation of the Omrides the prophet **Elisha** stirred up rebellion by designating **Jehu** as king (*II Kings* 9) and anointing him in Ramoth-Gilead.

5. The Post-Omride North

Jehu established himself on the throne by bloodshed and assassination, and his sons reigned after him for four generations. The charismatic principle was now weakening but was not yet dead. In the last years of Northern Israël, king succeeded king in rapid succession, usually by assassination. In these last decades the Northern prophet Hosea was constantly reminding the people of the charismatic principle which they were letting slip. Israël is condemned for choosing and making kings without **YHWH's** knowledge, but kingship is essentially a concern on the part of **YHWH** (*Hosea* 8:04ff, 7:05, 8:10, 10:03, 15:11). Thus the north knew nothing of dynastic Covenants, and it is of particular interest that the Sinai Covenant is so often related to northern settlements or centres

of worship (e.g. Shechem *Deuteronomy* 27, *Joshua* 4). But, not everyone agrees with ALT's neat distinction between North and South.

D. T.G. THORNTON'S THESIS: CHARISMATIC KINGSHIP IN ISRAËL AND JUDAH

1D. THORNTON's Thesis: The Evidence

1. Introductory perspective

In his short article, (c.f.: *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series Vol. 14, **1965**, /1-11), **Thornton** attempts to break the fortress of **Alt**'s citadel. **Alt**'s thesis was greeted with enthusiasm in the world of Old Testament Scholarship, but most scholars believe now that **Thornton**'s reply bears more common sense and reason.

2. All Ancient Near Eastern kingship was charismatic

Thornton points out that Kingship all over the Ancient Near East was charismatic in the sense that the king was appointed by the deity. This was true of both old and new dynasties which could appeal to some foundation oracle, just as **David** appealed to **Nathan**'s oracle. Now the mere fact of designation in Northern IsraëL through the prophetic ministry is not sufficient. It was the prophet **Nathan** in Judah who uttered the Davidic Oracle. Also, the prophet **Ahijah** designated **Jeroboam** king of IsraëL long before his election, as king in the north; for after **Ahijah**'s encounter with **Jeroboam**, the king-to-be spent some time in exile in Egypt (*I Kings* 11:26 ff). **Jeroboam**'s eventual election in the north was not based on Divine charisma, but on the political desire to break away from the oppressive rule of the Solomonic throne.

The only Northern king who was appointed to office in a charismatic fashion was **Jehu**, but he proved to be the most blood-thirsty of them all.

3. The Northern Kingdom's History: Extermination; attempt at dynasty; failure

All Northern so-called 'charismatic kings' attempted to establish dynasties. If the people upheld the principle of charismatic election, the kings themselves certainly had no interest in it. They all came to the throne by exterminating the preceding dynasty. Such charisma is not the kind that **Alt** suggests!

4. Deuteronomy & Deuteronomistic History writing

The Deuteronomist's interpretation of history is that punishment follows evil. The usurping kings were hence seen as men appointed by God to execute His Judgement on the evil dynasty that they were instructed to overthrow. We today would more openly term such proceedings as 'coup' or 'revolution' without invoking mystical notions of charisma. Further: *Deuteronomy* 17 declares that the king will be God's chosen, but it also declares that the king's son will rule after him in a dynastic fashion. Likewise, **Hosea**'s attacks on the northern kings, especially in *Hosea* 8:04, are attacks on apostate dynasties which had rejected the way of **the LORD**, and were not 'non-or-anti-charismatic dynasty' utterances.

2D. THORNTON: Difference between Northern and Southern Kingship models accounted

1. Topographical factors

The reasons for the differences between Israël and Judah are geographical and historical, not Theological. In the South there was one capital city and one central religious focus – Jerusalem. The North, however, had two sanctuaries and four successive capitals. It also contained 10 of the original twelve tribes of Israël. Geographically, the North was more difficult to administer, for it is a variegated land of mountains and valleys within which communications were slow. The population was a heterogeneous mixture of shepherd and farmer peoples with a good proportion of traders. The North was therefore more difficult to unite and hold together. Factions were bound to arise, but in the South matters were very different.

2. A Unity factor

The tribe of Judah had a very long tradition of unity, and on the whole the people tended to be shepherds rather than farmers. Furthermore, **David** and his dynasty were well established when Israël was in the infancy of her political status. (Israël here = Northern kingdom). Thus by the time of **Jeroboam**, the Davidic dynasty in the South was well established and protected by venerable age and the aura of a sacred tradition.

2. Conclusion

The distinction between North and South is more difficult to draw than **Alt** suggested. Ancient Near Eastern Kings are usually established by their national deities. Both Judah and Israël ore therefore in the charismatic tradition of kingship, and the dynasty of Judah was the direct result of a charismatic Covenant made with **David** and his house. For now, however, we must leave this matter, and turn to the prophets.

UNITS 8 & 9: THE EARLY ISRAELITE PROPHETS

A. INTRODUCTION: ALFRED GUILLAUME'S Thesis

1A. Orientation to Units 8 & 9

1. Guillaume's method and assumption

In these lectures we examine the comparisons drawn by **Guillaume**, between the life and work of the Old Testament Prophets, and the lives and work of Arab desert prophets and dervishes whose activity is supposed to have long pre-dated the Islamic era. The assumption is made that the life and conduct of these dervishes in their desert environment has changed little since the most ancient times, and that therefore they are able to show us something about the workings of either the Israélite *Old Testament* early pre-writing prophets, or if not can at least show us something about those prophets of the pagan neighbouring nations to Ancient Israel. 01865-556767/353401

2. Lecture contents and sequence

I therefore propose to examine the subject under seven different headings:

1. The definition of a Prophet (*Old Testament* and linguistic data).
2. The various method used to obtain prophetic inspiration
3. The prevalence of ecstasy.
4. The prophetic guilds.
5. The participation of the Prophets within the Israelite Cultus.
6. The problem of false prophecy.
7. The political alliances of the prophets.

2A. Guillaume's sevenfold division

1. Guillaume's scheme

This seven fold division covers most of the relevant material on prophecy in Israelite Prophecy's pre-literary stage as defined by **Guillaume's** thesis, and also gives certain other information – e.g: in the material concerned with the definition of a Prophet in Section 'A'. Our steps of investigation following this line will lead us naturally to our next portion of work which is a consideration of the Writing Prophets. That unit of work will not be necessarily based on any of the conclusions drawn in this.

2. Limitations of Guillaume's approach

Within a Charismatic and Catholic context where God moves in Prophetic Ministry, we have other parallels to draw which we will do in due course. This unit, however, is given to examining the perspectives of scholarship from earlier in this century when scholars had not known such a move of the Spirit. There is some value in their comparisons with the prophetic ministry of desert Arabs whose ways have changed little since ancient times – but I would suggest that the value is limited. The Division of the material was conceptualised by **Alfred Guillaume** of Edinburgh University who derived it by analogue with the practice of Arab desert dervishes today. The material is, however, not simply a reproduction of **Guillaume's** Thesis – it is our own.

B. THE DEFINITION OF A PROPHET

1B. Etymology of terminology and evidence from function

1. Terminology and Etymology

The English word 'Prophet' derives from the Greek which means "forth-teller", or someone who stands in front of others and speaks. (feti = 'to speak' ; pro = 'in front of'). However, the common Hebrew word for prophet is *ybin* (*nabi*). There is a congruent verb in Hebrew, which means "to behave in an uncontrolled manner". It is applied to **King Saul** when he loses control of himself in *I Samuel* 18:10, 19:24. The noun could therefore describe "one who acts in an uncontrolled fashion". But, there is an Akkadian verb "nabu", "to call/announce" and an Arabic word "to announce". It could be then that the *Old Testament* *nabi* was an "announcer" or it could be that is used to mean "one who is called" in a passive sense instead of "one who calls". The precise meaning of the word is uncertain.

2. Further evidence from a survey of the early prophets

(a) A brief survey of prophetic functioning

Unfortunately a survey of the earliest prophets gives us little more assistance.

- a. **Aaron** is called **Moses'** prophet in *Exodus* 7:01, but here the term seems to imply nothing more than 'spokesman'.
- b. **Moses** wishes that all the people of **YHWH** were prophets in *Numbers* 11:29, and here we must assume that he means "blessed with the possession/Anointing of God's Spirit".
- c. In *Numbers* 22-24, **Balaam** the prophet has the function of cursing the troops of *Israël* spread out below in the valley of the Moabites. The effect of the Prophetic curse must have been thought considerable when we look at the effort **Balak** of Moab exerted in trying to obtain the curse from **Balaam**.
- d. **Nathan** the Prophet in the Davidic stories seems to have been a royal courtier, whereas **Elijah** was a man of the desert.
- e. The Prophet **Samuel** seems to have been a sane headed leader of *Israël*, but the feats of **Elijah** and **Elisha** are charismatic miracles.
- f. The lone Prophet is encountered frequently in the Old Testament narratives, but prophets also banded together into Guilds (*I Samuel* 10:09 ff, *I Kings* 18:26 ff).

(b) An interim conclusion and working axiom

It does not seem easily possible to give a precise definition of a prophet, the range of ministry is very great and it is not clear from linguistic arguments alone as to what exactly "prophet" meant. The ecstasy element of the *Israélite* Prophet must also be clearly demarcated from that found in the nations around, unless the two can be shown to be the same.

2B. 'Prophet' with respect to other terms and offices

1. The terminological distinction Nabi'/Ro'eh

I Samuel 9:09 reads, “**He who is now called a Prophet was before-time called a Seer,**” where “nabi” is translated by “Prophet” and “Ro'eh” by “seer”. What the distinction was is not quite certain, but some suggestions have been made:

- (a.) Perhaps the Prophet obtained his oracles through spontaneous inspiration, whereas the seer worked more systematically.
- (b.) Perhaps only the Prophet showed outward signs of abnormality.
- (c.) Perhaps the seer was a diviner like the Rapotoskopists of the Ancient Near East (= augur in Rome; BARU in Sumerian Mesopotamia, and οἰωσκόοις in Greece).
- d. Perhaps there was no difference at all, just a different use of terminology through the ages.

4. PEDERSEN's Thesis: The Three Cultic Officers and offices

(a) Three Cultic officers and their functions

Pedersen draws a useful distinction between three types of Cultic Office and it has helped to shed light on the nature of early Prophecy.

- 1. **The Chief:** His function is to ensure prosperity and military success, which he did by various cultic acts to propitiate the deity.
- 2. **The Priest:** He mostly devotes himself to sacrifice, the care of cultic objects (e.g. in Israë: the Ark), and vis-à-vis Prophecy, he would obtain an oracle by 'Urim and Thummim'.
- 3. **The Prophet:** His/her function was to listen for oracles by whatever means.

(b) Inter-relationships of the offices and their functions

The three functions overlapped (e.g. **Ba'alam** was considered responsible for procuring military success), but for the most part they were held distinct. The one great exception in the earlier portions of the *Old Testament* text is **Samuel** in whom all three offices coalesced. In the days of the Monarchy, the king took upon himself the office of Chief, and all three co-existed independently with no control over the other. So it is, for example, that **Nathan** could chastise **King David** over the Bath-Sheba affair with impunity.

C. METHODS BY WHICH PROPHETIC INSPIRATION WAS OBTAINED

1C. Introduction: The Masal as an example

1. Introduction

The methods by which prophetic inspiration is obtained are as variable as the different types of prophecy, and I do not intend to discuss every example within the *Old Testament*. However, a general pattern is discernible.

2. Similitude: The Masal: *Amos* 8:1-2

(a) Oriental and Pre-Islamic Arab desert similitude

Alfred Guillaume in his book *Prophecy and Divination* gives some very readable descriptions of how Arab and Oriental seers work. They are men with hyper-sensitive and trained eyes and other senses who can pick up the slightest deviation from the norm in sight or sound and relate this to a situation which would, in most cases, appear completely unrelated.

(b) An example: *Amos 8:1-2*

There are examples of Masal within the *Old Testament* – c.f.: *Amos 8:01-8:02*:

‘God showed me: behold! a basket of summer fruit (Qayis).

And He said, “Amos what do you see?”

And I said, “A basket of summer fruit.”

Then he said, “The end has come upon My People Israël.”

(N.B: “end” Qes; “Summer fruit” = Qayis)

(c) Analysis

This process of contemplative comparison, or auto-suggestion, or whatever, is referred to as “Similitude”. **Amos** here was looking at a basket of summer fruit, and suddenly, by the association of ideas, the message about the end came to him.

(d) Other examples

Other examples are:

1. *Amos 8:01-8:02*: Qayis (Summer fruit)/Qes (end).
2. *Numbers 24:05-24:06*: ‘ohalim (Tents)/’ahalim (aloes).
3. *Jeremiah 1:11-1:12*: Shaged (almond)/ Shoqel (watching).

2C. Sacred lots, oracles, dream interpretation and other methods

1. The Qesem (Sacred lot)

(a) Qesem in the *Old Testament*

Micah 3:05 ff refers to the use of Qesem, or sacred lots in obtaining an oracle. **The LORD**, declares **Micah**, will no longer sanction the Qesem of the prophets who abuse it. Sacred Lots were usually a priestly method of obtaining a Divine Response, but *Proverbs 16:10* shows that the king could give Qesem, and *Micah 3:11* puts the Prophetic Qesem on a level with civil judgement.

(b) Specific evidence from *Ezekiel 21:21*

Ezek. 21:21 gives three examples of the use of the sacred Lot.

- (1) **Ezekiel** tells us that it can take the form of Lots i.e.: “he shakes the arrows” i.e: shaking odd sticks together and then choosing one.
- (2) Second: The consultation of the Teraphim. It is uncertain exactly what the Teraphim were. When **Rachel** stole **Laban**’s Teraphim, she seems to have taken possession of his household gods. Here in *Ezekiel* they seem to have been some further means of divination.
- (3) Third: *Ezekiel 21:21* defines Qesem as ‘looking at livers’ – a method of divination very widespread in the Ancient Near East.

2. Consultation for an Oracle

Even if we did not have the explicit statements of *Micah*, we would have to assume that the Prophets used such means for Divination (i.e: not for “occult practice” but for “obtaining God’s guidance”). In some ways the Israëlite and Judaeon Prophet was like those of the Sybilline Oracle at Delphi who could be consulted at a shrine on a holy day, and was expected to give an oracle on receipt of a gift, often money – c.f.: *I Samuel 9:05 ff.* and *II Kings 4:25*. We must assume that on such occasions the Prophets would have used some standard method for obtaining oracles.

3. Interpretation of dreams

Interpretation of Dreams was of course very popular – c.f.: *Jeremiah 25:25 ff*, indeed so popular that the Deuteronomistic Law ranks the ‘Dreamer of dreams’ on a level with the Prophet

(Deuteronomy 13:01-13:03). But, by far the most commonly attested method for obtaining an oracle was what we call ecstasy, and this will bring us in a moment to our third topic, that of Prophetic Ecstasy.

4. Other methods of obtaining inspiration

There are further methods in the *Old Testament* for obtaining inspiration and guidance.

- (1) The use of the Lots 'Urim and Thummim' by the Priests of Israël.
- (2) Divination by studying the clouds, habits of birds, animal livers etc. are found in many ancient societies, although these do not appear to have been practised within Israelite Yahwism.
- (3) Ecstatic Phenomena – to which we shall now turn.

D. THE PREVALENCE OF ECSTASY

1D. The nature and function of Ecstasy

1. Ecstasy as an heightened awareness of the realm of the Spirit

It is difficult to define precisely the nature and function of ecstasy. Basically, it seems that the stimulation of an ecstatic condition assisted to vacate the mind of all or some consciousness of the immediate environment thus ensuring that all the faculties could be devoted solely to the world of the Spirit.

2. Inducing an ecstatic state

The ecstatic state could be induced by a variety of means, e.g: **Elisha** has a minstrel play before him (*II Kings* 5:15 ff). Within the counterfeit realm, the Ba'al prophets on Mount Carmel performed a limping dance around the altar, chanted incantations, and slashed themselves with swords (*I Kings* 18:20- ff). It is contemporaneously a common practice in the Near East (and West?) to invoke such trances by drink, drugs, and other stimulants (c.f.: **Guillaume**).

3. Group ecstasy in early Israël: King Saul as an example

It seemed that the ecstatic state could often have been an end in itself, and that no oracle ensued. *I Samuel* 19:18 ff relates how **King Saul** sent envoys to arrest **David** who was with **Samuel** at Naioth in Ramah. When the messengers came they found a group of prophets prophesying, and the effect of the anointing soon encompassed the messengers who fell to prophesying also. The same happened to the second and third group of emissaries, and eventually **Saul** came himself. He too was overcome, and fell into ecstasy. He stripped his clothes and lay twenty-four hours naked upon the ground. From this narrative it would appear that the ecstasy was a kind of group worship rather than a means of obtaining an oracle, and it seems that **Saul's** condition was one of total oblivion rather than of intensified sensitivity to the realm of the Spirit.

2D. An insight from *Genesis* 2:07

1. Introduction

Now, much time could be spent in discussing such questions as group frenzy, crowd psychology, mass hysteria etc., and the mentality of primitive religion, but for our purposes it is more important to consider the ecstasy phenomenon within the context of the *Old Testament* understanding of Man

and His relationship to God. And so, for a moment, we must return to the story of the Creation. Here is *Genesis* 2:7.

2. *Genesis* 2:7

“And YHWH formed Man out of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And man became a living soul.”

3. A brief Theological analysis

Man is mere dust and stands in the relationship with **God** that the clay has with the potter. He is moulded into shape by the master-potter, but unlike the pot, he is given the Divine gift of the life-breath which is **God’s** own breath breathed into him. Thus we may say that there is something of **God** in every person, and it is that eternal principle of life in man which alone is the means of his communication with **God**. The potter can only manipulate the clay – he cannot communicate with it. Likewise, **God** merely manipulates the corruptible flesh, but He can communicate with man’s eternal principle of life (Man’s *Nepesh*). By contrast, **Man** in Greek thought is body, mind, and spirit.

3D. The ‘Man of God’

1. Two *Old Testament* examples

The *Old Testament* Prophet is sometimes called **“A Man of God”**: to give two examples:

- (a.) A ‘Man of God’ came to ‘Eli at Shiloh (*I Samuel* 2:26).
- (b.) A ‘Man of God’ came from Judah to Bethel to accost **King Jeroboam** (*I Kings* 15:01).

2. What was a ‘Man of God’?

Now, **‘Man of God’** is a most fitting title, for the Prophet of Israel and Judah was a Man taken hold of by the Spirit of God. Incidentally, this is a much better expression than ‘possessed’, as this latter implies that the Prophet is not exercising His Will Godward during the event of the moving of the Spirit. **Ezekiel** relates that **“The Spirit entered into him”** (*Ezekiel* 2:02). As the Divine principle in human kind is the life-breath, so it is the Spirit of God that is the agent of communication with the prophet. **Samuel** warns Saul that the **Spirit of the LORD** will come mightily upon him, and that he will prophesy, and be turned into another man – cf. (*I Samuel* 10:06). To be in the grip of the Spirit of God was to have an intensification of the Life principle that is in human kind to the extent of a visible transformation. **Saul** became **“another man”**.

3. The Prophet as ‘Another Man’

The transformation affected different people differently. With some it issued in oracular utterances, with others it resulted in a personal abandonment. With all it had visible effects. The Prophet did not become a mere mouthpiece for God’s Spirit, for the personal element in the Prophetic Message is markedly present in all the Prophetic Books. **Isaiah** does not preach a message identical to that of **Jeremiah**. However, what is common to all Prophets taken hold of by the Spirit of God is their total abandon to the Service of God. Their outward courage and strength is manifest for all to see – they are indeed driven by the Spirit, or as **Ezekiel** says, “lifted by the Spirit” (*Ezekiel* 3:12). This phenomenon is entirely comparable with the Charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit within the New Testament Christian and the Charismatic Christian today. We may recall the effects that the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit had at Pentecost, or the total abandonment with which **Saint Paul**

served the risen ascended glorified **Jesus Christ** claiming that, **“It is not I that lives, but Christ that lives in me”**. **Paul** was a man under that kind of compulsion, and so he became “another man”.

E. THE PROPHETIC ORACLE

1E. Imitative and Active Prophecy

1. Active Prophecy

(a) The concept of ‘Active Prophecy’

It is far too easy to think of ecstasy as a form of frenzy and to think of the consequent action of the ecstatic as eccentric and absurd. The action of the ecstatic may indeed have often been apparently meaningless, but normally it was imbued with an allegorical symbolism which entitles it to the designation “acted prophecy”.

(b) *Old Testament* examples of Active Prophecy

There are many *Old Testament* examples of Active Prophecy.

- (1) **Ezekiel** lay for a prolonged period on his side symbolising the number of years of **Israël’s** punishment (*Ezekiel* 4).
- (2) When **Jeremiah** walked around Jerusalem with a wooden yoke and then an iron yoke on his shoulders, he was attempting to portray in his action the future captivity of the people (*Jeremiah* 28).
- (3) **Hosea’s** children to whom he gave the names **‘Not pitied’** and **‘not my people’** (*Hosea* 1:06ff.) stood as a living symbol to those who met them that **Israël** would be punished for her sins.
- (4) **Isaiah** (c.f.: *Isaiah* 15.5:01) called his son **‘Maher-halal-shash-baz’** (‘hasten to plunder, hurry to spoil’), signifying the immediate danger of Assyria to **Israël**.

(c) Comment

Their symbolism was not wholly eccentric, for it was inspired in all of its painstaking detail. It was intended to correspond exactly with the prophesied eventuality, as allegory corresponds with fact. Thus it was truly ‘acted prophecy’ and not just eccentricity.

2. The dichotomy between Imitative Prophecy and Acted Prophecy

(a) ‘Imitative magic/prophecy’?

However, care must be taken to distinguish “acted Prophecy” from ‘imitative magic’.

- (1.) When **Zedekiah-ben-Chennanah** danced before the **Israélite** armies, he was not prophesying an assured event, but was attempting to procure before the event an assured result by means of a magical incantation and action (*I Kings* 22:11).
- (2.) In somewhat similar vein, but obviously not magic, **Elisha’s** instruction to **King Joash** to shoot arrows out of the window was aimed at assuring victory for **Joash** beforehand. So **Elisha** was disappointed when **Joash** only struck the ground with the arrows three times instead of five or six times. Three times would only ensure partial victory **Joash** had not done enough (*II Kings* 15:14).
- (3.) Similar to this is the Prophetic curse. **Balak** called upon **Ba’alam** to curse his enemy **Israël**. Thus victory would ensue. But **Ba’alam** found it impossible to utter the required curse (*Numbers* 22-24).

However: The acted Prophecy was of a different order from these.

(b) The Active prophecy analysed

Jeremiah's iron was not displayed to ensure captivity, but to warn of it. Yet there is a contact between the two. **God** had shown **Jeremiah** that the Captivity was inevitable, And the episode of the yoke thus symbolised an eventuality that would certainly take place. **Jeremiah** was thought to be unpatriotic and a traitor because it was thought that his actions were designed to ensure the Captivity of Jerusalem. Yet **Jeremiah** knew that the Captivity was already assured. Thus his action both asserted this assurance and stood as a symbol of warning. Imitative ritual is designed to ensure inevitability. In a similar way the curse ensures inevitability, but the spoken Prophecy declares inevitability.

2E. The Form of an oracle as foretelling and forthtelling

1. A form-critical approach to the phenomenon of the oracle

For an understanding of the component parts of the Prophetic Oracle, *I Samuel* 2:27 ff is instructive. Here a Man of God appears and denounces the practices of the Priesthood at Shiloh. The essential elements of the oracle are:

1. Fearless declaration of Authority: **“Thus says YHWH”** or **“Oracle of YHWH”**;
2. Denunciation of a particular sin – in this case, abuse of sacrifice;
3. Divine Oracle of Doom (or blessing) – usually beginning with such words as **‘behold the days are coming....’**
4. The sign, **“... and this shall be a sign to you ...”** The sign is usually an event which will take place soon after the utterance of an oracle. If the sign is seen to be correct, the prophesied doom is assured.

This form of oracle is common in the *Old Testament*, although not every oracle has all four parts consistently. The Oracle is declatory of an eventual concomitment upon existing or exact conditions. The Oracle is therefore both a denunciation and a declaration, – It is both ‘forthtelling’ and ‘foretelling’.

2. ‘Fortelling’ and ‘Forthtelling’

The question arises: ‘Why did the prophets pronounce oracles, and why did they exact Prophecies?’ There has been a movement amongst Biblical scholars to see the prophets as mere ‘forth-tellers’, as great moralists who had a keen awareness of moral abuses and who felt compelled to denounce these abuses in the Name of **the LORD** wherever they met them. In such an interpretation of Prophecy, **the LORD** subsumes the role of an ultimate moral standard against which national and individual behaviour is measured. But, it seems that there is more to Prophecy than this. It is manifestly obvious from even a cursory glance at the *Old Testament* that the Prophets did foretell, albeit with unerring accuracy (but not from the point of view of human understanding alone), but nevertheless, the problem of unfulfilled Prophecy was to torment the minds of pious Israëlités. However, they were seers who had some kind of insight into the world of the Spirit which gave them authority to proclaim the future. To understand this fully we must see it in the light of our discussion of ecstasy.

3. The assumption of the Prophet: The Spirit and the Divine Court

(a) The Prophet and the Spirit

The Prophet was a Man upon whom the Spirit had descended in far more of a fullness than the mere life principle which all men possessed. The intensification of the Divine in the Personality somehow lifted it into a higher realm of awareness in which Communion with God was possible.

(b) Three examples: *Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1*

1. In *Isaiah 6*, Isaiah was lifted up before the Heavenly Throne and had the vision of **the LORD** in His splendour in the Heavenly Court. Whilst so lifted into the realm of the Spirit, **Isaiah** was able to communicate directly with God and to receive His commission to prophesy.
2. **Jeremiah** in *Jeremiah 1* must have had a similar experience when he saw **the LORD** stretch forth His Hand and put His Message to Israel into his mouth.
3. Similarly, **Ezekiel's** vision of the Heavenly Beings (*Ezekiel 1*) is related to the Divine Court and Presence of **the LORD**. It is in this setting, being lifted up by the Spirit that **Ezekiel** received his commission to prophesy.

(c) The Prophet in the Lord's Heavenly Court

From the accounts of these three Prophets we see that the ecstatic vision is regarded as some form of assumption before the throne of **the LORD** into His Presence in His Heavenly Court. It is in this setting that the sins of the present and the inevitability of the future are revealed to the Prophet. The Prophet has been given an insight into heaven and into the mind of God who controls all life, past, present, and future. An explicit example of such an assumption is given in *1 Kings 22:19 ff* where **Micaiah-ben-Imlah** describes how he “**saw the LORD sitting on His Throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside Him on His Right Hand and on His left**”. In this vision **Micaiah** was lifted up into the Council of Heaven where he hears the debate about the future course of events taking place.

4. Conclusions: The Spirit, the Prophet, and ecstasy

Thus we may conclude that, although ecstasy may have had many forms, and many purposes, there seems to have been central view which saw it as an assumption by the Spirit who lifted the Prophet out of the earthly world into the Council of Heaven where he witnessed the making of plans for the future of the Universe where he had vision or insight into the mind of God Himself. This could be true too of intercessors before **the LORD**. Hence it was that the Prophet felt capable of both denouncing the present in the Name of **the LORD** and declaring the inevitability of the future. By contrast the practitioner of mimetic magic had no such insight. He could only hope and try to play on the mind of God by his action and thus ‘assure’ inevitability by mime, ‘prayer’ and curse.

F. THE PROPHETIC GUILDS

1F. The concept of a ‘Guild’

1. A link and direction

Our discussion of the Prophetic Guilds leads naturally from our study of ecstasy and will lead us naturally into the investigation of the relationship of the Prophet to the Cult.

2. The *raison-d'être* of trade ‘guilds’

The Old Testament frequently refers to Guilds of Prophets as “the Sons of the Prophets” (*bene-Nebi'im*). Now in the Ancient World there was a kind of trades union system, perhaps not entirely compatible to our modern equivalent, but effective none the less. Persons of a particular trade or vocation allied themselves to Guilds, e.g: The Guild of Bakers, The Guild of Carpenters, the Guild of bronze-makers etc.. Membership of a Guild meant protection of a craftsman in much the same way as modern workers are protected by Trades Unions. It was also through the Guild that the apprentice served his training and became a qualified craftsman. Normally in the Ancient Near East a trade or profession was passed from father to son, and with the trade went a membership of the Guild. Often it was difficult for a novice to be accepted by a Guild if he could not prove that his

father or some relative was already a member. In this way, those already in the profession were protected against the problems of redundancy through over-employment.

2F. The “sons of the prophets” as a Prophetic Guild

1. The matter of prophetic guilds in Israel and Judah

Now, it has often been suggested that the *Old Testament* Prophetic Guilds were directly comparable to the Trades Guilds in the sense that membership was exclusive and hereditary, and that the Guild protected the interests of the Prophet. **“Sons of the Prophets”** is therefore to be understood literally in the sense that the members of the Guild were the physical children of Prophetic-parents. Such was certainly the Arab custom for the prophetic art was a professional skill that had to be learnt, and like most other skills was either handed on from father to son or passed on by a teacher. Incidentally, in the Wisdom Literature, a teacher is often known as ‘father’ and his pupil as ‘son’. Unfortunately we do not have sufficient information about the *Old Testament* Guilds to be able to pass judgement.

2. Amos: ‘I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet’

They may indeed have been professional closed groups in this way, hence the importance of Amos’s denial in *Amos* 7:14: **“I am not a Prophet nor the Son of a Prophet ... but YHWH took me and said, ‘Go, prophesy.’”** Amos is denying that he has a --professional skill or is a member of one of the Prophetic Guilds – rather his Prophecy is spontaneous and depends solely on **the LORD’s** Call, not on his training by a guild, or his father, for he is by trade **“A herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees”**.

3. Ecstatic Worship in the Prophetic Guilds

Given that there were prophetic guilds in the *Old Testament*, ecstatic worship seems to have been a common feature in the Guilds. The band of prophets which **Saul** met were ecstasies (*I Samuel* 10:9 ff) and the prophets of Ba’al on Mount Carmel were similar (*I Kings* 18:26 ff). It has been suggested that they gathered in bands because it is easier for a group to become moved as opposed to an individual, and this may have been the case. The prophets which **Saul** met seem to have been treating ecstasy as an end in itself and show no signs of the compulsion of God’s Word. It is however difficult to see this as the only reason why the prophets banded together into Guilds. There is evidence that it was believed that a group of prophets amongst the pagans could be more powerful in persuading the ‘deity’ that a single prophet when it came to ritual enactment. Thus **King Ahab** called upon the 400 prophets led by **Zedekiah-ben-Chennanah** to exact a military ritual before battle (*I Kings* 22:06), while on Mount Carmel the rain making ritual was performed by 50 prophets of Ba’al and 400 prophets of Asherah (*I Kings* 18:19). But again, this still does not provide the full answer to our understanding of the prophetic guilds. So, here we must pass on to consider the relationship between the prophets and the Cult.

G. THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PROPHETS IN THE CULT

1G. Evidence for consideration

1. Evidence from *I Samuel* and *II Kings*: Samuel and Elijah

Samuel commanded **Saul** to go to the ‘hill of God’. The *Revised Standard Version* of the English Bible in *I Samuel* 10:05 states that he told **Saul** to go to the place ‘Gibeath-Elohim’, but that is only the Hebrew for ‘Hill of God’, so there must have been a sanctuary of some kind there; anyway, it was there that **Saul** met the band of prophets (*I Samuel* 10:10). We have already seen that there was a Prophetic Guild at Naioth in Ramah (*I Samuel* 19:18 ff), and *I Samuel* 7:17 tells us that **Samuel** had set up a sanctuary in Ramah. *II Kings* 2:01-2:08 tells us how **Elijah**, before his assumption made a farewell tour of the prophetic guilds at Bethel, Jericho, and Jordan. Bethel and Jordan were ancient Israélite shrines. Indeed, in **Elijah**’s time, Bethel was the religious capital of the Northern Kingdom. The Jordan Sanctuary is otherwise unknown.

2. A working trajectory

This information gives us a clear hint that the Prophetic Guilds were often, if not always, attached to a Sacred Place. But, individual Prophets were also seen as Cultic functionaries in the *Old Testament*. **Samuel** led the sacrificial worship in the High Place in the city where **Saul** first met him (*I Samuel* 9:11 ff). We shall also see that the Writing Prophets usually have strong links with a centre, **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah** with Jerusalem, **Amos** and **Hosea** with Bethel. However, the nature of their relationship with this centre is often difficult to define, but it does seem that these great prophets did not stand in isolation from the Guilds. **Isaiah**, for example, has a band of disciples (*Isaiah* 8:16) who were possibly members of one of the Guilds in Jerusalem.

2G. A brief evaluation and Amos as a test case

1. The view of older scholars and its critique

Older scholars often maintained that the Great Prophets could not have enjoyed any close association with the Cult because they constantly condemned the sacrificial practices of the Temple. However, such a simple deduction is not the most obviously correct solution to the problem. The Prophets were men of their age and the only kind of Worship they knew was the Worship of the Yahwistic Cult. It would have been as hard for them to visualise Worship without Sacrifice as it would be for some of us to visualise Worship without Prayers.

2. Amos: The Classical Test Case

For this reason **Amos** in *Amos* 5 denounces the sacrificial ritual at Bethel (READ: *Amos* 5:21). But, he concludes his condemnation with a call to morality and Justice, as in verse 24; (READ *Amos* 5:24). What **Amos** condemns is not the Cult, but the attitude of mind present in the Cult. Those engaging in the rituals believe that these are sufficient in themselves as a means for honouring **God**. **Amos** says, “No”, and tells his readers and listeners to get their priorities right. There is no sense in offering sacrifice if you cannot live an upright life. Let Justice come first, then offer your sacrifices. Only then will **God** accept them. When we come to the study of the Individual Prophets we shall return again to the problem of their relationship with the Cult. In the meantime, a few general words about the problem of false prophecy.

H. THE PROBLEM OF FALSE PROPHECY

1H. Dimensions of false prophecy

1. The problem posed: *Deuteronomy* 18

The problem of false Prophecy is one that recurs constantly in the *Old Testament* Writings. *Deuteronomy* 15:01-15:05 and 18:15-18:22 deals with it by declaring that Prophecy which comes true is true Prophecy, and that that does not is false. But this is not always a helpful criterion for discernment, as by the time an event has happened it can be too late to do something about the Prophet.

2. The function of the Prophet

However, it is not always the layman who was deceived by false Prophecy. Even a Prophet himself could be deceived. Thus the Man of God who came to Bethel in **King Jeroboam's** reign (*I Kings* 15) was deceived by a false oracle from one of the prophets in Bethel. When a Prophet utters the words, **"Thus says YHWH"**, who is to judge whether he speaks true or false words? The Judaeen Man of God suffers severe punishment for failing to discern the falseness of the words of the prophet from Bethel, and the implication of the narrative is simply that he should have known better.

3. The potential for abuse in Prophecy

The office of prophet could lend itself easily to abuse. A prophet had to be consulted for an oracle, and as we have seen, often expected to be paid. The better the oracle, the better the trade that the prophet plys. **Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Micah**, constantly condemn the prophets who give oracles of "Peace" and make a fortune out of it. (c.f.: *Jeremiah* 14:13ff, 23:16ff, 28:08ff, *Ezekiel* 15:08f). Here's *Micah* 3:05: **"Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead My People astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing in their mouths."** When we remember the constant fear of the curse which when spoken was held to be universally effective, we can still imagine how much money the people paid the prophets for a blessing!

2H. Discerning the Lord's truth

1. The basic problem of false prophecy: True and false prophecy

The basic problem of false prophecy is summarised by **Jeremiah** when he says, **"Who among them has stood in the Council of the LORD to perceive and hear His Word, or who has given heed to His Word and Testament?"** (*Jeremiah* 23:18). The false prophet is the one who has no insight into the Mind of **God**, who has not been lifted up by the Spirit into the Council of **God** to see and hear His plan for Mankind. The false prophet is the one who can only perform the intercessory function, but who dabbles in the declaratory function without the proper equipment to do so.

2. The dilemma for the 'seeker after God's Truth'

But, where stands the man who comes to consult the prophet? How is he to know the Truth? The problem is a perennial one, and still exists today. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to **Saint Paul** in *1 Corinthians* 12:10, is the power to distinguish between different kinds of spirits, but it seems that the Church today does not possess the same fullness of the Spirit that **Saint Paul** believed it should have, for we still have the problems of the *Old Testament* with us in this respect, as I am sure that you are keenly aware. The mere fact of ecstasy or spirit possession was no guide in itself to false prophecy in the Ancient Near East, as anyone who was 'non compos inni' was a man possessed, but it was often difficult to discern what power it was behind the manifestation. You will remember how certain people quite wrongly believed **Christ** was possessed by **Beelzebub**.

When we look back we can judge. Only prayer, and his own sense of the Presence of God can help the contemporary.

I. THE POLITICAL ALLIANCES OF THE PROPHETS

II. The Prophetic role vis-à-vis Politics

1. The role of the Prophet

Prophets were inevitable interferers in political matters. You will recall **Pedersen's** distinction between the chief, the priest, and the prophet and how he considered each to have a political role. But the prophet of **the LORD's** 'interference' extended beyond a pure representation to Israël of the Will of God, and beyond cursing and imitative magic that was seen in the 'pagan parallels' (Israël's prophets proclaimed God's curse but did not perform 'magic').

2. Political intervention by the prophets

We find the Prophets declaring God's Will for the State and by their action instigating political reactions as serious as civil war and the overthrowal of dynasties.

(a.) It is possible that one stratum in the *Samuel* suggests that **Saul** took up the throne on the instigation of **Samuel**.

(b.) **Nathan** the prophet, who anointed **Solomon** king, was deeply involved in the court intrigues of **King David's** reign.

(c.) It was **Abijah** the prophet who encouraged **Jeroboam** to revolt against **Solomon** (*I Kings* 11:29 ff) and **Shemaiah** who restrained **Rehoboam** from retaliating (*I Kings* 12:22 ff).

(d.) **Elijah** and **Elisha** led the opposition to the House of **Omri**, and **Elijah** was responsible for the bloodbath and wanton slaughter of **Jehu** (*II Kings* 9) c.f.: notes on 'Holy War'.

(e.) **Elisha's** instigation of **Jehu's** atrocities seems to have been stirred by a thirst for revenge on the house of **Omri** which had been responsible under **Ahab** and **Jezebel** for the murder of the prophets of **the LORD**. (c.f.: notes in *Psalms* units on 'Corporate Personality'.)

2I. The continuation of political ministry in the writing prophets

1. The Writing prophets: Interest in politics takes on a new appearance

When we study the writing prophets we shall see that they continued to intervene in politics, but with **Amos**, the revolutionary spirit amongst the prophets was superseded by a firmer form of nationalism which was based on the Covenant between God and Israël. Interest in politics did not wane, but it took on a new appearance. In the political and moral disorders of Israël, these prophets saw a disobedience to God's Covenant Laws. Punishment was bound to follow, and it was the prophet's duty to warn the nation of the consequences of its actions. Prophecy of woe became a developed genre therefore, and although often rather harsh and puritanical, often bitter and cruel, was nonetheless based in a true love and concern for Israël and her future good.

2. A note about our next teaching hour

In the next lectures we shall pass on to look at the writing prophets, and first at *Amos*.

UNITS 10 & 11: HEBREW WRITTEN PROPHECY & AMOS

A. AMOS: THE PROPHET AND HIS TIMES

1A. The Man Amos and Historical setting

1. Amos: The Shepherd of Tekoa

(a) Amos the shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees

According to the editorial structure of the Book *Amos*, the prophet was a shepherd who lived at Tekoa. Tekoa was a small village about 12 miles South of Jerusalem in the Judaeen Highlands, and the land itself is useful for little else besides sheep-rearing. In *Amos* 7:14-7:15, **Amos** himself claims to be a shepherd, but also to be a dresser of sycamore trees. It is unlikely that his work with sycamore trees could have been more than seasonal, and it is possible that he hired his services out at the time of harvesting for fruit gathering.

(b) Life in the country wilderness of Tekoa

Living in Tekoa, **Amos** was living in a land of wilderness. On the eastern slopes of the Judaeen highlands, there is a sharp deterioration in rainfall and the land is semi-desert, suited only for small settlements and very limited cultivation. The community life at Tekoa was therefore simple and contained many features of tribal life which were in sharp contrast to the life of the larger cities. In a tribal life the bond of kinship is all important and demands a high level of simple, primitive, morality. Virtues were social rather than economic amongst the tribal communities, and it was against this background that Amos lived.

(c) The contrast with the city

When **Amos** went up to the city, possibly to sell wool or some form of pastoral merchandise, he was shocked by the moral conditions he found prevalent there and felt compelled to denounce the abuses that they had inculcated.

2. The date of Amos's utterances

(a) Evidence from *Amos's* inscriptions

An editorial inscription to the Book sets **Amos's** preaching in the reigns of **King Uzziah** of Judah and of **Jeroboam II** of Israël.

Uzziah: reigned **785 – 742 B.C.** (King of Judah).

Jeroboam: reigned **786 – 746 B.C.** (King of Israël).

So, Amos must have been active sometime between **786 and 746 B.C.** i.e: **Amos** prophesied in the **first half of the eighth century B.C.**

(b) Evidence from *Amos* 1 and *II Kings* 6 & 8 re.: Hazael and Ben-Hadad

In his first oracle, (*Amos* 1:03-1:05), **Amos** recalls atrocities perpetrated by **Hazael** and **Ben-Hadad** kings of Damascus. There is record of these two monarchs found in *II Kings* 6 and 8, and we see that they were threatening Israël at the **end of the ninth century B.C.**, before the revival of Northern Israel under **Jeroboam II**. We must assume then that Amos is not too far removed from the time of these oppressors, and it seems likely that he prophesied before **750 B.C.** A more precise date is unfortunately not possible. The editorial introduction does give a very precise date – **“two years before the earthquake”**, but unfortunately the earthquake in question cannot now be dated. However, it seems unlikely that we must bring the date back too near to **783 B.C.**, for **Amos** seems to have been aware of the rising threat of Assyria.

2A. The Assyrian factor

1. The international background to Amos's ministry

Assyria had undergone a period of weakness in the **Ninth Century B.C.** That was now changing. By **853 B.C. Shalmaneser III** had come as far West as Qarqar on the River Orontes, but his progress was stopped there by the victory of a coalition of Palestinian states. Nevertheless in **841 B.C. Shalmaneser III** succeeded in obtaining tribute from **Jehu king of Israël**. (N.B.: C.f.: PICC Foundation Course 22 *Biblical Archaeology* and the notes there on The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. This obelisk is about a person's height and is in the British Museum, London. It shows **Jehu** paying tribute in person to Shalmaneser, probably in the latter's palace. There is no direct reference to this event in the *Old Testament*.) However, these two events were of only minor significance in the history of Israël and Assyria, and it was not until the reign of **Tiglath Pileser III** ("**Pul**" in the *Old Testament*) that Assyria became strong. However: Danger increased. By **745-727 B.C.** Assyrian rise to power under "Pul" dangerously threatened the West. **Amos** was aware of the danger.

2. Amos's response to the Assyrian threat

(a) An adversary and a captivity beyond Damascus

Amos 3:11 & 3:12 refer to an un-named "**adversary**", and *Amos* 6:14 refers to a nation that will 'afflict' Israël. *Amos* 7:09 tells us that the affliction is to be in battle and *Amos* 5:05, 6:07, 7:17, and 9:04 foretell the captivity and enslavement of Israëlités who will be removed from the land. A precise hint is given in *Amos* 5:27 – the captives are to go into exile '**beyond Damascus**', i.e: into the far north and east, that is the land of Mesopotamia and hence Assyria.

(b) A chronological corollary

Now, if the prophet were aware of a rising danger in the North East we cannot remove his date too far from **750 B.C.** So it seems best to place **Amos** in the **mid-eighth century**, and as such he is the earliest of the writing prophets.

3A. Conditions of life in eighth century Israël and Judah

1. An age of international and military security, and hence economic boom

In order to understand more fully the ministry of **Amos**, something needs to be said about the conditions of life in Israël and Judah during his time. In the era of peace during the weakness of Assyria, Judah and Israël experienced great security and a boom in economics. Egypt was at this time as weak and as ineffectual as Assyria, and no powers threatened Israël's borders. Strangely enough, Israël and Judah also lived at peace with each other after many years of war and turmoil. Security was the key note of the age, and according to *I Chronicles* 20 and 27, this security was maintained largely by military strength.

2. An age of increased wealth and luxury

It was an age too of increased wealth and luxury, and from this period come the exotic Samaritan ivories (c.f.: **A. Parrot Samaria**) (EXPLAIN **Parrot's** Information). Of course, economic prosperity affects city life more than it does rural life. Luxury goods flowed into the great trading centres of Israël and Judah, but of course, as is usual, this meant that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. So, the nation was sharply divided between the wealthy upper class and the impoverished lower class.

3. The wealthy upper class versus an impoverished underclass

(a) Concerning the wealthy

Their houses were of hewn stone (*Amos* 5:11), they had ivory inlaid furniture (*Amos* 6:04, 3:15); wine was plentiful (*Amos* 6:00); many could afford summer and winter residences (*Amos* 3:15); whilst women drank like men (*Amos* 4:01).

(b) Concerning the community

There was commercial dishonesty (*Amos* 8:05, 8:06); Injustice prevailed in Court (*Amos* 5:12, 5:07).

(c) Concerning the poor

The poor were trampled into the dust of the earth whilst the rich clung to their luxuries (*Amos* 5:11). It was not uncommon for the poor man who was in debt merely to the cost of a pair of shoes to have to sell himself into slavery to satisfy his creditors (*Amos* 2:06).

4. Amos's response

Amos, coming from the simple and highly moralistic life of the small rural and tribal community in Tekoa, as you can well imagine was shocked at these conditions.

B. THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF HEBREW PROPHETIC BOOKS

1B. Oracles, authors, editors, and the prose-poetry dichotomy

1. Introduction

Now, before we look more closely at what **Amos** had to say, there are one or two topics to be dealt with, of which the literary structure of the Hebrew Prophetic Books is the first, and the now outdated Nineteenth century hypothesis that the Old Testament prophets came before the Old Testament Law is the second.

2. Oracles, Authors, and Editors

Firstly, we cannot be certain that **Amos** wrote the Book that goes by his name. Nowhere are we told that he wrote it – only that he uttered the oracles recorded in it. Maybe he did write down some of the oracles contained in it, but it is far from certain that he was ultimately responsible for the compilation of the Book. The same is true of the other Old Testament prophets, and we have evidence from the prophets themselves that they were not personally responsible for the editing of their own oracles. (a) In *Isaiah* 8:16 we hear the prophet command that his teaching should be preserved among his followers, and in *Jeremiah* 36 and 45 is to be found an example of one at work. So: (b) **Jeremiah** had a disciple called **Baruch** who was his scribe, and it seems it was **Baruch** who was responsible for much of the writing down and editing of the prophecy of *Jeremiah*. So, it is often suggested that prophets often had disciples who preserved their teaching, probably at first in oral form, and it was in the prophetic schools these formed that the oracles were edited and compiled into Books.

3. Author/Editor and the Verse/Prose dichotomy

Now, there is a lot in this suggestion, for more often than not a prophetic Book contains two types

of material; prose and verse. The verse sections are generally the oracles of the prophet, and the fact that they are cast in verse suggests they were phrased to facilitate learning by heart. On the other hand, the prose sections in the prophetic Books are normally not oracles, but narratives about the prophet in which the prophet is spoken of in the third person; i.e. they are little essays about incidents in the life of the prophet recorded for us by an editor and inserted into the collection of oracles. In *Amos* we find such prose editing especially in *Amos* 1:01, and *Amos* 7:10-7:15. But it is not just in the prose of the prophetic Books that we find editorial work.

2B. The Prophetic Oracle: Its literary nature, form, & juxtaposition

1. The literary nature of the prophetic oracle

The Prophetic Oracle is normally a short poetic unit which can be lifted out of its context and can stand as a complete unit within itself.

2. The Form of a Prophetic Oracle: *Amos* 1:3-5 an example

(a) *Amos* 1:3-5 as an example

Here is *Amos* 1:03-1:05: (READ TEXT)

- a. Declaration of Authority: **“Thus says YHWH”**.
- b. Statement of sin (*Amos* 1:03).
- c. Prophecy of Divine retribution (*Amos* 1:04, 1:05).
- d. Concluding **“YHWH N^{um}”** i.e.: **“Oracle of YHWH”** formula.

(b) Analysis

This unit is completely self-contained and is all address to the rulers of Damascus warning them of the wrath to come as a result of their sin. It has no direct connection with what goes before or what comes after. *Amos* 1:02 seems to be a poetic description of an earthquake, and *Amos* 1:06-1:08 is an oracle on Gaza and the Philistine cities – and neither of these units are related to the oracle on Damascus. When the prophet utters an oracle he uses the best modern T.V. techniques – a short statement which is to the point, which contains a story message and is easily remembered. It is the editor who was responsible for stringing these oracles together in the way we have them, and sometimes it is not easy to see what principles were used in joining one oracle to the next.

3. Principles relating to the juxtaposition of oracles

(a) Subject matter: *Amos* 4:6-10

Sometimes oracles are linked together because they deal with the same subject matter: e.g. *Amos* 4:06-4:10 is a collection of four oracles which deal with drought and plague.

(b) The stichtwort principle: *Amos* 5:12-13

Sometimes oracles are planned side by side on what is known as the **Stichtwort** or ‘catchword’ principle; i.e. a word or phrase at the end of an oracle has suggested to the editor another oracle which he remembers as beginning with the same word and phrase. e.g. *Amos* 5:12-5:13: This draws to conclusion an oracle about the oppression of the poor. It ends with the words, **“for it is an evil time,”** and the word **‘evil’** suggested to the editor an oracle which started with the words, **“seek good and not evil.”** Furthermore, the first oracle had **“turning aside the needy in the gate,”** (verse 12: explain), and the oracle which begins with **‘seek good and not evil’** is on the theme of “establishing Justice in the gate”. (*Amos* 4:15).

(c) Oracles have a similar form or structure: *Amos* 1:3-2:11

Sometimes oracles are put side by side because they have the same basic form of structure. This is

clearly true of the oracles of *Amos* 1:03-2:11:

Amos 1:03-2:03:

A series of oracles against the nations.

Amos 2:04-2:11:

Oracles against Israel of Judah.

The second group are so juxtaposed because of their similarity in form.

4. Reading an Old Testament Prophetic Book as a collection of Oracles

So, to understand a prophetic Book it is necessary to divide the chapters into individual oracles and read each oracle as a unit. Oracles are usually easy to isolate as they begin with, **“Thus says”** or end with, **“oracle of YHWH”** (R.S.V. translation reads, **‘says YHWH’**), or sometimes both. The Books must not be read as if they were one continuous narrative –you wouldn’t read a hymn book or anthology like that.

5. Chronology is not necessarily a principle; editorial work is varied

Unfortunately it is not always possible to find chronological order in the arrangement either.

e.g.: **Isaiah’s** initial call to prophesy comes in chapter 6 and not in chapter 1. Editorial work is not, however, confined to writing prose narratives and arranging oracles. The editor can often insert his own oracles alongside the authentic oracles of the prophets.

3B. Other Literary devices found in Old Testament Prophetic Books

1. Doublets: E.g.: *Amos* 1:2 = *Joel* 3:16; *Isaiah* 2:2-4 = *Micah* 4:1-3

The same oracle may occur in more than one prophetic Book, e.g: *Amos* 1:02 = *Joel* 3:16; whilst *Isaiah* 2:02-2:04 = *Micah* 4:01-4:03. It may be that **YHWH** gave two prophets the same oracle, or it may be that the editor of one book knew the oracle in another Book and thought it appropriate to include it, in which case the utterances of one prophet are in part a commentary on those of another. For those of us attempting to discover the ‘ipsissima verba’ of the prophets, due consideration must be taken of this doublet feature.

2. Free Composition: E.g.: *Amos* 2:4-5

Some oracles are the free composition of the editor. The oracle of Judah in *Amos* 2:04-2:05 is a late addition and is editorial. Its language from beginning to end stands in sharp contrast with the style of *Amos*, and in fact the style here appears to be Deuteronomistic. It seems that a Deuteronomistic editor saw in *Amos* oracles against the nations and against Israel and felt that Judah was just as bad as these others and should have an oracle against her included, as she was party to many of the things being prophesied against that were characteristics of these other peoples.

3. Psalms: *Habakkuk* 3 and *Amos* 4:13, 5:8, 9:5-6 corporately

Psalms are often included into prophetic Books – here are two examples:

- (1) *Habakkuk* 3: An extended Psalm seemingly appended to *Habakkuk* which is very very old, and incidentally, omitted from *Habakkuk Pesher*, the *Habakkuk* commentary of the Dead Sea Scrolls;
- (2) *Amos* 4:13, 5:08, 9:05-9:06: Fragments of what must originally have been one Psalm in Praise of **God** who rules the created world are preserved here. These now independent units show signs of their coherence not only by their similarity in theme, but also by the presence of the repeated refrain at the end of every verse; **“the LORD of Hosts is His Name”**, whilst *Amos* 5:08 and *Amos* 9:06 repeat the chorus, **“who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the surface of the earth”**. Again, it is possible that this was a hymn or a favourite of Amos, or possibly Amos

himself was its author – we do not know – but its present division and scattering through the Book *Amos* is editorial to it.

4. The oracle to the future community: *Amos* 9:11-15

(a) The oracle to the future community

There are also oracles in the Prophetic Books which often appear to be addressed to a community which was not that to which the prophet preached, but which was a community living at a much later date. Thus *Amos* 9:11-9:15 seems to be an oracle which was originally addressed to people living in exile after the fall of Jerusalem 250 years beyond the time of **Amos**.

(b) An example: *Amos* 9:11-15

The oracle of *Amos* 9:11-9:15 speaks of the House of David as fallen (*Amos* 9:11), the city in ruins (*Amos* 9:11), whilst Edom is a particular nuisance to the inhabitants left in the desolate land (*Amos* 9:12) (READ). All this is a picture of the conditions in the Exile and the promise of restoration that follows would only have been understood by those who were experiencing its misfortunes. **Amos** is a prophet of woe and his oracles are oracles of woe, whereas this picture in *Amos* 9:11-9:15 is of a future golden age. There is little sign in the rest of *Amos* that the prophet had such a picture in mind when he addressed sinful Israë. All that he could see resulting from their sin was disaster.

4B. The Structure of the Book *Amos*.

1. Introduction

We are now in a position to look at the general structure of *Amos*, and bearing in mind the work of the editor. *Amos* is one of the simpler Books to subdivide.

2. Structure of *Amos*

<i>Amos</i> 1:1 – 1:2:	Editorial Superscription.
<i>Amos</i> 1:3 – 2:16:	Oracles against the nations and Israë.
<i>Amos</i> 3:01– 6:14:	Oracles of Judgement against Israë.
<i>Amos</i> 7:01– 7:09	
<i>Amos</i> 8:01– 8:03:	Visions given by YHWH to Amos.
<i>Amos</i> 9:01– 9:04:	
<i>Amos</i> 7:10– 7:17:	Editorial narrative concerning Amos's visit to Bethel.
<i>Amos</i> 8:04– 8:14:	
<i>Amos</i> 9:07– 9:10:	Further judgements against Israë.
<i>Amos</i> 9:11– 9:15:	Exilic promises of Restoration.

C. THE PROPHETS AS FOUNDERS OF ISRAËL's FAITH?

1C. The Nineteenth Century Liberal thesis

1. The logic of the Liberal idea that the prophets founded Israel's faith

One of the questions that is often asked about the Old Testament Prophetic Books is, “Why were the oracles of these particular *Old Testament* prophets preserved in writing?” Why, for example, do we not have a ‘Book of **Elijah**’ or a ‘Book of **Micaiah-ben-Imlah**’? If you were to look at older works on the *Old Testament*, especially those from the end of the last century and the beginning of this. you will find that this question is answered by the suggestion that the writing prophets were the founders of Israël’s Faith.

2. The prophets brought Israel from paganism to Monotheism?

To enlarge: The testimony of the prophets themselves is that there was much corruption in contemporary Israëlite religion, and it was suggested that it was the prophets who drew Israël out of its semi-paganism and brought her the high Faith of Ethical Monotheism.

3. JULIUS WELHAUSEN: The Prophets came before the Law

So, older liberal scholars believed that the prophets were innovators and great religious thinkers. This school of thought goes back to the late Nineteenth Century German scholar **Julius Welhausen** but it lead to certain oddities in the reconstruction of the History of Israël’s Faith, i.e.: that the prophets came before the Law! Hence: It takes little account of the religion of **Moses**, for example, and as a result **Welhausen** had to try to argue that the *Decalogue*, i.e.: the Ten Commandments, must post-date *Isaiah*! Clearly this is unsatisfactory.

2C. Present day perspectives on the writing prophets

1. The present day scenario

Today, happily, the position is reversed. With the re-discovery of the age of the Judges and a new interest in the Mosaic foundation of the Israëlite Faith, few would maintain that the Ten Commandments were late and post-exilic! It is also now recognised that the Sinai traditions are older than the Davidic Covenant, and so the prophets have fallen from the high status given them by the Welhausen School of thought. The prophets are no longer thought to be responsible for the *Psalms*, the Law, Wisdom literature, etc. These things are seen as independent and often older than the writing prophets.

2. The prophets as reactionaries not innovators

The prophets are no longer treated as innovators. They did not invent the Sinai Covenant Faith, they merely condemned Israël for straying from it and called Israël back to it. They were not innovators, they were reactionaries. Their Faith was the old Faith of Sinai, and they call upon Israël to return to that Faith.

3. The prophets as reactionaries and independent thinkers

Whilst we recognise that the prophets were reactionaries, they were also independent thinkers and they brought many new insights into Israël’s Faith. The purpose of research today is to see what these new insights were and to attempt to relate them to the contemporary situation. Thus we find that the prophets fit into the age and society to which they belonged. They quote from *Psalms*, they use the techniques of Wisdom, and they appeal to the Law. Older Liberal scholars believed that these very things were signs that the prophets invented them, but today they are recognised as being external influences upon the prophets. We shall notice in forthcoming studies that **Isaiah** was heavily dependent on the organised Temple Worship at Jerusalem, and that **Amos** used techniques

of Wisdom. This is simply because they were men of their own age and society. So, we return to the question – Why was **Amos** preserved in writing, whilst none of the prophets before him were?

3C. Amos as a prophet

1. The distinctiveness of Amos as a prophet

There must have been something special about **Amos**: What was it? Whilst it is difficult to draw any sharp distinction between **Amos** and the earlier prophets there was something different – **Amos** himself declares the difference. *Amos* 2:11-2:12 and 3:07-3:08 shows that **Amos** held the prophets in high esteem, and yet in *Amos* 7:14-7:15, in his encounter with **Amaziah** at Bethel, he says, “**I am not a prophet, nor one of the sons of the prophets ...**” i.e: **Amos** disclaims membership of the ‘son’s of the prophets or the prophetic guilds.

2. Amos was not an official ‘cultic prophet’

Now, **King Amaziah** clearly thought **Amos** was an ordinary prophet, for he thinks that **Amos** has come to Bethel to try to earn his living by prophesying there (c.f.: *Amos* 7:12-7:13: READ and EXPLAIN), but **Amos** says, “No”, – he is not that kind of a prophet at all. **Amos** continues that he is a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees. His words are not oracles given for money, but rather are commanded by **God** (*Amos* 7:15).

3. Amos has a distinctive Divine vocation

Here we get a hint of the call of **Amos** to prophesy (EXPLAIN). Amos is not denying that he was a prophet, for he says that the command was, “**Go, Prophesy**”. He is only trying to assert that his prophecy is of a different nature from the usual oracles given by the sons of the prophets.

4. Amos: Conviction as a function of submission to God

We can only conclude that it is in the intensity of his conviction and in his willingness to submit his entire personality to the authority of the Divine Will that **Amos** impressed himself and his uniqueness upon his contemporaries. **King Amaziah** found himself up against an iron will. He had been accustomed to dealing with the cult prophets at Bethel – but **Amos** was not to be bullied – his words were **God’s** Words.

5. Amos: Preacher of the end of Israel

Now there is something novel about Amos’s message. Preaching Judgement is not new, but in *Amos* 5:01-5:02 and *Amos* 8:01-8:02 and elsewhere, **Amos** preaches the end of Israë. The setting of this preaching is the Covenant between **the LORD** and Israë. Israë had broken **the LORD’s** Covenant and so **the LORD** will reject Israë (*Amos* 3:02). Earlier prophets had spoken of a purge of sinners from the community – **Amos** spoke of the casting off of the community. So, the basis of any renewal of the community must be that of obedience to the Covenant on the part of Israë.

6. Amos’s work preserved as he preached ‘the old time religion’

It was probably **Amos’s** devotion to the cause of **YHWH** and to the true and ancient Covenant Faith that ensured the preservation of his oracles in writing amongst those who clung to the ‘old time religion’. Before we look more closely at the problems of *Amos* and the prophet himself, let’s study his teaching.

D. AMOS'S TEACHING

1D. Amos's teaching on the Cult i.e.: the organised worship of Israel

1. Amos & the religion of the wealthy Northern shrines

(a) Amos's shock at what he encounters

Amos, coming to the wealthy shrines of the North with his simple Covenant Faith and coming from a simple rural background, was shocked at what went on in Israë'l's religion.

(b) The dimensions of the organised Northern Israelite cultus

Certainly Israë'l brought to the shrines plenty of sacrifices (*Amos* 4:04), peace offerings (*Amos* 5:22), meal offerings (*Amos* 5:22), thank-offerings (*Amos* 4:05), freewill offerings (*Amos* 4:05), and tithes (*Amos* 4:04). They kept their festivals in Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba (*Amos* 5:05) and celebrated these with music and song (*Amos* 5:23).

2. Amos's condemnation of the Northern Israelite cultus

Yet, **Amos** condemns their cult. Now, it has often been supposed that **Amos's** condemnation is a condemnation of all sacrificial worship, that **Amos** was a puritan and an evangelical who sought to impose a spiritual religion as opposed to a cultic religion. But such conclusions seem to be putting too heavy a demand upon the text of *Amos*. Certainly *Amos* 5:25 (READ) seems to imply a rejection of all sacrifice, but it is interesting that in this case the condemnation immediately following is directed to the pagan nature of the sacrifice which is being offered to the star gods Sakkuth and Kaiwan. It seems highly improbable that **Amos**, living in **Eighth Century B.C.** Judah could have conceived of a religion which had no cult. The answer to the problem seems to lie in *Amos* 5:21-5:24. Here we find the primary demand is for Justice and Righteousness, or, if you like, obedience to the Covenant. Get your moral values right first, says **Amos**, then you can offer the sacrifices. Sacrifice and cult without Faith and Obedience are mere sham and emptiness, and not acceptable to **the LORD**.

2D. Amos's teaching on 'Social Righteousness'

1. Amos as a prophet of human rights

Amos's demand for Justice was not just a religious demand. **Amos** was the prophet of human rights and, if anything, outdid **Karl Marx** in denouncing religion as the opiate of the people. Men cannot offer true worship to God unless they first offer brotherly love to each other. Thus we find **Amos** constantly condemning the social abuses of the age, the social abuses that we have already outlined.

2. His Tekoan background as a factor?

As a member of the Tekoan kin group, **Amos** was well aware of the importance of Social Justice, and so his oracles are a passionate plea for Justice, Order, and Righteousness in social life. So he condemns the oppression of the poor, drunkenness, injustice, extortion, bribery etc.. This whole message is very adequately summarised by *Amos* 5:14. The demand is for Covenant Obedience and moral uprightness – then you will know that **YHWH** is with you.

3D. Ethical Monotheism

1. Amos: From Henotheism to Monotheism

In **Amos** we can see the crossing over from the older henotheism (one God for Israël, but recognising the gods of the nations) of Mosaic religion and the explicit Monotheism of *Deutero-Isaiah*. For example: Amos points out that the authority of YHWH extends to the depths of Sheol (Amos 9:02) – something which the Psalmist of Psalm 4:02 did not seem to have grasped. The older belief of henotheism held that outside the borders of Israël other gods were in control (*Judges* 11:24), but **Amos** points out that **the LORD's** authority extends beyond Israël's borders.

2. Amos: The Lord has jurisdiction over all nations and all the earth; Universal morals

Amos addresses oracles to the nations (*Amos* 1:03-2:03) over whom he believes **YHWH** has jurisdiction and in *Amos* 9:07 he extends **YHWH's** authority to the limits of the known earth – Ethiopia. The Philistines and Syrians were old enemies of Israël and even over these **YHWH** holds sway. However, although it seems clear that **Amos** is to all intents and purposes a Monotheist, there is no explicit statement to that effect. This is probably because **Amos** is not concerned about the philosophical question as to whether there are in reality other gods outside of Israël. His concern is with morality. **YHWH** is a moral God, and His demands in ethics are universal demands. In other words, the ethics of the Covenant are the universal ethics of Mankind.

3. Israel, although the chosen covenant people, is subject to God's judgement

When a nation other than Israël breaches that moral law, it too stands subject to the Judgement of **YHWH**. Israël, because of her unique election and special status before **YHWH**, is not in a position of unique privilege. She is subject to the same universal ethic and her unique status merely means that her responsibility is greater – she is more obliged than any of the nations to the Covenant Law and its required Obedience (*Amos* 3:02).

4D. Eschatology

1. S. MOWINCKEL: The Day of the Lord: A cultic new year festival enactment?

In *Amos* 5:18-5:2 we find mention of the Day of the LORD. The Day of the Lord is here something that the people look forward to as a day full of light. This day of **YHWH** is the day of **the LORD's** showdown with the powers of chaos, according to the Norwegian scholar **Sigmund Mowinckel**. For him, in the cult of Israel it was the New Year Festival that was the occasion of the Epiphany and Enthronement of **YHWH**, the defeat of the enemies of Israël, and the subjugation of chaos.

2. Present cultic enactment points to the future

(a) The 'Day of the Lord' in Israelite belief was to be a future glorious day for Israel

However, we shall do well to remember that within Spiritual Hope, this '**Day of the Lord**' is always future. It may be cultically enacted as a present reality, but it represents a future hope when the Kingdom of God is to be re-established. In Israëlite cultic belief this '**Day of the Lord**' was to be a glorious day when Israël was to be raised above the nations.

(b) The 'Day of the Lord' will be a day of darkness and judgement for Israel

Amos says, “No!” The Day of the LORD is to be a day of darkness. There will be a day of the LORD, there will be a showdown – but to you it will be a day of darkness as you have aligned yourselves with the powers of chaos. The cult does not ensure an automatic Salvation. The Day of the LORD is not just a cultic and political event, it is also a moral event, and its primary theme is Judgement and Justice. That Judgement of the Eschaton was executed by foreign nations whilst at war. It is a Covenant event and the test will be obedience to the Covenant. This seems to be the best interpretation of *Amos* 1:8-5:20. It is a reaction to the popular eschatology of the cult.

(c) ‘Seek the Lord and live’ and ‘maybe the Lord will be gracious’

Now, although **Amos** is a prophet of Doom, his message is not without hope. He does not declare darkness without the hope of light. So we find him saying, “**Seek the LORD and live,**” (*Amos* 5:14). but he does not hold out that hope for everyone. He is too much of a realist and recognises that the majority will not repent, but he does envisage, and positively so, a remnant (*Amos* 5:15), and it “**may be that the LORD will be gracious**” to that remnant. However, **Amos** does not envisage any particular function for that remnant: it will simply exist.

3. In Summary

We have seen several themes in *Amos* very much in their infancy – Monotheism, the Day of the LORD, the Doctrine of the Remnant. We shall find these themes being taken up by other prophets and developed – especially in *Isaiah*.

E. AMOS & THE CULT

1E. Amos as a cultic prophet

1. The matter of Amos’s relationship to the Israelite cultuses

We have already seen that **Amos** claims that he is not a cultic prophet. But, if he is not, what then is his relationship to the cult at Jerusalem, Bethel, Dan, etc.? He was antipathetic to many cultic practices and beliefs, especially to sacrifice as an empty ritual, and to the cultic hope for the future. Yet at the same time he is very much interested in the cult and certainly tries to correct it where he thinks it has gone wrong.

2. Amos as a reformist and revolutionary cult prophet?

Now, it has been argued that **Amos** was a cultic prophet who was a reformist and a revolutionary. For example, if **Amos** was not a cultic prophet, what was the setting of the oracles against the nations? It seems unlikely that Amos travelled to Damascus, Phillistia, Edom, Ammon, and Moab just to deliver these oracles, but they could have been uttered in the context of the cult at a festival, for example, as a part of the assertion of the victory of **YHWH** over the nations. Outside the cult it is very difficult to find a setting for them. Of course, they may have been uttered on various occasions when there were Israëlites gathered together simply to encourage them by declaring that **YHWH** was going to be Lord over their enemies, – but Amos also said that **YHWH** would be Lord over Israëel . The oracles of the nations fit properly into the tenor of **Amos’s** message as a whole, as oracles of judgement, but it is extremely difficult to see to whom, and when, they could have been spoken.

3. Amos is not a cult prophet: His oracles were addressed only to the North

However, the strongest argument against **Amos** as a cultic prophet is that he addressed his oracles

to Northern Israël, and preached in the north, although he himself lived in the South. We have no account of **Amos**'s preaching in the South, even though some scholars argue that 'Israël' in *Amos* refers to the whole nation including Judah. But, it seems on the whole that when **Amos** refers to 'Israël' he means the 'North', Certainly all the shrines he mentions are northern, and, if as it seems, he delivered his oracles at those shrines, he could hardly have been a cultic prophet there.

2E. H.W. WOLFF's Thesis: *Gestige Heinut Amos*

1. Amos as a clan wisdom figure

In 1973, H.W. Wolff in his *Gestige Heinut Amos* made an attempt to seek **Amos**'s setting elsewhere. Wolff notes that **Amos** uses many of the techniques of Wisdom. e.g:

a. Nature Questions: *Amos* 3:03-3:06, 3:08; compare *Job* 8:08-8:11, 8:13. These are analogies from nature, and a moral answer is implied in the question.

b. Wisdom Admonitions: Many of these are to be found in *Amos* 5 and 6. e.g: '**seek good and not evil that you live**'. As with *Proverbs* the consequences are stressed: compare *Proverbs* 15:24, 19:20.

c. Oracles against the nations: An appeal to international justice which is a common theme in Wisdom. Interestingly, they are presented in numerical form, compare *Proverbs* 30, and *Ecclesiasticus* 25:07-25:11. There are other details.

d. Amos's Tekoan origins: **Amos** was from Tekoa – *II Samuel* 14:02, a wise woman dwelt at Tekoa – so Wisdom was to be found there.

2. Wolff's definition of 'wisdom'

Now, Wisdom according to Wolff is the common precepts and maxims of the clan. So **Amos** shows himself in using this form of speech and argument to have been nurtured on the teachings of the clan and not the cult.

UNIT 12: HOSEA

A. HOSEA: THE PROPHET & HIS TIMES

1A. An Introductory Study Note for Units 12-14

1. Questions of 'Introduction'

In these lectures on the prophets that follow, I shall not deal in too great detail with such questions as date, authorship, and structure of the Books – these you can get from *Old Testament Introduction* Textbooks and Commentaries. I dealt with these matters in some detail when we looked at *Amos* simply to show you how the principles of analysis work when studying the prophetic Books.

2. The study of *Hosea* in this respect

Here I shall only say that it is not possible to divide *Hosea* as neatly as *Amos*. *Hosea* 1-3 deals with **Hosea's** marriage, and the rest of the book contains oracles dealing with religious and political affairs. To attempt further subdivision is difficult. There is no apparent order in the arrangement of the oracles dealing with religious and political affairs, and it is often difficult to distinguish where one finishes and another starts. In comparison with *Amos*, *Hosea* has been poorly edited.

2A. The Prophet and his times

1. The Historical and Geographical Setting of Hosea's Ministry

(a) Hosea in chronological, regnal, and prophetic context

Unlike **Amos** who was a Judaeen prophet preaching in the North, **Hosea** was a Northerner, and there is no evidence that he ever travelled beyond the borders of the Northern Kingdom. His Ministry, we are told in the superscription, was set in the reign of **Jeroboam II** of Israël and in the reigns of **Uzziah**, **Jothan**, **Ahaz**, and **Hezekiah** of Judah – i.e: he was active after the time of **Amos**, but not long after. However, it is unlikely that his ministry went on into the reign of Hezekiah as the superscription suggest, for by that time the Northern Kingdom had fallen to Assyria, and *Hosea's* oracles show no knowledge of that fall.

(b) A sitz-im-leben shortly before the Fall of Samaria of 722 B.C.

From **Hosea's** oracles we see a picture of rapid deterioration and the constant threat from advancing Assyria. These were the last years of the Northern Kingdom, and in the twenty years before the fall of Samaria in **722 B.C.**, six kings reigned in rapid succession, four of whom were assassinated by their successors. This picture of chaos in internal policies, which is reflected in national morality, shows through clearly in *Hosea's* oracles.

2. Hosea's Judaeen Oracles

There are several places in *Hosea* where Judah is referred to e.g: *Hosea* 1:07, 4:15, 6:11, 11:12, and 5:08-5:12, but each of these references is suspect and seems to come from the pen of an editor. For Israël, **Hosea** warns, a catastrophe is imminent, but the references to Judah show that Judah is exempt from this fate, and is not like Israël which is apostate. Judah is pure and true to **the LORD**. Such words could have come from a Nationalistic Judaeen rather than a Northern prophet. **Hosea** was well aware of the national situation, and could hardly have been blind to the Southern apostasy when he condemns the North. We can safely say that **Hosea** was a Northern prophet who preached in the North in the **second half of the 8th Century B.C.** before the fall of Samaria in **722 B.C..**

3. Canaanite Religion: A source of Israélite Apostasy

The religious background to the preaching of **Hosea** is one of apostasy to the Canaanite cults. In the lectures related to the *Psalms* I have dealt with the Canaanite religion in some detail, and you will remember that it was an agricultural religion which emphasised the motif of fertility for the crops. **Ba'al** was a 'cosmic deity' who controlled the storms, wind, rain etc., and he ensured the continuation of cosmos and the natural order by his several victories over **Yam, Lotan** and **Mot** while he secured annual fertility by his marriage to **Anat**. We also saw that the 'hieros gamos' or 'sacred marriage' was a common feature of Canaanite religion. Now, Ba'alism had secured a much stronger foothold in Northern Israël than it had in Judah. We find relatively few traces of Ba'alism in the Jerusalem cult, but this is partly because Judah was a land of shepherds rather than a land of farmers. The Northern valleys were fertile land, and so it was inevitable that Ba'alism should be strong there. You may remember that it was in the North on Mount Carmel that **Elijah** met the prophets of Ahab who were the prophets of Ba'al and Asherah. It is for this reason that **Hosea** contains frequent invectives against the sexual cults of Israël. But, **Hosea** himself was not uninfluenced by his own milieu.

B. HOSEA'S MARRIAGE

1B. The 'Problem' of Hosea's marriage

1. Hosea's marriage his 'Call vision'?

When we look at some of the prophets, e.g: **Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah**, and **Ezekiel**, we find that they all experienced an initial call vision in which they themselves knew **God's** call to prophesy. No such vision is to be found in *Hosea*, but some scholars see **Hosea's** call as coming from **God** through his marriage.

2. The 'problem' in short

Now, there have been many articles and books written about **Hosea's** marriage and still we find it difficult to understand. The basic problem is that the marriage is related in Chapter 1 in the form of a prose biography in which the prophet is referred to in the third person, whilst Chapter 3 deals with **Hosea's** marriage in the form of a prose autobiography in which the prophet therefore refers to himself in the first person. Chapter 2, which separates biography from autobiography is a series of verse oracles. In Chapter 1 the wife is named: **Gomer, daughter of Diblaim**, but the wife is not named in Chapter 3. The question arises as to whether it is the same wife referred to in both cases – for Chapter 3 could be translated, "**The LORD said to me, 'Go again, love a woman,'**" and this sentence suggests that the woman is someone different from **Gomer**. However, the editor clearly intended that the sequence of Chapters 1, 2 and 3 be continuous, and since the woman in Chapter 3 is not named – it may be assumed that she is **Gomer**, or can it?

2B. G. ADAM-SMITH's Thesis: Hosea 1-3 is an historical progression

1. Gomer turned to harlotry during her marriage to Hosea

Now the popular view of this narrative, and still the one most commonly used in sermons, is that propounded by **George Adam-Smith** in his book *The Twelve Prophets*. He assumes that **Gomer** was not an harlot when **Hosea** first married her, but that she turned to harlotry after her marriage. He interprets these chapters therefore as relating to an historical progression.

2. Hosea's children given symbolic names: Israel's 'religious harlotry' with Ba'al a parallel

Hosea was naturally disturbed by his wife's infidelity, and gave names to his children which correspond to the way he felt at the time. The first child was named "**Jezreel**", recalling the atrocities of **Jehu**, the second was called '**Lo-Ruhamah**' or 'Not pitied', and by the time that the third was born he was so disgusted, he named the child, '**Lo-ammi**' or 'Not my people'. There was a Divine oracular intention in the names, for **Hosea** saw his wife's unfaithfulness as a symbol of the unfaithfulness of **Israël**. **Israël** was like a faithless wife who gradually got worse and worse and became so much of an harlot that **the LORD** cast her off as '**not my people**'. Chapter 2 follows naturally upon this biographical narrative, for in it we get the allegory explained. **Israël** is the harlot who has gone after the gods of Canaan and rejected **the LORD** in favour of the sexual cult of **Ba'al**.

3. Hosea buys back his wife from harlotry and insists on her fidelity

And yet **Hosea** is not happy about the suggestion that **Israël** is beyond Redemption. In *Hosea* 2:14-2:15 he visualises a second wilderness period when **Israël** will be taught all over again to be faithful to the Covenant, and so we find him in Chapter 5 going out to seek his wife and get her back. his wife had meantime left him, says **Adam-Smith**, and had fallen into slavery. So **Hosea** has to buy her back at a price. But having bought her back he insists that she stay faithful and refuses to let her commit adultery again – likewise **the Lord** will secure again the fidelity of **Israël** and she will no more play the harlot. As **Hosea** still loves his wife, so **the LORD** loves **Israël** despite her adultery.

4. Adam-Smith's thesis in summary

And so to summarise **Adam-Smith's** thesis. For him the message of the text portion *Hosea* 1-3 for **Adam-Smith** is twofold: (a) As **Hosea** still loves his wife, so **the LORD** loves **Israël** despite her adultery; (b) As **Hosea** discovered his love for **Gomer**, so he discovered the truth of **the LORD's** love for **Israël**. Further: (c) The marriage of **Hosea** takes the place of the call vision to the prophetic ministry which features in the ministry of other *Old Testament* prophets.

5. A brief evaluation

Adam-Smith's interpretation is appealing, but it is not clear that it is correct. *Hosea* chapters 1 – 3 are not continuous and do not appear to have been so right from the first. Chapter 2 is between them, and apart from the connection between **Gomer's** harlotry and **Israël**, shows no other points of contact with Chapters 1 – 3. Hence, other suggestions have been made.

3B. Alternatives to G. ADAM-SMITH's thesis, and their Raison d'être

1. The wife of *Hosea* 3 is not **Gomer**

Suggestion: It has been proposed that the wife of Chapter 3 is not **Gomer**, but that **Hosea** was so disgusted with **Gomer**'s infidelity that he cast her off and sought another and more faithful wife.

Critique: But, it would be odd if **Hosea** found **Gomer** unfaithful that he should go and marry another woman who was already an adulteress and someone else's mistress.

2. Chapters 1 and 3 are the same story: one biography and one auto-biography

Suggestion: It has also been suggested that Chapter 3 is simply telling the same story as chapter 1, but one is biography whilst the other is autobiography.

Critique: However, apart from the fact that the wife of chapter 3 and **Gomer** in chapter 1 are both adulteresses, there is little similarity between the two accounts.

3. The whole story of Hosea's wife is allegory not history

Suggestion: A further suggestion, that the whole story of **Hosea**'s wife is not history but allegory, founders on the point of detail. As an allegory it would have been invented or uttered by the prophet to illustrate the Theological situation pertaining in the present relationship between Israël and **the LORD**.

Critique: But, it is argued in opposition to this suggestion that there are too many details in chapters 1 and 3 for the tales to be allegory. In allegory all details and names etc. must conform to a reality in the world – but **Gomer**'s name corresponds to nothing in particular.

4. An impasse reached

(a) Two factors to consider for finding a solution

First: It appears, then, that we have reached an impasse- no theory is entirely satisfactory. Now: The compiler of the narrative intends to give the impression that the narrative is continuous, and we must give some weight to his wish.

Second: It is also a marked feature of this narrative that **the LORD** persists in His love for Israël, despite her infidelity (*Hosea* 11:08, 12:01), and it is likely that the editor has told chapters 1-3 as a continuous narrative to illustrate this Theological insight.

(b) One wife in the narrative seems essential

So to make sense of the narrative and to fit it into **Hosea**'s message, there must be only one wife. If **Hosea** cast aside his first wife and chose another, then the message would be that **the LORD** was about to choose some nation to replace Israël, but such a suggestion is not a feature of *Hosea*'s prophecy. Also, assuming that there is one wife only, **Hosea** did not divorce her. Some scholars believe that *Hosea* 2:02 implies that he divorced **Gomer**, but *Deuteronomy* 24:01ff shows that in Israëlite Law it was forbidden to remarry a divorced wife. Hence: We must now look at the whole narrative from a different perspective.

4B. Towards a Solution

1. *Hosea* 1-3 not a call narrative: *Hosea* married Gomer when already a cult prostitute

If we do not try to see in *Hosea* chapters 1-3 an account of how **Hosea** became a prophet, then a different interpretation is possible. To begin with, *Hosea* 1:2 makes it quite explicit that **Gomer** was already an harlot when **Hosea** married her. Now the probability was that **Gomer** was a prostitute in a Ba'alic sanctuary. Such prostitutes could marry and continue their trade, and this is what **Gomer** seems to have done.

2. *Hosea*'s action is an 'acted oracle'

Hosea's action (according to *Hosea* 1:02) is commanded by God as an acted symbol, or an acted oracle. His action symbolises **the LORD's** love for the harlot Israë!l, and despite her persistence in adultery, **the LORD** still loves her.

3. The offspring vis-à-vis the faithful partner

But, the offspring of a marriage in which one partner is not faithful cannot be pure and acceptable to the faithful partner. In this way **Hosea's** marriage, his wife, and his children, all symbolise **the LORD's** relationship with Israë!l. They are an acted sign like **Jeremiah's** sign when he walked around Jerusalem with a wooden yoke on his shoulders (cf. *Jeremiah* 28), or **Ezekiel's** sign when he laid on his side (*Ezekiel* 4), and very much like **Isaiah's** sign when he named his son **Maher-shalal-hash-baz** (*Isaiah* 8:01).

4. Hosea not a broken hearted prophet from a broken marriage

This was not the beginning of Hosea's career as a prophet, but an acted sign performed during his ministry. Certainly he must have learnt much from it and doubtless it is basic to much of his Theology, but if we do not try to see in it the story of a broken marriage and a broken-hearted prophet, we shall come nearer to the truth that Hosea is trying to teach.

5. An attempted solution

So, in *Hosea* 1 **Hosea** permits the cult prophetess **Gomer** to continue in her job at the sanctuary, for Israë!l continued to go after the Ba'als. But in *Hosea* 3 **Hosea** goes and releases his wife from her work by paying the appropriate price, i.e: by buying her from the god of Canaan, and, claiming her for his own, refuses to let her return to prostitution. She is to be his wife and he her husband in a proper and pure relationship. So **Hosea** hopes that **the LORD** will continue to love Israë!l despite her idolatry, and will some day claim her fully for His own.

C. THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

1C. The Love of God in *Hosea's* Theology

1. Hosea's marriage a symbol of the profundity of God's Love for His people

As we would expect, the marriage symbol in *Hosea* expresses the profundity of the relationship between **God** and His people. As far as we know, **Hosea** was the first to commit this symbol to writing, and it is probably derived from a mixture of insights obtained from his relationship with **Gomer**, his understanding of **the LORD's** Covenant love, and his observations on the baseness of Canaanite religion. We see little of the love of **God** in the austerity of *Amos's* message of Justice, but *Hosea* does not depart from this, for Justice is still demanded.

2. God is a loving Father to His people

There is a second symbol of **God's** Love used in *Hosea* 11:01-11:04. This depicts the relationship between **God** and His People as that of a loving father. (READ *Hosea* 11:01-11:04). *Deuteronomy* 6:04 demands that Israë!l should love **God**, and *Deuteronomy* 5:05 declares that **God** will chasten Israë!l as a father chastens his son. But not before *Hosea* do we find this symbol of the loving father

in the messages of the prophets.

2C. The thrust of Hosea's message

1. Religio-social evils condemned by Hosea

However, the demands of **Hosea** and his convicting message are not weakened by his Doctrine of God's Love. As **Amos** had done before him, **Hosea** condemns ill-gotten wealth (*Hosea* 12:07-12:09), drunkenness (*Hosea* 4:11-4:18), empty cultic worship (*Hosea* 6:06) and ritual prostitution (*Hosea* 4:13-4:14).

2. Hosea's focus on politics and religion rather than social affairs

But, **Hosea** has little to say about the poor and his attacks are directed mainly to politics and religion rather than to social affairs. He attacks idolatry and mocks the bull cult of Bethel (*Hosea* 8:05-13:02). And of course, most strongly throughout his ministry, he condemns cultic prostitution, fertility rites and the Ba'al cult in general. His attacks on the officials of Israel are particularly vehement. Israel's king-ship is thoroughly corrupt and apostate (*Hosea* 5:01, 10:03, 10:07, 10:09-10:11) and the priesthood is no better (*Hosea* 5:01, 6:09). *Hosea* 6:09 even accuses the priests of Shechem of theft and murder. (READ)

3. A message of punishment

Now, as **Amos** had also seen, the inevitable result of such sin is punishment. This, according to **Hosea**, as with **Amos**, will take the form of a military disaster (*Hosea* 9:03, 10:14, 11:06), but unlike **Amos**, **Hosea** is not certain that the foe will come from the North. He does sense that it will probably be Assyria, but also senses that there is a danger from Egypt, and seems to envisage a second (symbolic?) Egyptian captivity, or a return to Egypt (*Hosea* 7:16, 8:13).

4. The Recreation of Israel

(a) Hosea's 'second Exodus'

But, here we are passing into Eschatology, and it seems that **Hosea** is thinking in terms of a re-creation of Israel. Going down into Egypt again is like starting all over again from the beginning. So, there came from **the LORD** by prophecy the vision of a second wilderness wandering when Israel will learn to know **the LORD** all over again (*Hosea* 2:14). So, **Hosea**, though his prophecy is one of condemnation, does have a doctrine of a future hope. Although there will be disaster and punishment, somehow Israel is to emerge from it by passing through a process of re-creation, as at the first Exodus.

(b) Hosea's prophecy vibrant with future hope

Now, *Amos* also held out some hope for a remnant, but he had no vision of the future of that remnant, and gave no hint of how it would survive the Judgement. **Hosea's** doctrine is much more explicit and full of hope. It is, however, a doctrine that arises from his understanding of God's Love for Israel, as we see in *Hosea* 11:08-11:09 (READ). Israel's sin demands punishment, but the **LORD's** Love demands Hope, **Hosea**, however, has no detailed idea of how all this is to happen. Later prophets uttered a great deal on the 'New Exodus' and the theme is worked out in painstaking detail – cf. especially *II Isaiah*.

(c) Hosea's reason for 'looking to Egypt'

Why should **Hosea** show such concern for the wilderness? Why should he invoke Egypt as a means of Judgement? **Amos** seemed to think that the foe would come from the North. Was it just

the idea of re-creating Israël in the Eschaton that made **Hosea** look to Egypt and the wilderness? Could he not have envisaged that re-creation taking some other form, e.g: punishment and purification through the Assyrians?

5. The Golden Age

It has been suggested that **Hosea** had a hankering after the Golden Age of the desert that was now lost – the age when Israël's relation with **the LORD** was much purer. **Amos** clearly appealed to the '**golden age of the desert**' (*Amos* 5:25) and **Jeremiah** upholds the nomadic life as one that is pure (*Jeremiah* 35:05f). It seems however it is more than merely sentimentality that makes **Hosea** cast his eye back to Israël's beginnings. His appeal is to the era of the foundation of the Covenant. In teaching his doctrine of Love, and in denouncing Israël's sin, **Hosea** is doing just what **Amos** had done before him – he is calling Israël back to the Covenant with **the LORD**. Although he has brought new insights to bear on the interpretation of the Covenant Faith, he is still as Conservative a Yahwist as was **Amos**. His message is to 'return to the old time religion'. Hence it was that **Hosea** explicitly makes reference to the breaking of the Covenant in *Hosea* 6:07 and 8:01. The return to Egypt and the renewed wandering in the desert are thus to be seen as a return to the Covenant Faith.

6. H.W. WOLFF's Thesis: The 'Knowledge of God'

On several occasions **Hosea** makes reference to Israël's '**Knowledge of God**' (*Hosea* 4:06, 6:06, 5:04, 8:02, 8:32 (READ)). Older commentators believed that '**Knowledge of God**' in these sentences meant 'Communion with God' (in my opinion rightly), but recently, **H.W.Wolff** in *Wissen un Gott* has argued that 'knowledge' here is 'intellectual' and not 'personal' knowledge. If this is so, it is intellectual recollection and consciousness of Israël's Salvation History and of the God who was active in it. It is, if you like, 'Primitive Theology', and a recalling of **the LORD's** Grace in Election of the Covenant People.

UNIT 13: MICAH

A. INTRODUCTION

1A. Date and setting of Micah's Ministry

1. The Setting of Micah's Ministry

In contrast to **Amos** and **Hosea** whose ministry focused on the Northern Kingdom of Israēl, **Micah** was a Southern prophet (READ *Micah* 1:01). Moresheth, **Micah's** home town, was near Gath in the Philistine coastal plain. With the exception of an odd reference to the Northern Kingdom, **Micah's** ministry and its focus was set on Judah (*Micah* 1:05).

2. The date of Micah's Ministry

According to the superscription, **Micah** prophesied during the reigns of **Jotham** (742-735 B.C.), **Ahaz** (735-715 B.C.), and **Hezekiah** (715-680 B.C.), and was hence prophesying sometime between 742 B.C. and 687 B.C. if the dates of these kings are correct. **Micah** must therefore have begun his ministry during **Hosea's** ministry and ended during that of **Isaiah**, who was prophesying during the reigns of **Ahaz** and **Hezekiah**. According to *Jeremiah* 26:16-26:19, **Micah's** prophecy had a strong effect on the later **Hezekiah**.

2A. The Historical context of Micah's ministry

1. The Historical Setting of Micah's Ministry

Micah's time was an age of great uncertainty for Judah:

734 B.C.	Ahaz becomes a vassal to Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria.
732 B.C.	Fall of Damascus. Samaria becomes subject to T. P. III .
722 B.C.	Invasion of Judah by Shalmaneser V . Samaria falls to Sargon II .
711 B.C.	Revolt of Ashdod quashed by Sargon II .
702 B.C.	Revolt of Jerusalem. Sennacherib of Assyria lays siege to Jerusalem and boasts that he "shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage". He did not, however, take Jerusalem.

(N.B: c.f.: PICC B.A./B.D./B.TH./B.MIN Foundation Course 22 *Biblical Archaeology* and notes there on the Sennacherib cylinder.)

2. The Internal politics of Judah during Micah's time

(a) Judah a politically divided power

For the greater part of **Micah's** ministry, Judah was politically divided.

King Ahaz: Ahaz was pro-Assyrian and did not join the Syro-Ephraimite coalition.

King Hezekiah: Hezekiah was neutral and did not join the Ashdod revolt, but he became pro-Egyptian, and in 701 became the leader of a Palestinian revolt. Although Judah was an Assyrian vassal, she was on the edge of the Assyrian Empire, and so was ready to revolt and ally with Egypt.

(b) The Fall of Samaria 722 B.C.

In **722 B.C.**, Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom fell to the advancing Assyrians. Details can be found in *II Kings* 17. During Samaria's siege, many died whilst many other people were exiled, especially those who were influential or leaders. Samaria was re-populated by the Assyrians and became pagan, although some worship of **the LORD** continued.

3. Micah's place in the history of Northern (Israelite) and Southern (Judaean) Prophecy

(a) Northern and Southern prophecy and prophets

The Northern Kingdom had been the home of Israel's prophetic movement from **Samuel's** time; e.g: **Samuel** and **Ahijah** were at Shiloh, **Elijah** and **Elisha** were both Northern, and **Amos** and **Hosea** ministered in the North. There is little reference in the Bible to the Southern prophets up to this period – but cf. **Nathan** at David's Court, and the role of the 'Men of God' and 'sons of the prophets' e.g: *I Kings* 13:01, *I Kings* 12:22 ff.

(b) Northern and Southern prophecy contrasted

Whilst Northern prophecy focused very much on the Mosaic Faith of Sinai and the Law/Covenant; Southern prophecy still has this interest, but becomes dominated by the Jerusalem Theology. Northern prophecy was essentially about Israel whilst Southern prophecy was essentially about Jerusalem. This latter was to become characterised during this period by a marked new interest in the Temple, the role of the king, and the political hope that centred on Zion. So it is with *Micah*.

B. MICAH'S MESSAGE

1B. The social dimensions of Micah's message

1. The thrust of Micah's Message

A century or so after his death, **Micah** was remembered as one who prophesied doom to Jerusalem. *Jeremiah* 28:18 summarises his message by quoting *Micah* 3:12 (READ). This Word of Doom is typical especially of Chapters 1-3. The coming judgement is a consequence of those same abuses that **Amos** and **Hosea** also condemned, and like them, **Micah** bases this on demands of the Covenant.

2. Details of Micah's social critique of Judah

At *Micah* 2:02 **Micah** deplores the greed of the wealthy who **“covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away”**. At *Micah* 2:08-2:10 **Micah** criticises the enslavement of debtors, at *Micah* 3:01-3:03, **Micah** censures corruption of politicians who pervert Justice and oppress the people. *Micah* 3:11 relates **Micah's** condemnation of the priests and prophets who work only for money; whilst *Micah* 1:05-1:07 denounces the idolatry that is to be.

2B. Micah amongst the prophets

1. Similarities and contrasts between Micah, and Amos and Hosea

As you probably have gathered, **Micah** and **Amos** are in some respects very similar. Both uphold social justice and prophesy woe. But, *Micah* has no great original themes like *Amos* or *Hosea*. It is very much a re-application of their message to Judah by the prophetic standard of the Covenant Faith. Like them, **Micah** is a traditionist: Here is *Micah* 3:01: **“Is it not for you to know Justice?”**

“Justice” here looks very much like *Hosea*’s ‘Knowledge of God’ and the standards of Faith and conduct given through **Moses**. And, like **Hosea**, he says that the rulers should be setting the example.

2. Micah’s Eschatology, and teachings about Jerusalem

These cannot be studied apart from the questions about the structure and composition of the book, to which I shall now turn.

C. AN ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK *MICAH*

1C. The authenticity of *Micah* material

1. “Authentic Micah material is only to be found in Chapters 1 – 3.”

(a) *Micah* 1-3 authentic, *Micah* 4 onwards editorial

This analysis was subscribed to by many of the older liberal ‘source-critics’, e.g: **Strade, Marti, G. Adam-Smith, Nowack, Th. Robinson**; and also by current names in study reading, e.g: **S. Mowinckel, J.L. Mayes, G. Fohrer, and R. Rennaud** – by succession starting from 1881. These noticed that *Micah* 1-3 is made up of oracles of woe, except for *Micah* 2:12-2:13. They also noticed that by contrast *Micah* 4-5 consisted mostly of words of Salvation and Life. Again: *Micah* 6-7 is mostly Words of Judgement, but ends with an oracle of Hope. Now: When **Micah** is mentioned in *Jeremiah* 26:18, that text recalls only prophecy of woe on Jerusalem, and quotes *Micah* 3:12 – the last oracle of *Micah* 1-3 – as a summary. Also, *Micah* 4:01-4:03 is identical with *Isaiah* 2:02-2:04. It looks ‘editorial’ in *Micah* because of the ‘stichtwort principle’ – c.f.: **“The Mountain of the House of the LORD ... ”** So, for these scholars, the editorial material begins here and continues to the end of the Book.

(b) The role of editor(s) in furnishing oracles of Hope

The sayings of **Micah** are mostly of woe for sin, similar to those of *Amos* in theme, but directed against Jerusalem. His teaching was edited, probably at the exile when many of the hope sayings were added as the prophet looked for restoration. **Micah**’s Judgement had happened, and now the editors look beyond that Judgement.

(c) Further strictures on ‘authentic material’

There are probably some authentic **Micah** oracles in Chapters 4-5. Also, in the opinion of these scholars, *Micah* 2:12-2:13 is not authentic to *Micah*. According to this analysis of the book, **Micah** himself had little sense of Hope. There are so few of his sayings that possibly his ministry should be regarded as coming from the period **c.601 B.C.**

(d) A faulty method

It is unfortunate that much of the analysis of these scholars was based on two A-Priori assumptions:

- Any oracle that speaks of Hope and Deliverance must have been ‘written in retrospect’ for it is impossible to prophetically know of future Deliverance events.
- This implies a ‘Theology of Prophecy’ that is quite unacceptable to the experience of God that the Christian Charismatic has.

2. “Most of Micah is authentic”

(a) Analysis of *Micah* according to this scheme

This analysis has been subscribed to by **Sellin, Weiser, Beyerlin, Hammershaimb, Rudolph, and Allen**. Those who follow this view ‘divide’ *Micah* into three parts:

Micah 1-2: Judgement (1:02-2:11), followed by Salvation (2:12-2:13).

Micah 3-5: Judgement (*Micah* 3), followed by Salvation (*Micah* 4+5).

Micah 6-7: Judgement (6:01-7:06), followed by Salvation (7:01-7:20).

Each section is introduced by ‘**Hear**’. Some of the above scholars say that the final form of *Micah* is exilic, but nevertheless it is essentially from **Micah**, even if the reader is at times only in touch with him through his disciples or successors.

(b) WILLIAM RUDOLPH: An example exponent of this view

Rudolph is an exponent of this view. He says that **Micah** is essentially a preacher of Judgement (as *Jeremiah* 26 says). It is not that **Micah**’s main thrust is a call for repentance – rather, he is declaring Judgement as an inevitable consequence of sin. *Micah* holds out a future hope for the re-unification of the two kingdoms, for the return of the exiles of the Northern Kingdom, and ultimately for Israel as a numerous and powerful people (*Micah* 2:12). But, according to Rudolph, this hope is not the main theme – it is not what will come through repentance – it is only what will follow Judgement, which must happen first. In this **Micah**’s ministry is very much in contrast to that of his opponents who prophesy ‘peace’ without catastrophe (*Micah* 2:06 ff).

2C. A.S. VAN-DER-WORDE’s Thesis: *Micah* as dialogue

1. A Bibliographic orientation

A.S. Van-der Wourde’s thesis is most conveniently to be found in his article “Micah in dispute with the Pseudo-Prophets” *Vetus Testamentum* 19, 1969, /244-260, of which there is a copy in Bishop Andrew’s Library. This is worth reading, but as you do have a Bible in one hand and this article in the other.

2. Introduction: Van-der-Wourde’s thesis stated

According to **Van-der-Wourde**, *Micah* is in two parts: *Micah* 1-5 contains the prophetic oracles of **Micah of Moresheth**, whilst *Micah* 6-7 is by a different but contemporary Northern Prophet of **Micah**. For **Van-Der-Worde**, **Micah** was active in **King Hezekiah**’s time, whereas the Northern prophet of the last two chapters was prophesying earlier, in the reigns of **Kings Jotham and Ahaz**. A ‘redactor’, probably exilic, has put them together.

3. The dynamic of *Micah* 1-5

In *Micah* 1-5, **Micah** confronts his opponents, especially priests and prophets. These cry, “**Peace**”, “**No Judgement**”, (*Micah* 2:06 ff, 3:05, 3:11), and they apparently try to silence **Micah** (*Micah* 2:06). Their Theology is that of Zion (*Psalms* 4, 46, 48 etc.) and hence they cry, “**Do not worry about the Assyrian.**” (*Micah* 3:11). To this **Micah** replies that Zion is not protected in this sense, she will fall. In his message there is therefore an open tension between the Davidic and Sinai Theologies: Sinai: Obedience — Salvation; Davidic: Promise — Salvation. So, **Micah** opposes the ‘popular Theology’ of the Jerusalem cult, and has a Theology very similar to that of Amos vis-à-vis the ‘**day of the LORD**’.

4. *Micah* 1-5 as debate between Micah and false prophets

Van-Der-Worde therefore sees much of *Micah* 1-5 as a record of debates between **Micah** and these ‘false prophets’. **Micah** himself lampoons them as men with Theology but no vision – also self seeking by giving comfortable words. (People pay well for what they want to hear, so prophets make a profit!) Here follow some examples of this type of dialogue.

5. A first Example: *Micah* 4:09-5:01

Micah 4:09-5:01 seems an odd muddle of gloom and blessing; one sentence gloom, the next sentence blessing, and so on. Most commentators say this points to editorial work. However: **Van-Der-Wourde** says it is a dialogue between **Micah** and the false prophets:

Micah 4:09: False prophets address the people, “What are you worried about? You have your king and governors – All is well.”

Micah 4:10: Micah replies, “You should be worried, because you will be going to Babylon as prisoners. It is only once you are there that God will do anything about rescuing you. You must go through severe pain first!” (Micah’s Eschatology for you).

Micah 4:11: False prophet returns; “Not at all! There are enemies at the gate, but they do not know the LORD’s plans. This city is protected by God, and His enemies will be beaten and destroyed.” (c.f.: The Theology of *Psalms* 48).

Micah 5:01: Micah comes back; “No! You are surrounded and besieged and soon your ruler will be humiliated and beaten.”

And so on to the end of Chapter 5.

6. A second Example: *Micah* 2:06-3:01 ff.

Micah 2:06ff: Clearly implies dialogue.

Micah 2:12-2:13: Possibly these are the words of false prophets, articulated by **Micah**.

Micah 3:01ff: Here is **Micah**’s reply ... (**‘And I said, ... ’**)

7. A corollary

So for **Van-der-Wourde** the picture of the golden age is possibly neither exilic nor from **Micah**, but a product of the Jerusalemite Theology of the (false) Jerusalem cult prophets. **Micah** opposes this with a message of Justice, and the values of Sinai. In this scheme, **Micah** is essentially a prophet of woe while the element of hope is the teaching of the opposing prophets.

8. Our Conclusion

Micah of Moresheth certainly preached Judgement, possibly in Jerusalem, and stood in the Sinai tradition. Whether he also had hope and was influenced by the Zion traditions in any way depends on how you analyse the book. Clearly on any theory, **Micah** came into conflict with the Jerusalem authorities and especially their priests and prophets. In that respect he is very much like **Amos** confronting **Amaziah** at Bethel. On any theory, **Micah** is very much Judah’s **Amos**.

UNIT 14: ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM: (1 ISAIAH)

A. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK *ISAIAH*

1A. Introduction: The Comprehensiveness, Divisions, and Structure of *I Isaiah*

1. The Comprehensiveness of *Isaiah*

If everything that is in the Book *Isaiah* comes from one prophet, then that prophet must have conducted his ministry over a period of nearly 250 years. The prophet's inaugural vision in Chapter 6 is dated precisely – in the year that King Uzziah died – i.e. **742 BC**, whilst many of the oracles in the last eleven chapters of the Book (*Isaiah* 56-66) belong to the time after the return from exile at the end of the **Sixth Century B.C.** Before we try to answer the question, “How does a prophetic Book come to span such a period of time?” Let us first look at the Book's structure in more detail.

2. The Divisions of *Isaiah*

Isaiah is not just a collection of prophetic oracles by **Isaiah** – it is a collection of collections. The Book is usually divided into three broad sections which correspond roughly with the material that they contain, and which were first proposed in their entirety by **Bernhard Duhm (1892)**:

a. *Isaiah* 1-39: Pre-Exilic (c.8 BC.) Known as *I Isaiah/Isaiah of Jerusalem*

b. *Isaiah* 40-55: Exilic Known as *II Isaiah/Deutero-Isaiah*

c. *Isaiah* 56-66: Post Exilic Known as *III Isaiah/Trito-Isaiah*

(N.B: *II Isaiah* is prophesying a return. In *III Isaiah* exiles have returned. Unfortunate modernist-rational links of this original division.) Here, in what follows, we are only concerned with the pre-exilic prophet, and so our attention is concentrated only on *Isaiah* 1-37/39 for this first session. But, even *Isaiah* 1-39 is not straightforward – it is not simply a collection of oracles – it contains several collections.

3. The Structure of *I Isaiah*

(a) *Isaiah* 1-12

The first collection, this contains mostly authentic oracles of **Isaiah of Jerusalem** interposed with some biographical and autobiographical narratives.

(b) *Isaiah* 13-23

A collection of oracles against foreign nations: e.g: Against Assyria (*Isaiah* 14:24-14:27), Phillistia (*Isaiah* 14: 25-14:32), Damascus (*Isaiah* 17:01-17:06), Arabia (*Isaiah* 21:13 -21:15), Egypt (*Isaiah* 18), Tyre (*Isaiah* 23:01-23:12). Others deal with the Babylonian oppressor: In the age of **Isaiah**, Babylon was merely a province of Assyria.

(c) *Isaiah* 24-27

Known as the *Isaiah Apocalypse*, this portion is a mixture of Hymns and descriptions of the ‘end-times.’ The chapters were assigned a late date by earlier scholars (**3rd and 4th centuries BC**), simply because many regarded ‘Apocalyptic’ visionary writing as ‘Post-Exilic and influenced by Persian religion.

(d) *Isaiah* 28-31

A collection of Isaianic oracles from the last period of his ministry – i.e. from the time of **Sennacherib's** siege of Jerusalem.

(e) *Isaiah* 32-33

A collection of Messianic oracles. Isaiah himself developed the doctrine of the messiah, and this doctrine was further developed in the utterances of those who came after him whose work forms the later part of the present Book of Isaiah.

(f) *Isaiah* 34-35

A series of Oracles pronouncing doom and salvation. The language and ideas are similar to those found in *Isaiah* 40-66, and possibly these chapters are in some way to be associated with that corpus.

(g) *Isaiah* 36-39 An historical narrative drawn from *II Kings* 18-20 almost verbatim. It recounts **Sennacherib's** siege of Jerusalem and the prophet *Isaiah's* dealings with **King Hezekiah**.

(h) Comment

So, it seems that the oracles of **Isaiah of Jerusalem** himself are to be found in chapters 1-12, 13-23, 24-27, and 28-31. But, even here, collections are themselves collections of collections.

2A. *Isaiah* 1-39 as a 'collection of collections'

1. *Isaiah* 8:16 and 30:08 as testimony to the process behind *Isaiah's* formation

(a) Introduction: The collections of *Isaiah* 1 and 2 as examples

Isaiah 1 is furnished with a superscription and forms a collection in itself, for Chapter 2 starts afresh with a new superscription. Both superscriptions declare that the oracles which follow are concerned with Judah and Jerusalem, and if we had not been dealing with separate collections one superscription would have been sufficient. The collection started at Chapter 2 seems to end at *Isaiah* 5:30, for *Isaiah* 6:01ff starts with a new date and takes us right back to the beginning of the prophet's ministry. Although it would be possible to divide *Isaiah* 6-12 (they are a mixture of prose and verse), it seems likely from reading them that they form one original collection and are a unity and unit within the Book.

(b) Two consequent questions for us to answer

Now, why is it that the Book *Isaiah* should be a veritable library of anthologies of prophetic oracles? How do these collections seem to have been put together into one large collection in this way? The answer seems to be suggested in two places – *Isaiah* 8:16 and *Isaiah* 30:08.

2. Evidence from *Isaiah* 8:16

Here, **Isaiah** had just come from an encounter with **King Ahaz** who was planning to call on Assyria for military help. **Isaiah** counselled the king not to do this, but **Ahaz** went his own way. **Isaiah** warned the king of the consequences of his action, and in Chapter 8 we see that he took a tablet and wrote on it his son's name, '**Maher-shalal-hesh-baz**'. As you will remember, **Isaiah's** son stood as a prophetic symbol, and his name signified that Assyria would plunder the land, (the name means 'hasten to booty', 'plunder to spoil'). **Isaiah** called two witnesses to the fact that he had recorded these prophetic words in writing, and in *Isaiah* 8:16 he commands his disciples to bind up the testimony – i.e. to keep safe his written prophecy. He then says, "**I will wait for the Lord,**" i.e. **The Lord** has spoken, **Isaiah** has written, and he will wait for the Lord to act. Meanwhile, *Isaiah* 8:18 continues, **Isaiah** and his family stand as witness to the prediction of doom for the nation.

3. Evidence from *Isaiah* 30:08

(a) **Isaiah's oracles written down as a witness**

Isaiah 30:08 helps us to understand the process better. The oracle here is to be written down so that it may be appealed to in time to come as a witness. **Isaiah** had spoken, few had paid attention. So, he writes and says, **“When the event has come to pass which I have predicted, you will be able to refer to my writing down here – then you will see that the Lord is true to His promises”**. The writing is here shown to be for a testimony to the fact that **Isaiah** did utter these words. In the meantime he gives the written oracles to his disciples to be kept in their care. Now, we shall see presently that **Isaiah of Jerusalem's** ministry was divided into phases, and since the command to preserve the oracles comes twice it is possible that he did the same at each phase of his ministry. The disciples would then have had at the beginning several testimonies which would form the basis of collections.

(b) **Isaiah's oracles written as witnesses to the Lord's eternal truths**

Now, these original testimonies were not written simply for antiquarian or archaeological interest. They were not particularly written either so that later generations could, as we are doing, sit down and learn what **Isaiah** once said. They were written as witnesses to **the Lord's** eternal truth and truthfulness and as such would have been studied and handled by the disciples of **Isaiah**. As time and decades went by, they would be applied to successive generations. Further oracles would have been added through further utterances being given by **the Lord**, and the old scrolls would have been kept up to date by adding later prophecies. In some such way the collections would have grown, and since they are all associated with the same prophet and his disciples, they were eventually put together as a biography to form one composite collection.

(c) **Interpretation and re-use of Isaiah's prophecies**

But, it is this constant re-application to another generation, the constant waiting for the fulfilment of those prophecies, the constant re-use of the oracles through the centuries that ensured the expansion of the collections, and the later addition of the exilic and post exilic materials of chapters 40-66.

B. THE PROPHET ISAIAH AND HIS TIMES

1B. The Historical Setting of Isaiah's Ministry

1. *Isaiah's prophetic ministry a living ministry and tradition*

The *Isaiah* school did not die with the prophet but lived on long after him and it kept re-using his prophecies to teach new disciples. The prophetic ministry in this respect continued to be a living ministry, or put better, a living tradition.

2. Chronological reference points for the study of *Isaiah* 1-37/39

Isaiah 6:01 tells us that **Isaiah** received his call to prophesy in **742 BC**, the year of the death of **King Uzziah**, and the superscription in *Isaiah* 1:01 tells us that his ministry lasted through the reigns of **Jotham**, **Ahaz**, and **Hezekiah**. From the material content of his oracles, and from the witness of *II Kings* 18-20 we know that these dates are accurate, and so **Isaiah** was a contemporary of **Micah**, and the beginning of his ministry in the South overlapped with that of **Micah** in the North. He was still active in **701 BC**. when **Sennacherib** withdrew from Jerusalem, and so his career spans a period of 40 years at least. He may have continued to be active after **701 BC**, but this we do not know. Although it may be possible to see his oracles as scattered throughout the entire period

of forty years, there is little in some of them to indicate precise dates. Those that can be dated fall into three distinct periods, and we'll look at those next.

2B. The three phases of Isaiah of Jerusalem's ministry

1. 742-734 BC: The first phase of Isaiah's Ministry

(a) The extent of the first phase of Isaiah's ministry

Isaiah 6 – 8 gives the precise date of the first phase of **Isaiah's** ministry. It began in **742 B.C.** with his call to prophesy on the death of the leprous **King Uzziah** and ends with the capture of Damascus in **734 B.C.** As we have already seen, this was the period of the re-birth of Assyria.

(b) The rise of Assyria and the Syro-Ephraimite coalition

By now, **Tiglath-Pileser III** was now pushing westward and in **736 B.C.** **Regin** king of Damascus and **Pekah** of Samaria tried to form a coalition of Palestinian states to oppose Assyria (*Isaiah* 7 and *II Kings* 16). **King Ahaz of Judah** refused to join in and so, fearing a foe behind as well as before, **Pekah** and **Regin** attempted to bring Judah to heel. Either **Ahaz** must be won over or he must be re-placed, and a substitute for **Ahaz**, a son of one known as 'Tabula' (*Isaiah* 7:06) was chosen to fill **Ahaz's** place if Judah could be defeated. It seems that Judah and **Ahaz** were terrified by the prospect of an invasion by a Syro-Ephraimite coalition (*Isaiah* 7:02), but **Isaiah** went to **Ahaz** to advise him to be calm, and he said, **"Two smouldering wicks of firebrands, Pekah and Regin, will soon fizzle out before the face of Assyria,"** (*Isaiah* 7:03-7:09). All that was necessary for **Ahaz** was to trust that **the Lord** was working His purpose out, but **Ahaz** was faint-hearted and would not rely on **Isaiah**, let alone the **Lord**. He appealed to Assyria for help and submitted himself to **Tiglath-Pileser** as tributary (*II Kings* 16:05-16:09). **Tiglath-Pileser** forthwith invaded Northern Palestine, reduced Damascus to an Assyrian province, and made Northern Israel a vassal state in **734 B.C.**

(c) A prophet of social conscience

Apart from his political oracles encouraging **Ahaz** to trust **the Lord** alone, there are many other oracles which seem to belong to this phase of his ministry. On the death of **Uzziah**, Judah was still in the era of wealth and luxury which also existed in the Northern Kingdom during the reign of **Jeroboam II**. So, we find many oracles in *Isaiah* which are similar to those found in *Amos*: oracles condemning injustice on the part of the rich, the deplorable social conditions and empty religious practices, e.g: *Isaiah* 1:10-1:17, *Isaiah* 3:16-3:23, and *Isaiah* 5:08-5:24 deploring empty ritual, indulgent women, and social evils respectively. Most of the oracles which deplore the things **Amos** deplored belong to this period, for the age of wealth and luxury was to give way to hardship under the Assyrian oppressor.

2. c.714 BC: The second phase of Isaiah's Ministry

The second phase of **Isaiah's** ministry is connected with the revolt of Ashdod and other cities against **Sargon II** during the years **714-711 BC**. **Tiglath-Pileser II** had died in **727 B.C.** and was succeeded by **Shalmaneser V**. In his time, Samaria revolted, but after a prolonged siege was captured in **722 B.C.**, the year that **Shalmaneser** died. His successor, **Sargon II**, deported the inhabitants of Samaria (*II Kings* 17), and the Northern Kingdom passed from history. But Assyria was now at Egypt's doorstep and constituted a growing threat. Egypt therefore tried to foster opposition to Assyria in Palestine and in **714 B.C.**, Ashdod and some other cities revolted (*Isaiah* 20, *ANET* 280f.) **King Hezekiah** of Judah seems to have been tempted to join the revolt, but **Isaiah** advised against such action. Unlike **Ahaz**, then, **Hezekiah** seems to have taken **Isaiah's** advice. It was at this time that **Isaiah** is said to have performed his only acted oracle which was to walk around Jerusalem naked and barefooted. To this phase of **Isaiah's** ministry probably belong also the oracle

against Phillistia (*Isaiah* 14:28-14:32), Arabia (*Isaiah* 21:13-21:15) and against **Shebna** the steward of Jerusalem (*Isaiah* 22:15-22:24), the lintel of whose tomb, incidentally, is in the Palestinian room of the British Museum in London, above its entrance doorframe. (N.B: By **701 B.C.**, **Eliakim** had replaced **Shebna** as steward – *Isaiah* 36:03).

4. The third phase of Isaiah's ministry: c.705-701 B.C.

The third phase of **Isaiah's** ministry, and the last recorded in the text portion *Isaiah* 1-37 is connected with the revolt by **Hezekiah** against Assyria in **705-701 B.C.** On the death of **Sargon II** in **705 B.C.**, revolt broke out in Palestine, largely at the instigation of Egypt. **King Hezekiah** was the ringleader in this revolt, and one of the cities' governors who refused to join it – **Pudi** of Ekron, was imprisoned in Jerusalem. However, it was not long before **Sennacherib**, **Sargon's** successor, invaded Palestine and subdued it city by city. It was in preparation for the attack by Assyria that **Hezekiah** strengthened the defences of Jerusalem and had his famous water tunnel dug so that the city's water-supply would not be cut off during the siege (*ANET* 321f – explain). The siege came, and the events are fully described in *II Kings* 18 and 19. **Hezekiah** had negotiated an alliance with Egypt, and it seems that **Sennacherib's** troops were drawn off to meet the Egyptian army, whilst some Divinely given terrible scourge overtook the Assyrian forces, possibly some kind of plague (*II Kings* 19:35f), and Jerusalem was for the moment safe. It was this period that *Isaiah* 36-39 (*II Kings* 18-20) describes.

C. THE THEOLOGY OF ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM

1C. Isaiah's witness vis-à-vis the Egyptian alliance issue

1. 'Trust in the Lord and He will protect'

Throughout the troubles, **Isaiah** had been offering the same advice to **Hezekiah** that he had offered to **Ahaz** – '**Trust in the Lord, and He will protect**'. But **Hezekiah** was trusting more in his Egyptian alliances, and so we find **Isaiah** pointing out the weakness of Egypt as an ally – The Egyptians are men and not gods, and so cannot protect as God would. "**Make your alliance with God and not men,**" (*Isaiah* 31:01-31:04 READ).

2. The oracles of *Isaiah* 28-31

Many of the oracles in *Isaiah* 28-31 belong to this period and we find in them constant reference to enemies surrounding the city and the repeated call to Faith and trust in God alone. But, **Isaiah** did not foretell the unconditional deliverance of the city. He prophesied that the deliverance would be conditional upon Faith. After the city was delivered by **the LORD**, the historian of *II Kings* 18-20, looking back on **Isaiah's** oracles, saw in them a prediction of the deliverance of Jerusalem come true, and so **Isaiah** is portrayed as the defender of the Faith in time of crisis. Yet, to take but one example, *Isaiah* 30:01-30:05 showed how greatly **Isaiah** was concerned that the alliance with Egypt could bring nothing but shame and disgrace. It was a sign of rebellion against the **LORD** – a sign of trust in a Saviour other than the **LORD** Himself.

2C. Holiness

1. The nature of 'Holiness' in the *Old Testament*

There does not appear to be one particular narrowness of meaning that we can give to the word 'Holiness' in the *Old Testament*. It carries a variety of implications. On linguistic grounds the Hebrew: "Qados" means 'bright' or 'shining' (cf. Akkadian quddusu shining/gleaming) and in the *Old Testament* 'Holiness' is often associated with Glory. Now **the LORD's** "Kabod" or "Glory" is His brilliance seen in the Theophany of His appearing (e.g. *Ezekiel* 1-2, and in *Isaiah* 6:03 we find Holiness and Glory coming together (READ)).

2. Holiness and Moral Purity

But, Holiness also has the implication of moral purity, as we saw in the Holiness passages of the *Pentateuch* where the command is constantly repeated, **'Be ye Holy, for I the Lord Your God am Holy,'** (*Leviticus* 19:02 et al.) There, words are repeated to encourage obedience to the moral Law – and so Holiness is also a kind of moral uprightness.

3. God in His Holiness

But, brightness and morality are essentially the obverse and reverse of the same thing with **God**, for **God** is wholly other. He is the one set apart from all things earthly. In His Holiness He is terrible, unapproachable, exalted, and stands far above every human. Thus **God** declares in *Hosea*, **"I am God and not man"** (*Hosea* 11:01), or as we read in *I Samuel* 6:20, **"Who is able to stand before the LORD this Holy God?"** It is this kind of attitude to **God** that is found strongly in the Book of **Isaiah of Jerusalem**. If there is a key word which would describe **Isaiah's** message it is 'Holiness' (in *Amos* it is 'Justice', in *Hosea* 'Love'). Indeed, **Isaiah's** favourite title for **the Lord** is the **'Holy One of Israë'l'**, and he seems to have been the first to receive it as a title to speak in the flow of his utterances. Now, for a full appreciation of **Isaiah's** concept of Holiness, and also of his message as a whole, it is necessary to look fairly closely at his Call Vision in Chapter 6.

3C. The Call Vision of **Isaiah**: The *Isaiah Denkschrift*

1. **Isaiah's Call Vision: *Isaiah* 6:1-6**

This vision is set in the Temple (*Isaiah* 6:01f), and the occasion is probably one of festival, for what **Isaiah** is describing is a Theophany when **the Lord** 'appeared' on the ark between the cherubim while the smoke from the altar of incense before the Holy of Holies fills the house (*Isaiah* 6:4). But, for **Isaiah**, the whole scene has been transformed before his eyes, and the vision is of the Heavenly Court, with **the LORD** enthroned on high. So, it is possible for the prophet to talk at one moment of the Temple (*Isaiah* 6:01 and 6:04) and at the next to say that the **'whole earth is full of the LORD's Glory'** (*Isaiah* 6:03). So the vision is of **the LORD** in all His Glory attended by the Seraphim whose brightness also suggests luminosity (EXPLAIN). But, **Isaiah's** immediate reaction is to declare **the LORD's** Holiness, **"Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of Hosts"**. Although this is an acknowledgement of **the LORD's** Glory and Brightness in Theophany, it is more than that, for **Isaiah** immediately becomes extremely conscious of his sin (*Isaiah* 6:05) (READ). The contrast here is between the purity of the LORD and the sinfulness of **Isaiah**, i.e.: between **the Lord's** Holiness and **Isaiah's** unholiness.

2. **Isaiah acknowledges his sin and guilt, and the Lord purges it**

Isaiah, now conscious of his sin and his inability to stand before **the LORD** has offered the purest form of confession which asks for nothing but merely acknowledges guilt. Forgiveness soon comes, but it does not come as a verbal absolution – it comes as a searing fire. The Seraph takes a burning coal from the altar and with it purifies **Isaiah** by purging the evil out of his mouth. Then comes the declaration of purity (*Isaiah* 6:07). Here again we see the conjunction of brightness and morality. In order to stand before **the LORD**, **Isaiah** must be made Holy and this can only be done by being purified morally, and also by being brought into contact with the purifying fire of **the LORD**'s Holiness and Glory.

3. Isaiah's commission follows his dedication of himself to the Lord

Isaiah now dedicates himself to **the LORD**'s service. He becomes aware that **the LORD** needs a messenger to His people, and he offers his services (*Isaiah* 6:08). Finally comes **Isaiah**'s commission and the message he has to preach (c.f.: *Isaiah* 6:09–6:10 – I shall come back to these).

4. The Life of Faith expressed in Isaiah's meeting with the Lord

Here in **Isaiah**'s vision we have the classical formula for the Life of Faith:

- a. Adoration (*Isaiah* 6:01-6:04).
- b. Confession (*Isaiah* 6:05).
- c. Forgiveness (*Isaiah* 6:06-6:07).
- d. Dedication (*Isaiah* 6:08).
- e. Mission (*Isaiah* 6:9 and 10).

This formula is frequently used in Christian Worship. It is only a pity that it so seldom bears the personal reality that it bore for **Isaiah**. But, this is what happens when actions are moulded by formulae rather than by convictions.

5. Awe of God transplanted fear of men and women

Since **Isaiah** was so conscious of the Holiness of the LORD and lived in such awe of God, there was little room in his life thereafter for awe of men and women who stood opposed to God. (c.f.: *Isaiah* 8:11-8:12). (READ).

4C. Faith

1. The harshness of Isaiah's message

The words of **Isaiah**'s commissioning (*Isaiah* 6:09-6:13) (READ) appear bitterly harsh. **Isaiah** is called to condemn his people to ruin and disaster and such a call appears to stand opposite to everything that the prophetic Faith stands for. However, the understanding of these words cannot come from an isolated consideration of a text out of context.

2. Isaiah as a prophet within the Temple cultus

Now, **Isaiah** is the first writing prophet who comes from Jerusalem itself. **Micah** came from Judah, and we know how ill at ease he felt about the beliefs of the religious officialdom in Jerusalem. But **Isaiah** himself stands closer to the Jerusalem Temple practice than **Micah**, for it was within this context that **Isaiah** received His call to prophesy. So, we cannot expect to find that **Isaiah** is utterly opposed to the Jerusalem traditions. He is certainly unhappy about the emptiness of many of the Jerusalem rituals (*Isaiah* 1:12-1:17), but even in this passage his concern, like that of **Amos**, is for a correct balance. Ritual must be based on living Holiness – i.e: that which comes through keeping in and sustaining the Covenant relationship with God (READ *Isaiah* 6:16-6:17). Now, the appeal in

this instance is to the Sinai Covenant, and Isaiah does not find this antithetic to **God's** Covenant to **David**. However, he insists that the Davidic Covenant and its accompanying 'Zion Theology' must be properly interpreted. **God** has certainly chosen Israel and Zion, but to live in the benefit of that choice is not unconditional – it depends on Faith and Obedience. The classic example of **Isaiah's** statement of Faith is found in Chapter 7 in his encounter with **Ahaz**. You will remember that **Ahaz** was afraid of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, but **Isaiah** says to him, **“Do not worry – these kings of the North will not stand whilst you trust in the LORD”**. Here is an assertion that **the LORD** protects Zion, but only so long as Faith can be found within Zion. The important words are those of verse 9b: **“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established,”** ('im lo' tha'amimu, ki lo' the'emenu). The precise significance of **'being established'** is not clear. Faith in **the Lord** is the essential pre-requisite for Salvation in any form whatsoever – i.e: **The LORD** is your strongest ally if only you will stick to the alliance.

3. Isaiah's Faith a real and realistic Faith

Now, **Isaiah's** Faith is a real and realistic Faith. He is quite clear in mind that much is demanded of Israel and he is also quite certain that Israel is not going to live up to **the LORD's** demands. History and present conditions have shown that Israel is disobedient to the Covenant and does not hold to the alliance with **the LORD**. This is the theme of the opening of *Isaiah* (READ *Isaiah* 1:02-1:05a). Here we see the sadness of the prophet at his consideration of Israel's faithlessness and he ends with a question – **“Why do you go on like this? Have you not learnt your lesson?”** The content of the demand is the Sinai Covenant (READ *Isaiah* 5:24), but the Davidic Covenant also depends on an obedience to the Sinai Covenant (*Isaiah* 1:27). The basic need is for FAITH, TRUST and OBEDIENCE, but as **Isaiah** realises, these things whilst they are of saving value are also of damnatory value. Those who do trust and obey will be saved, but those who do not trust and obey are condemned by their actions.

4. The LORD as the foundation stone and stumbling block: Covenant demand and blessing

So, **the LORD** can be a sure foundation stone for those who trust in Him to build on (*Isaiah* 28:16) (READ), or at the same time that stone can become a stumbling block for those who reject it (*Isaiah* 8:14 ff) (READ). Faith is no mere formula for recital, as the Jerusalem Temple collective so often asserted. Faith is a relationship, and at that a relationship with the **Holy God** whose demands are Holy. They are the demands of the Covenant, and the Holiness of **God** is so awesome that there is either Holiness or sinfulness, as **Isaiah** himself learned in his call vision. For those who accept there is union with **God** and His protection (The Covenant), for those who reject there is disaster. Unfortunately it is clear from history that many, if not most, would reject and hence **Isaiah's** preaching would be a stumbling block to the people. He would call on the people to listen, but they would choose not to understand; he would call on them to see, but they would choose not to. By their continued rejection of His Will they would harden themselves against **God** – or as he says, **‘their ears would become heavy and their eyes close’** – they will become afraid to see and hear because they will be so ashamed of the Truth. So, they will harden themselves further and absolutely refuse to listen. This is the terrible reaction that the preacher is bound to get, and in his call vision, Isaiah explained that he realised this terrible burden he was adopting by becoming a prophet. He was to become a cause of the hardening of Israel's heart (*Isaiah* 6:09f).

5C. Isaianic Eschatology

1. God's people Israel are to face God's retribution on them

Was Isaiah a pessimist? Did he really believe that his message would lead to utter destruction? Did he have no hope that some might have Faith in **the LORD**? One of the pre-dominant themes in Isaiah is that Israë! is of no longer any value as God's people and is to face retribution. This theme is worked out in detail in various of the prophecies, and between them they cover a great time span from that of the Fall of Jerusalem and exile from **587 B.C.** up to the Time of the Return of **Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah** (I have here super-imposed *New Testament* and Christian categories briefly).

2. The 'Day of the Lord' and Jerusalem

(a) *Isaiah 1:04-1:20*

The nation has become utterly sinful. Its immediate future is to be overrun and destroyed.

(b) *Isaiah 2:06-2:22*

Here the prophet sees the Day of **the LORD** as a day of visitation on all nations, not just on Israë!. Although Israë! stands in a special relationship to **the LORD**, yet **the LORD** is **God** of all nations and so they stand condemned by the same standards as does Israë!. On the day of **the LORD's** visitation, people will flee and try to hide in the cracks of the rocks and in caves before the terrifying majesty of **the LORD's** Glory.

(c) *Isaiah 3:01-4:11*

Again, Jerusalem is condemned. It is a city that is without true leaders and a city which is in a state of anarchy. Morally, it is rotten to the core, and its only fate is punishment. The punishment is conceived of in terms of captivity, and in this chapter there are many images of the state of a prisoner (*Isaiah 3:24*). There will be a great reversal of present conditions of wealth and prosperity: (i) Food supplies will be cut (*Isaiah 3:01*); (ii) Rulers and Counsellors will be replaced by boys (*Isaiah 5:04*); (iii) Beautiful women will be smitten with scab (*Isaiah 3:17*) and their finery taken away (*Isaiah 3:18-3:23*); (iv) Anyone who has even a coat to wear will be looked to by the people for protection (*Isaiah 3:06*).

(d) *Isaiah 5:01-5:07*

Here is to be found Israë!'s famous *Song of the Vineyard* in which Israë! was once a fruitful vine, but soon the day will come when it will be plundered and invaded and turned into ruin and wilderness (The Exile). The vines only produced bad fruit (*Isaiah 5:04*) and so the husbandmen gave it up to the beasts, – so it is with Israë!.

(e) *Isaiah 22:01-22:14*

Even after **the LORD** showed mercy to Israë! and the city was saved by some miracle in **701 B.C.**, the people in their joy and rejoicing did not turn to **the LORD**, and so are destined to suffer (*Isaiah 22:10-22:14*).

(f) *Isaiah 28:07-28:22*

Jerusalem has rejected the teaching of **the LORD** and of His Messengers (*Isaiah 28:07-28:10*) (EXPLAIN 28:10), but in doing so they have chosen to be taught by foreign oppressors (*Isaiah 28:11-28:13*). Jerusalem has inevitably made a Covenant with death and Sheol (*Isaiah 28:15*) and so **the Lord** has issued a decree of destruction (*Isaiah 28:22*).

(g) *Isaiah 29:01-29:04*

Another famous oracle, “**Ho, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped.**” ‘Ariel’ means ‘Lion of God’ or ‘Altar hearth’. Both denote former greatness in the eyes of God, and here the famous city of God is to be besieged and reduced to a ghost town (*Isaiah* 29:04).

(h) *Isaiah* 30:13-30:14

Finally, this oracle declares that Jerusalem will be smashed like a potter’s vessel into tiny fragments.

So ruthlessly will it be smashed that none of the fragments will even be sizeable enough to be of any further use.

3. The theme of future hope in *Isaiah* of Jerusalem

(a) The dominant theme about Israel is ‘black/dark’

The dominant theme in **Isaiah**’s utterances about Israēl as she then was is black/dark, and does not carry much hope for the future. But there are other passages where we do see hope in *Isaiah*.

(b) The Lord who purifies

When the Seraph touched **Isaiah**’s lips with the fiery coal, the effect was to purify. So also the visitation of **the LORD**’s Holiness will purify. All that is dross, of course, will be cleared away, but what is left will be pure and Holy. **Isaiah** looks beyond the visitation upon the land itself and the people in it at that time to a future time when the people of God will be a nation purified and clear (*Isaiah* 1:24-1:26). But the visitation and purification is not only for Israēl, it must apply to all nations also. Thus in *Isaiah* 30:28, the advent of **the LORD** in all His anger and Holiness will have the effect of sifting the nations with a sieve.

(c) Destruction of the nations surrounding Israel, and ultimately of Assyria

The majority of oracles on the nations are oracles of soon to be damnation and destruction for the immediate peoples around Israēl. So, *Isaiah* 14:28-14:32 – even the remnant of Phillistia will be slain. *Isaiah* 17:01-17:06: Damascus will become a heap of ruins, *Isaiah* 19:01-19:15; the fate of Egypt will be desolation, destruction, anarchy. The immediate instrument of **the LORD**’s judgement of Israēl was to be Assyria (*Isaiah* 7:20, 10:05), but even Assyria will overstep herself and instead of regarding the reduction of Israēl as her work in the execution of **God**’s Judgement – she will boast of her own prowess. For this too, she will have to be finished (*Isaiah* 10:02-10:16). But there is rather more to be said.

4. Eschatology: ‘Last in order of time’ and/or ‘absolutely authoratative’

Now **Isaiah** himself is not thinking here in terms of the end of the world. He is not describing Armageddon. His judgements are religio-political and are addressed to the present world situation of his own day. They are the working out of history in his own time. Yet his words spring from an awareness of **the LORD**’s transcendent Majesty and carry the finality of the Divine action. When **God** acts His acts are final. But here we cross to the problem of terminology. “Final” means both ‘last in order of time sequence’ and ‘absolutely authoritative’. Eschatology also has this duplicity, for the ‘end time’ cannot be the ‘end full stop’ since it also possesses an implication of afterness. **God**’s eschaton is the absolute end, the authoritative and therefore the final, but there is never the suggestion that there is nothing to follow the final Eschaton. Now, what did **Isaiah** think was to come after? People have looked again and again to *Isaiah* 7 to try and find a clue to **Isaiah**’s understanding of Israēl’s future hope, and to this we will return.

6C. The Remnant

1. The Lord's anger will purify Jerusalem and Judah

We have already seen that **Isaiah** thought of the future visitation as a purgative process. We saw in *Isaiah* 1:24-1:26 a statement that **the LORD's** anger was to smelt away the dross and alloy from Judah and Jerusalem, whilst those left would be purified and restored to the old time Faith (READ AGAIN). Here we have an explicit statement that a remnant is to survive the visitation. **Isaiah** is certain there will be a remnant, although it will be a remnant of left-overs or those who escape. It will be a purified remnant.

2. The Isaianic understanding of 'remnant'

Now the term 'Remnant' ("She'ar", "She'rith") is used 23 times in *Isaiah* 1-39, and in particular in *Isaiah* 7:03 where **Isaiah** calls one of his sons "**Shear-Jashub**" i.e: 'A remnant shall return'. The precise implication of this name is uncertain, for it could mean:

- a. Only some will survive the visitation, i.e: it would be a name of gloomy foreboding.
- b. It could mean at least some will survive and will open the new era of Hope. There is nothing to support the argument either way – it could be a hope or foreboding that is implied in the name.

3. *Isaiah* 1:24-25: A Prophecy of the faithful Jerusalem of the future

However, it does seem likely that **Isaiah** himself had a fairly definite vision. It is true that the bulk of his message is one of foreboding, but we have the passage in *Isaiah* 1:24-1:25 which tells of the faithful Jerusalem of the future, and also it seems unlikely that so many oracles about the remnant would have later on in the Book been associated with **Isaiah** by his disciples if he had not taught them to hope for one. (c.f.: *Isaiah* 10:20ff, 11:11-11:16, 28:05, 37:32 READ A SAMPLE).

4. The Hope for the remnant: The Lord a foundation stone, the remnant purified

The hope for the remnant then, is expressed according to the idea of purification. Furthermore, as we have already seen, **Isaiah** taught that **the LORD** was a sure foundation stone for those who stand in Faith (*Isaiah* 28:16).

5. The remnant: An Israel within Israel leading to the Theology of the Church

At any rate, we find in *Isaiah* the growth of a concept which is new – the belief in an Israel within Israel – i.e: a group specially chosen and called because of their Faith, whilst the rest of the nation in its unrepentant sinfulness is to be rejected as the arena for the outworking of **God's** Covenant purposes. Although this remnant is Israel's life, i.e: the hope of the nation, at least there is now some scope for individual choice as opposed to the old idea of the nation or nothing. It is here that the clue to Israel and the Church in *Isaiah* is to be found. So far we have been looking entirely from a viewpoint of being alive in **Isaiah's** time and will continue to do so as we now turn to consider the 'Messiah' from **Isaiah's** point of view in his time. Here I will just consider *Isaiah* 1-39. The Messiah in *Isaiah* 40-66 is considered elsewhere by us in ICPICJC B.A./B.D./B.MIN./B.TH. Courses *Isaiah* 40-45 in Hebrew; and *Isaiah* 49-53 in Hebrew.

7C. The Messiah

1. Three key texts

c.f.: *Isaiah* 9:02-9:07; *Isaiah* 11:01-11:09; *Isaiah* 32:01-32:08 (READ)

2. The Theology of Messiah in *Isaiah* 1-39

Now, **Isaiah's** remnant was to be a religious and not a political remnant. The political body of the Israélite state **Isaiah** regarded as being only fit for destruction – but here in these verses we find the state emerging into new and vigorous life under the leadership of the new king – **the Messiah**. Also, the detail of the vision in *Isaiah* 11 is of peace in the realm of nature and typically apocalyptic in its imagery. The Messianic kingdom is to be one of Righteousness and Peace and the **Messiah** is to embody these qualities. So, **Isaiah of Jerusalem** marks a new era in the Religious Hope of Israël. His religion is still the old-time Faith of the Sinai Covenant, but it is also blessed with new insight into the nature of that Covenant. The prophet condemns disobedience and promises the inevitable judgement that disobedience implies. but, at the same time he holds out hope for the remnant who have Faith to be saved and purified through **the Lord's** visitation. It will be the task of this remnant to become an Israël from within Israël under its new **Messiah** king, and its total duty, which it will be able to perform now that it is purified will be to live the life of true Faith in Communion with God. In the mean-time it is for every Israélite to exert pressure to ensure that that reality (which can be present under the Sinai Covenant) be sought and maintained at the cost of all human political alliances and other friendship as necessary.

3. 'Woe' implies God's heart burning with pity for Israel

Unfortunately, as **Isaiah** is all too painfully aware, these are high hopes and all too high for sinful Israël. His message will unfortunately have the effect of condemning many, but at least they will have been told WHY they are being condemned. The prophet thus finds himself in a dilemma, and the prophetic '**Woe**' does not so much mean 'cursed' as "**How my heart burns with pity for you, O Israël**".

4. A note about Israel and Church

It is unfortunate that there is a lot of talk around today, and rather simplistic talk, about what is meant by the Church as the New Israël. 'Israël' is the people of God, the people of His Covenant. Hence, there is an Israël of the Old Covenant to whom God has offered a New Covenant which some received and some did not. Further, people of all nations were invited on an individual basis into that Covenant relationship – '**to as many as received Him gave He the power that they should become Sons of God – even to them who believe on His Name ...** '

UNITS 15- 16: DEUTERONOMY & THE DEUTERONOMISTS

A. INTRODUCTION: CONTENTS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF *DEUTERONOMY*

1A. The Structure of the Book *Deuteronomy*

1. Basic Structure of *Deuteronomy*

The Book *Deuteronomy* is one of the very few Books of the *Old Testament* that can be neatly divided into sections: (a.) Introduction: *Deuteronomy* 1-11; (b.) Laws: *Deuteronomy* 12-26; (c.) Curses and addenda: *Deuteronomy* 27-36. But: each of these parts can be subdivided:

2. *Deuteronomy* 1-11: An Introduction

***Deuteronomy* 1-3:** A summary of the last stage of the wilderness journey ending in the land of Moab, thus bringing Israël to the doorstep of the promised land.

***Deuteronomy* 4:** A collection of brief Laws and exhortations.

***Deuteronomy* 5:** Decalogue followed by exhortations.

***Deuteronomy* 6-11:** Exhortation to obey the Law. There is an historical insertion into this section recalling the episode of the golden calf of Aaron (Deut. 9:07-10:11).

3. *Deuteronomy* 12:01-26:15: The Laws

***Deuteronomy* 12:01-26:15:** The Laws. These are interspersed with paranesis i.e: exhortation. There is little apparent order in the arrangement of the Laws, but many of them have been developed from the Covenant Code.

***Deuteronomy* 26:16-26:19:** An insertion which recalls a ceremony of receiving and accepting the Law, i.e: a Covenant Ceremony.

4. *Deuteronomy* 27-34: Covenant Blessings, curses and addenda

***Deuteronomy* 27:** An account of a Covenant ceremony which took place at Schechem. Emphasis on curse which results from a disobedience to the Law.

***Deuteronomy* 28:** A list of blessings or curses dependent on obedience or disobedience to the Law.

***Deuteronomy* 29:** The account of a Moabite Covenant which urges obedience.

***Deuteronomy* 30:** Two short sermons on obedience.

***Deuteronomy* 31:** Further sermons: The account of Joshua's appointment.

***Deuteronomy* 32:** The Song of Moses: and extended poem.

***Deuteronomy* 33:** The Blessing by Moses.

***Deuteronomy* 34:** The Death of Moses.

Now, there are reasons for believing that the original *Book of Deuteronomy* was not as long as the present Book. But before we can determine the nature of this *Ur-Deuteronomy*, we must see how *Deuteronomy* fits into history.

2A. Josiah's Reformation: DE WETTE's Thesis

1. The Course of the Reformation under King Josiah

II Kings 22-23 informs us that in the eighteenth year of **Josiah's** reign (622-612 BC) the priest, **Hilkiah**, found a Law Book in the temple and gave it to Josiah's secretary of state, **Shaphan**. **Shaphan** read the Book to **Josiah** who was very disturbed when he heard of its contents. He therefore sent his courtiers to consult a prophetess, **Huldah**, about the Book's authority. On hearing that the Book had the **LORD's** sanction, **Josiah** called his officials and people to the temple (*II Kings* 23) and there made a covenant that the nation would obey the Laws written in the Book. He then set in motion a purge of the temple in which all of its pagan apparatus was thrown out, and after extending his purge to the Northern Kingdom and to Bethel, he returned to Jerusalem and held a Passover celebration in the temple.

2. DE WETTE's Thesis: 'Deuteronomy' was the law at the heart of Josiah's reforms

Now the Deuteronomistic editor of *Kings* praises **Josiah** highly for his actions and regards him as one of the best Yahwists who ever ruled Judah. The 'inordinate praise' accorded to **Josiah** rather suggests that the editor had a special interest in the Law Book in question. For many centuries, even as far back as the time of **Jerome**, it had been suspected that **Josiah's** Law Book was *Deuteronomy*, but it was only in 1805 that a German, **De-Wette**, set out the evidence for the equation. **De-Wette** noted that the reforms of **Josiah** correspond with the demands of *Deuteronomy* in almost every detail, but that they do not correspond well with the demands of any other known Law Code.

3. A polarised reaction to De-Wette

Since **De-Wette** proposed his equation, the debate has continued:

(a) **CONSERVATIVE SCHOLARS:** Conservative scholars have largely refused to accept **De-Wette's** presentation of his thesis, as it implies that *Deuteronomy* was written not too long before the reform itself. They have clung to the idea that *Deuteronomy* is somehow Mosaic, and even if it was *Deuteronomy* that was found in the temple, they argue that it could have been in the temple stones as a foundation document since the time of **King Solomon**. Its production in 622 B.C. was hence in the nature of a re-discovery of a long forgotten Law.

(b) **LIBERAL SCHOLARS:** Less Conservative scholars, on the other hand, have tried to date *Deuteronomy* at a date in or after the exile. They claim that the Deuteronomistic editor of *Kings* has written very biased history, and they have chosen **Josiah** to show that if a king or ruler did implement the Law of *Deuteronomy*, then he would be blessed indeed. There is little, they claim, of real historical value in *II Kings* 22-23. It is a kind of sermon rather than history – a sermon giving an illustration of how one is blessed by obeying

But there are difficulties with both of these positions as we shall now see.

4. Evaluation of faction and reaction

There are difficulties with both the Conservative and Liberal positions stated on the last page.

(a) The literary style of *Deuteronomy*

To begin with: The style of *Deuteronomy's* language is the style of the editor of *Kings*, and the editor of *Jeremiah*, and that style is unique in the *Old Testament*. It belongs to the date near the time of *Jeremiah* – i.e: towards the end of the history of the Kingdom of Judah – **the Seventh & Sixth Centuries B.C.**

(b) King Josiah's death

Secondly, *II Kings* 23 hardly shows Josiah to have been the most blessed of Judaeen kings, for he was slain in battle in **609 B.C.** against Pharaoh Neco (*II Kings* 23:28-23:30).

(c) Ancient and immediate pre-exilic material in *Deuteronomy*

Yet there is some truth in both the ‘Conservative’ and ‘Liberal’ positions, for there is material in *Deuteronomy* that is very old, and there is also material that is post-exilic.

(d) The historical perspective of the author/editor of *Kings*

It is also true that the editor of ‘Kings’ is writing biased history. He tries to show that the Josianic Reformation was a direct result of finding this wonderful book, whereas *II Chronicles* 34-35 tells us that the Book was found after the reforms had started.

(e) Different perspectives in *Kings* and *Chronicles*

However, even ‘Chronicles’ raises a problem about history, for if **Josiah** started to purge the Jerusalem cult before the finding of the Law Book, then the question arises, “Why did **Josiah** start this reform?” This has two answers in the *Old Testament*: According to *II Kings*: The reform started because of the Law Book; according to *II Chronicles* the reform was already under way. If *Chronicles* is right and the reform started earlier, there must have been some other reasons for reform.

3A. OSTREISCHER’s Thesis: King Josiah’s reform was political

1. OSTREISCHER: *Das Deuteronomische Gesetz* 1923

(a) OSTREISCHER’s Thesis stated

In **1923**, **Ostreicher** published a book, *Das Deuteronomische Gesetz*, in which he maintained that *Chronicles* was right – the reform started before the discovery of the Book. **Ostreicher** also sought to provide a reason for the reform. This was the age of Assyrian domination, and Judah was subject to Assyria. Assyrian rule, **Ostreicher** stated, meant that the subject peoples had to worship Assyrian gods as a sign of their vassal status. These ‘gods’ had to be set in their temples, and it was these that **Josiah** threw out. **Josiah’s** reforms fell at about the time of an Assyrian decline, and **Josiah’s** action was not religious, but political. By throwing out the Assyrian gods, **Josiah** was throwing off Assyrian rule and declaring his independence. It was in the course of these political reforms that the Law Book was produced, and it gave a different slant to the whole affair by making the reforms more religious and less political.

(b) Comment and perspective

This theory of **Ostreicher** is still very widely accepted today. You will find it cited in all the standard commentaries, introductions, and histories. However, it seems that there is little evidence to support it, and we ought therefore to briefly attempt an evaluation of it.

2. An evaluation of Ostreicher’s thesis

(a) Textual evidence

Assyrian texts do not demand that vassals of Assyria put Assyrian idols into their temples, neither do they suggest that this was Assyrian practice.

(b) Canaanite and Palestinian aspects

It would seem that the ‘gods’ that Josiah threw out of the temple were all Canaanite and Palestinian. None of them is particularly Assyrian: Ba’al, Asherah, and Moloch were Canaanite ‘gods’ of Sidon, Moab, and Ammon, are mentioned (*II Kings* 25:13) but no Assyrian god is mentioned.

(c) Star worship

Star gods are mentioned – but they are not said to be Assyrian, and the worship of the stars was very widespread in the Ancient Near East.

3. J.W.McKAY & R.COOGAN: An evaluation and conclusion

From 1966 to 1969 J.W.McKay was working on an evaluation of **Ostreicher's** thesis in the University of Cambridge under the direction of **E.W.Nicholson**, whilst **R.Coogan** was working on a similar evaluation in Oxford. **McKay** worked from the *Old Testament* texts and read the Assyrian texts in their light, whilst **Coogan** did the opposite, and apparently, neither they nor their supervisors colluded. However: Both came to the same conclusion: The cause of the reforms was not political in the sense that the yoke of Assyria was being cast off. Nevertheless, you will find that **Ostreicher's** thesis is accepted by almost everyone who has written (without too much thought) on the matter. No: It seems that the reforms instead were inspired by a movement within the land of Judah itself. The movement was that of 'Deuteronomism', and soon after it obtained control of the government, the reforms began. *Deuteronomy*, then, was the movement's Book which set out its reforms in black and white. We shall return to this later, but I tell you so much now in the present so that the rest of our study can be seen in this perspective.

B. UR-DEUTERONOMISM AND THE DATE OF DEUTERONOMY

1B. Internal Literary Evidence

1. The Problem of Ur-Deuteronomy

(a) Introduction

We now have a date to which we can attach the Book *Deuteronomy*. We have already noted that some of the material of *Deuteronomy* is very ancient, and some may well be near contemporary with **Josiah's** reforms. If it was *Deuteronomy* that was used in **622 B.C.** by **Josiah**, the original draft must have been produced before that date. However, there is much material in *Deuteronomy* that pre-supposes the exile.

(b) Speeches and sermons in *Deuteronomy*

Some of the speeches and sermons in *Deuteronomy* give an outline of history, and that outline takes us through the period of the kingdom to the fall of Judah, and into the exile, ending with a note about the return from exile (cf. *Deuteronomy* 4:25-4:31, 29:28 (N.B.: "as at this day" = "when they're in another land"), and 30:01-30:10 which is constituted by tables of return.) Now, such material is obviously later than **Josiah's** time, and so must represent a later addition to *Deuteronomy*.

(c) MARTIN NOTH: *Deuteronomy* as the first Book of the 'D'-History

We saw earlier that *Deuteronomy* represents the first part of the great 'D' history (*Deuteronomy-II Kings*), and there is much of the editorial work in *Deuteronomy* that is similar to the material in *Kings*. Now *Kings* ends its history well into the exile, and so some of *Deuteronomy's* editing must belong to a fairly late period, much later than **Josiah's** time.

(d) Use of 'Thou' and 'Ye'

A third reason for seeing some material in *Deuteronomy* as late and editorial is that within *Deuteronomy* itself we find sharp and uneasy changes in style. The style of the Book is an address to the people, and the people are always referred to as 'thou' in the singular, i.e. 'You' as a united people. But frequently we find that the style suddenly changes, even in mid-sentence, and the 'you' becomes 'ye'. Now, these 'ye' passages have been studied in depth, and they display a style and

Theology consonant with that of the editor of the material that comprises *Kings*. Most ‘ye’ passages are in the first part of *Deuteronomy*, but they are difficult to distinguish in the *Revised Standard Version* English Translation because modern English does not distinguish between ‘You’ in the singular and ‘you’ in the plural. You have to look at the *Authorised Version* (1611) or the *Revised Version* (1889) of the English Bible to see the change from ‘thou’ to ‘ye’. (e.g: *Deuteronomy* 8:19b-8:20).

2. The construction of *Deuteronomy*

Now, by such methods as these we can cut out most of the editorial and later material in *Deuteronomy* that came from its inclusion in the ‘D’ history. We are left with:

1. Introduction (*Deuteronomy* 4:04-4:11) (but: omit ‘ye’ portions);
2. Laws (*Deuteronomy* 12:01-26:15);
3. Sanctioning rite (*Deuteronomy* 26:16-26:19);
4. Blessings and curses (*Deuteronomy* 28:01 ff).

This ‘core’ we call *Ur-Deuteronomy* and it is this Book we believe to be the one that **King Josiah** used. Some scholars want to cut it down further, but there is little evidence to support this. It is only reduced further by those who find it difficult to accommodate to their own theories of history, e.g: **Gerhard Von-Rad** who wants to cut out all the centralisation Laws in *Deuteronomy*.

2B. A.C.WELCH’s Thesis: *Ur-Deuteronomy* is Northern Kingdom in provenance & tradition

1. Introduction: A further probing

Although we have a fixed date for *Ur-Deuteronomy*, that is only a final date – terminus ante quem or terminus ad quem. We now want to find a ‘terminus a quo’ i.e: the earliest possible date. Unfortunately we do not have information in our histories as clear-cut as **King Josiah’s** reformation. It could have been that the Book lay long enough in the temple before **Hilkiah** produced it, and some scholars have tried to argue that the Book *Deuteronomy* itself shows signs of great antiquity. It is also believed that the antiquity is not that of Judah, but that of the Northern Kingdom. Why?

2. The contribution of ADAM C. WELCH

Although isolated scholars had suspected a Northern origin for the Book *Deuteronomy*, it was not until 1923 that **Adam C. Welch** in his Book *The Code of Deuteronomy* specifically pointed to the evidence for such a theory. But, before we look at this evidence, let us first have clearly in mind the distinction between the Book and its traditions.

3. The nature of the traditions

A tradition is always a tradition about something – e.g: we can have traditions about the priesthood and traditions about the shrine. Traditions are usually a mixture of stories, laws, regulations, explanations, etc.. For example, we may have a law about priesthood and a story to explain why that law came into existence. Now, these traditions are handed on independently from generation to generation, sometimes in writing, and sometimes by word of mouth. But the important thing about traditions is that they are not mere record. Their interest is not solely in past history – they are handed on so that they may be taught and learned. Traditions are living, e.g: *Exodus* was handed on so that each generation could learn of the greatness of the Lord, and of the special choice of Israel by YHWH.

4. Traditions within *Deuteronomy*

(a) Introduction

Now there are many traditions within *Deuteronomy* and many of these traditions reach far back into antiquity. We shall look at some of these presently, but we must realise that a tradition has an independent existence, and just because a tradition in a book is old, we cannot say that the Book itself is old. A late book may preserve old traditions.

(b) *Deuteronomy* as the Law of The Lord's Covenant people Israel

To begin with, *Deuteronomy* is a law for 'Israël'. It is not state Law, but the Law of the Covenant people. In the period of the monarchy, the Covenant people were divided into two kingdoms, but somehow they continued to be one people – the LORD's people. The notion of one people Israël goes very far back into the time of the Judges at least, and so the whole of 'Deuteronomy' is centred on an ancient tradition of a sacred institution – the religious community, Israël.

(c) The Theology of 'Holy War'

We also find in *Deuteronomy* the old idea of Holy War being revived. There are various Laws, speeches, and sermons in *Deuteronomy* that concern 'Holy War', especially *Deuteronomy* 20, 23:09-23:14. This is not the law which governs the national armies of Judah and Israël, but the religious law of the sacral unit 'Israël'. The tradition in this instance is again a religious tradition and one which goes back into dim antiquity. We find that the **LORD** is the Commander of the forces, and that He protects His military sacral armies against all military odds. The forces must be kept pure and holy, and so we find in *Deuteronomy* 23 the laws governing the purity of the military camps.

(d) The Law of *Deuteronomy* is Sinai Covenant Law

Furthermore, the central tradition of *Deuteronomy* is that of the Law. Now, the tradition of **YHWH's** Law goes back to the Lord giving this Law to **Moses** during the Exodus of Israel from Egypt at Mount Sinai, i.e.: to the very origins of Israël. Although the Law of *Deuteronomy* is given not in Sinai but in Moab, it is still the Law of the Sinai Covenant. According to *Deuteronomy* the only Law given at Sinai (Horeb) is the Decalogue (*Deuteronomy* 5), but the Moabite Laws, given by **Moses** on the eve of entry to the land, all form part of the same Covenant Faith. *Deuteronomy* is not the Law of the Davidic Covenant or of any other Covenant – it is the Sinai Covenant Law. Thus again we are dealing with Israël's oldest traditions.

(e) Laws of Centralization

Deuteronomy's Laws of Centralisation (*Deuteronomy* 12) rest on an old tradition. In the period of *Judges* the 'Amphictiony' (if Israël was such) had a central 'shrine'. So, *Deuteronomy's* demand for one central sanctuary may simply be a development of an old ideal although there is a difference. Any supposed amphictionic shrine would exist alongside the local sanctuaries, but *Deuteronomy's* Law demands the sole existence of one shrine and the abolition of all others.

5. Jerusalem as a provenance for these Ancient traditions?

Now, early scholars who noticed the antiquity of *Deuteronomy's* tradition argued that *Deuteronomy* must itself be very old. But, the traditions of *Deuteronomy* do show some signs of development, and it seems that they were incorporated into the Book at a fairly late date. As we shall see later; this date is the **Seventh Century B.C.** The question now arises – 'Where were those ancient traditions preserved and cherished?' It immediately seems unlikely that they were cherished in the Jerusalem 'shrine', for the traditions of Jerusalem seem to have been very different from those of *Deuteronomy*. Jerusalem's Theology had at its centre the Davidic Covenant and the notion of the **LORD's** external protection of His Holy Mountain – Zion. Nothing of this is found in

Deuteronomy, and indeed, *Deuteronomy*'s Law of the king (*Deuteronomy* 17:14-17:20), if anything stands in tension with kingship of the Davidic type. (READ and discuss *Deuteronomy* 17:14-17:20).

6. WELCH: The Northern Kingdom as provenance for the Deuteronomic traditions

With Jerusalem as a 'no candidate', **Welch** looked to the Northern Kingdom:

(a) The cultic role of Shechem as a sanctuary of The Lord

The only sanctuary that holds a position of real prominence in *Deuteronomy* is the one at Shechem (*Deuteronomy* 11:26-11:32, 27) and it is one of the early cultural shrines of the so-called amphictiony of Northern Israël.

(b) *Deuteronomy* seems to be dependent on 'E'

Also, the traditions of the wilderness history in the early chapters of *Deuteronomy*, for those of you who like the Pentateuchal Documentary hypothesis of **Graf-Keuen-Welhausen**, which I don't, are dependent upon 'E' and not 'J', and 'E' is a northern source. (The arguments involved here are very intricate – c.f.: Older Commentaries e.g.: that of **S.R.Driver 1912**.)

(c) The Law of Kingship is not of Southern origin

Thirdly, the Law of Kingship could hardly be of Southern origin, for the only type of Kingship in the South was the Davidic Kingship. So again, argues **Welch**, we must look to the North. We may remember that the Southern prophet **Isaiah** was well disposed to the king, but **Hosea** in the North openly spoke against his kings – this is similar to the attitude found in *Deuteronomy*.

(d) **Hosea**, a Northern prophet, like *Deuteronomy*, addresses 'all Israel'

Fourthly, we may remember also that the Southern prophets **Isaiah** and **Micah** addressed their oracles mainly against the Judaeans' bureaucrats, whilst **Hosea** was mainly concerned to address 'all Israël' – so it is with *Deuteronomy*.

(e) Israel separate from the nations

Fifthly: The Jerusalem cult and **Isaiah** desired to teach that The Lord through His Davidic King was the ruler of Israël and all the nations, ruling from Zion. But, **Hosea** and *Deuteronomy* both maintain that Israël's attitude to the various nations must be one of separation (c.f.: *Hosea* 7:08 ff, 8:08 ff, 9:01, and *Deuteronomy* 7). The demand for separation arises out of the recognition of the nations as pagan, and it is in the struggle to keep separate that both *Deuteronomy* and the northern prophets recommend the use of Holy War.

(f) The Law of Tithes

There are other minor points: *Deuteronomy* 14:22-14:27 has a Law of Tithes and *Amos* 4:04 shows that tithes were a well established practice in the north – cf. *Genesis* 28:22 where Jacob offers tithes at Bethel.

(g) The Passover Law

The Passover Law in *Deuteronomy* 16:01-16:08, which is different in many ways from that in 'P' (*Exodus* 12 ff) presents a ritual similar to the one that has survived amongst the Samaritan Jews.

(h) *Deuteronomy*'s use of the 'Covenant Code'

'*Deuteronomy*'s use of the Covenant Code Laws is also said to point to a Northern origin, but we do not know whether the Covenant Code was Northern or not.

7. Conclusions and further questions from WELCH's thesis

(a) A Preliminary conclusion

It may therefore be concluded that much of the material in *Deuteronomy* goes back a long way and that it was preserved in the Northern Kingdom. Now, when these arguments were first put forward,

it was immediately suggested by some that *Deuteronomy* was written in the North before **722 B.C.**, and when Samaria fell it was taken South and safely hidden in the temple. Others suggested that refugees from the North after **722 B.C.** wrote *Deuteronomy* in the South and hid their Book in the temple structure during the oppressive reign of **King Manasseh**. But, does this go far enough?

(b) *Deuteronomy* as a living tradition

It seems to me that there is much more to *Deuteronomy* than the mere record of old traditions held in the North. *Deuteronomy* itself is a living Book. It is not a mere historical record, but a Law written to be put into operation and obeyed. It is addressed to a listening audience (c.f.: ‘You’) who are asked to obey ‘this day’ (*Deuteronomy* 5:02-5:03). This is no mere record for posterity compiled by a group of refugees – it is a Book of the Living Faith, and not of one that has just been destroyed.

(c) The crucial question: ‘Who were the Deuteronomists?’

So we now have a Book preserving the old traditions of Israël, the Northern Kingdom, which fell in **722 B.C.** It is only used publicly for the first time in **622 B.C.**, and yet it is written by participants in a living Faith. How does all this fit together? The answer to the problem lies in finding an answer to the question, “Who were the Deuteronomists?”

C. THE IDENTITY OF THE ‘DEUTERONOMISTS’

1C. G.VON-RAD’s *Studies in Deuteronomy* 1933: They were Levites

1. A Bibliographic orientation

The outline of the argument that follows can be found in G. Von-Rad: *Studies in Deuteronomy*, London: SCM Press Studies in Biblical Theology Series 2 Monograph 9; and *Deuteronomy*, SCM Old Testament Library, London: SCM Press. Both were written originally in German, both are in **Bishop Andrew Shergold’s** Library and the PICC Library at Bacoor.

2. Introduction

The most popular theory today is the one proposed by **G. Von-Rad**, that the Deuteronomists were Levites. But, before we look at this theory, we must find out who the Levites were. ‘**The priests the Levites**’ or ‘**The Levitical priests**’ are frequently mentioned in *Deuteronomy* itself. But, sad to say, we know so little about them before the time of *Deuteronomy*.

3. The Pre-Deuteronomic History of the Levites

According to **G.Von-Rad** and his reading of the earliest traditions of the *Old Testament*, **Levi** was an Israëlite tribe, but at some very early date this tribe became scattered and landless. *Genesis* 49:05-49:07 contains a very early tradition which explains why they were scattered, but the allusions are unfortunately obscure. ‘Levi’ is condemned for rash, violent and warlike action which led to his virtual extermination. It is usual to see in *Genesis* 34 the tradition of how this happened. **Simeon** and **Levi** attempted to avenge the rape of their sister **Dinah**. Their wrathful attack on Shechem, we are told, led to their unpopularity in the land, and the fear of repercussion is expressed (*Genesis* 49:30). Whatever happened at Shechem, it must have happened at a very early date, possibly before, or soon after the Settlement; and **Levi** soon lost what tribal possessions it owned.

4. The appointment of the Levites as Priests

Somehow, at a very early date, the landless Levites came to be regarded as priests. The story of Micah's Levite who was abducted by the Danites (*Judges* 17-18) tells us that during the period of the Judges the Levites were already highly esteemed as priests. How the scattered tribe became priests we don't know, but *Exodus* 32:25-32:29 and *Deuteronomy* 33:08-33:11 both suggest that the Levitical priesthood dates from the desert period and that somehow they were appointed to the priesthood at Kadesh. This early information, obscure though it is, tells us quite a lot, but a long period of silence follows, and we hear nothing more of Levites until the time of *Deuteronomy*.

5. The Levites in 'P' and *Ezekiel*

'J' and 'E', for **G.Von-Rad** and those who adhere to them, tell us nothing of interest and the **8th century B.C.** prophets have nothing to say. Thus we are left to infer from *Deuteronomy* and the later writings what the Levites were. In *Ezekiel* 40-48 and in 'P', the Levites appear as a second order of priests whose duties are the menial tasks of the sanctuary. *Ezekiel* 44:10 ff gives as the reasons for their reduced status the information that before the exile they became apostate and syncretistic. **"The Levitical Priests (who kept the charge of my sanctuary) went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israël went astray"** (*Ezekiel* 44:10).

6. The Levites in *Deuteronomy* and the 'D' history

In the time of *Deuteronomy* priest and Levite appear to have had an equality of status, and all were altar priests. The key passage here is *Deuteronomy* 18:01-18:08. Here we see that all the Levites were priests (although we do not know whether all the priests were Levites cf. The Zadokites and the Aaronites). The Deuteronomist recognises no such distinctions. The priests at the central shrine are Levites, and all the Levites and all the Levites who come to the central shrine have equal status with them. The implication of this passage is that the Law of Centralisation deprived the Levites of their local shrines and that they were the local priests whom Josiah brought out of their local sanctuaries (cf. *II Kings* 23:08-23:09). *II Kings* 23:09 says that some of them refused to come up to Jerusalem to the central shrine, but at least the Law in *Deuteronomy* 18 shows that they had the right to do so if they wanted to. So we can fairly safely say that in the time of *Deuteronomy*, the Levites were the local priests in Judah. Now we can look at **Von-Rad's** theory.

6. *Deuteronomy* and the Covenant Festival

(a) Correlation between Covenant Festival and *Deuteronomy*

Now we can look at **Von-Rad's** thesis. You will remember that **Von-Rad** believed that the central feature of the Israëlite cult was a Covenant or Law-giving festival. The Covenant ceremony took the form of: (a.) Exhortation to Obedience (= Sermon); (b.) Reading of the Law; (c.) Ceremony sealing the Covenant; (d.) The pronouncement of blessings and curses. I.e.: This ceremony was in 'Covenant Form' – c.f.: the last section of this unit. Now, says **Von-Rad**, this structure of the Covenant festival corresponds exactly with the structure of *Deuteronomy*: (a.) *Deuteronomy* 4:44-11:32: Exhortation; (b.) *Deuteronomy* 12:01-26:15: Law; (c.) *Deuteronomy* 26:16-26:19: Sealing of the Covenant; (d.) *Deuteronomy* 28:01 ff.: Blessings and curses.

(b) *Deuteronomy's* Covenant Cult context

So, from the very start it seems likely that the Book of *Deuteronomy* grew out of the Israëlite Covenant cult. But there are other pointers in the same direction. There is a lot of exhortation and preaching in 'Deuteronomy' which is the kind of thing that you do not find in the Law Codes. This suggests cultic interpretation of the Law. Again, the use of the second person form of address ("You") implies that the Law was being read to an audience. And again, the use of 'this day' means

that the audience is being exhorted to obedience **now**. This is the Sermon, and the setting of the sermon is the cult.

(c) An arising question

But, who preached these sermons? Who was so familiar with the Law that he could handle it in a sermon? The identity of these preachers is for **Von-Rad** the key to the identity of the Deuteronomists.

7. The identity of the teachers of the *Deuteronomy* Sermons

(a) Evidence from the Levites of *Nehemiah*

The clue to the identity of the preachers of the *Deuteronomy* sermons is found by **Von-Rad** in *Nehemiah* 8:01 ff. Although this passage is post-exilic, it shows the Levites engaged in a task with which they must have been familiar. **Ezra** read the Law to the people, and in *Nehemiah* 8:07-8:08 we see that the Levites interpreted it – i.e: they expanded the text and explained it to the people, – or if you like – they preached a sermon on it.

(b) The function of Levites in *Deuteronomy*

Now this is very similar to the function that *Deuteronomy* itself gives to the Levites, for in *Deuteronomy* 31:09f, the Levites are instructed to read the Law to the people at the autumn festival. Also in *Deuteronomy* 20:01 ff, we find an example of a priest preaching a sermon. So the local priests of the Judaeen villages were preachers and it is they who were familiar with the traditions and who handled them and expounded them in the same way as the Book of *Deuteronomy* itself does. So; they were the Deuteronomists.

(c) The Levites and Holy War militia

But, **Von-Rad** does not stop there. *Deuteronomy* contains many Laws of Holy War, and in *Deuteronomy* 20:01 ff the priest is seen addressing the armies before battle. The Levites were not just priests and preachers – they were also involved in military matters. During the Assyrian period they set themselves the task of organising resistance and attempted to organise the peasantry of Judah into an army based on the principles of Holy War.

8. Conclusion from Von-Rad's thesis

(a) Von-Rad's thesis in summary

So: *Deuteronomy* has its origins in the North, but the Levites continued to preserve its traditions after **722 B.C.** in Judah where they taught the Sinai traditions in the villages and tried to keep true Yahwism alive by preaching and by organising resistance on religious principles to pagan domination. It was they who were responsible for *Deuteronomy* in its original form, and it was they who deposited it in the temple.

(b) Von-Rad's thesis is flawed

But, **Von-Rad's** thesis is seriously and fatally flawed, and I could spend some several teaching hours pointing out the obvious weaknesses in it. It seems very surprising to me that so many people have accepted it, I can only conclude that they may have been dazzled by a big name.

2C. A critique of Von-Rad's thesis that the Deuteronomists were Levites

1. The 'centralisation' factor

(a) The problem

The basic problem is that of the Laws of Centralisation. It seems ridiculous to suggest that local priests could have written a Law which ordered the abolition of their own local sanctuaries, i.e: they

should have done themselves out of their own job, or as one scholar so beautifully puts it, that they should have sawn off the branches on which they were sitting.

(b) Two possible solutions

Now; there are two ways out of this problem:

- a. **Welch's** argument that *Deuteronomy* does not demand centralisation.
- b. That of **Von-Rad**: to omit altogether from *Ur-Deuteronomy* the centralisation laws.

We shall examine both of these 'ways out' in turn.

2. WELCH's Solution: Centralisation does not simply mean 'Jerusalem'

(a) *Deuteronomy* 23:16 'qualifies' *Deuteronomy* 12:05

Welch argued that *Deuteronomy* does not demand centralisation: *Deuteronomy* 12:05 reads, "**You shall seek the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His Name and make His habitation there**". **Welch** then points to *Deuteronomy* 23:16, the Law of the Runaway slave which reads: (Here READ Dent. 23:16). Here you find the same phrase, "**in the place which the LORD your God shall choose**", and in this instance it cannot imply only one place in the whole land. So, *Deuteronomy* 12:05 does not mean just one place in the whole land, but a lot of individual places.

(b) Welch's contention in short

Now, the linguistic arguments that **Welch** employs here are very complex, but basically the problem reduces itself to the question as to whether there is any real difference between "**choosing the place in one of your towns where it pleases you best,**" and, "**choosing the place out of all your tribes, the place which YHWH has chosen**". It does seem that there is a world of difference, but unfortunately, **Welch's** arguments in this instance are given almost no weight today.

(c) Today's 'status quo' vis-à-vis centralisation

Despite this, it is generally agreed that *Deuteronomy* does demand a centralisation and that this is one of the reasons why **Josiah** centralised the cult. If the Deuteronomist did not want to convey the idea of a centralisation, then he expressed himself very clumsily and certainly Josiah must have thought that he meant 'centralisation'.

2. G.VON-RAD's Solution: Omit all centralisation laws from *Deuteronomy*

(a) Von-Rad's method stated and critiqued

The second alternative, and the one adopted by **Von-Rad**, is to omit the centralisation laws altogether from *Ur-Deuteronomy*. **Von-Rad's** argument is that since the Levites wrote *Deuteronomy* they would not have legislated for the abolition of their own shrines, so the centralisation laws are a later addition to the text. But, this is a case of putting the cart before the horse. He has invented a theory, and what evidence does not fit his theory he simply throws into the bin. But: The centralisation law forms a substantial part of the Book *Deuteronomy* and it is those laws that give the Book its most characteristic stamp. **Von-Rad** is arbitrary. He cannot do with scholarly integrity what he does in this thesis.

(b) Centralisation material omitted by Von-Rad from *Deuteronomy*

Here are the 'binned' laws:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> 12:01-12:28: | Centralisation and profane slaughter. |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> 14:22-14:29: | Tithes to be taken to the central shrine. |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> 16:01-16:17: | Three festivals to be celebrated at the central shrine. |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> 17:08-17:13: | Supreme court of appeal is at the central shrine. |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> 18:01-18:08: | Law of Levitical priesthood at central shrine. |
| <i>Deuteronomy</i> 26:01-26:11: | Firstfruits to be taken to the central shrine. |

Deuteronomy 26:12-26:15: Third year tithes to be taken to central shrine.

Deuteronomy 15:19-15:23: Firstlings of land and flock to be offered at central shrines.

Deuteronomy 19:01-19:13: Law of refuge – local sanctuaries have gone, so cities of refuge are to take their place.

This is a substantial portion of ‘Deuteronomy’, and you can’t just cut it out to suit your own theory.

3. Omitting centralisation material omits seven out of ten mentions of ‘Levites’!

But there is a more serious objection to **Von-Rad’s** solution. In the Law-code *Deuteronomy* 12:01-26:15, the Levites are only mentioned ten times, and seven of these times are in the centralisation laws (the first seven in the above list). By cutting out these laws, **Von-Rad** is cutting out the Levites as well, for it is in the centralisation laws that the Levites are most often mentioned. The other three references to Levites are in *Deuteronomy* 17:15-17:20, 21:05, 24:08-24:09.

4. Von-Rad is confused as to the identity of the Levites in *Deuteronomy*

There is another problem about **Von-Rad’s** theory, and that is that he is confused as to who the Levites were. He says *Deuteronomy* is to be set in the cult and that it is so cultic indeed that only the priests could stand behind the traditions and compilation of the Book. Yet, when he develops his theory about preaching Levites involved in military affairs, he is compelled to remove his Levites one step from the cult itself. He writes, “the Levites cannot have been purely cult personnel and therefore chiefly interested in the cult.” (*Studies* 167). Here he is attempting to explain how *Deuteronomy* shows so much interest in matters which are non-cultic and says so little about the laws of sacrifice etc.. But with these words he is blatantly contradicting his initial assumptions that the Deuteronomists must have been priests.

5. A contextualising remark

Well, as I said earlier, I could go on, but I hope I have said enough to show that **Von-Rad** has certainly not offered a coherent answer, despite his popularity today.

3C. E.W. NICHOLSON’s *Deuteronomy and Tradition*: The Deuteronomists were prophets

1. A note related to the history of scholarship

Although **Von-Rad’s** thesis of Levitical traditions is the most popular today, it has not always been so. Since the end of the last century there have been some who have thought that *Deuteronomy* shows close affinity with the prophetic tradition rather than with the priestly tradition. Some early scholars like **S.R. Driver** believed that *Deuteronomy* shows signs of being a book worked out by prophets and priests together to show their points of agreement. Recently, the idea of a prophetic tradition has been revived by **E.W. Nicholson**, and there are signs that his thesis has begun to be considered as a serious alternative to that of **Von-Rad**.

2. Nicholson, Welch, Von-Rad: Similarities and Diversities

(a) Agreement

Nicholson starts from the same point as **Von-Rad** started. He agrees with **Von-Rad** that many of the traditions in *Deuteronomy* reach far back into the antiquity of Israel’s history and he also agrees that the form of the Book and its use of paranesis, of the sermon or hortatory address, of ‘You’ as the form of address, of ‘this day’ to make the Law a present reality – he believes that all these things do point to a cultic setting for the Law of *Deuteronomy*.

(b) Nicholson's Divergence

But where **Nicholson** takes exception to **Von-Rad** is with respect to the Levites as the cultic persons who were involved in the traditions of the Law. The traditions show signs of preservation in Northern Israel – he agrees – but they cannot have been preserved at the Northern Kingdom's shrines – he argues.

3. NICHOLSON's Thesis stated

(a) Prophetic condemnation of the Levites in the *Old Testament*

To begin with, *Ezekiel* 44:10 ff is quite explicit in its condemnation of the Levites as apostate priests, and in *Amos* and *Hosea* we find that the northern shrines are totally corrupt (c.f.: *Amos* 4:04-4:05, 5:04-5:05, 5:21-5:24, *Hosea* 4:01ff, 6:09). If the Levites at the Northern shrines had been preserving the true Israelite Faith, they would not have incurred the wrath of the prophets. Indeed, it seems to be rather the prophets who are preserving Israel's Faith as opposed to the priests. It is the prophets who, as we have already seen, call Israel back to the Faith of Sinai – back to the old time religion. And this old time Faith is, as we have seen, the Faith of *Deuteronomy*, since many of the traditions go back to antiquity and also because the Covenant of *Deuteronomy* is the Sinai Covenant.

(b) Holy War

Again, on the question of Holy War, it is not the priests whom we usually see inspiring the armies of the **LORD** to great military deeds, it is the prophets. The demands of Holy War are to support the **LORD** to the last against the forces of paganism. They are not the demands of a peasant militia organising resistance to the Assyrian as **Von-Rad** suggested. The Holy War is not the political war, it is spiritual war – the war against paganism. The leaders of this war in the Old Testament are men like **Elijah**, **Elisha**, **Ahijah**, **Samuel** – and with **Samuel** we are back to primitive Israelite times. The prophetic tradition seems to be a continuous one which lasted from the days of the Judges down to the fall of Israel and constantly the prophets demand the same thing – obedience to the Sinai Covenant and Holy War against the Ba'als. This is the demand of *Deuteronomy* – so the prophets were the Deuteronomic traditionists. If anything, the priests opposed this tradition rather than aided it or demanded it.

(c) The internal evidence of *Deuteronomy*: The Deuteronomists were traditionalist prophets

Now, *Deuteronomy* itself suggests that the prophets were the traditionists. **Moses** was the mediator of the Covenant in *Deuteronomy*, and we know from *Hosea* 12:13 (READ) that among the prophets **Moses** was regarded as a prophet. Now, *Deuteronomy* 18:15-18:18 also presents **Moses** as a prophet, and this same passage declares that there will arise after **Moses** a series of prophets who will continue to mediate the Law as **Moses** himself had done. (READ *Deuteronomy* 18:15-18:18). Here is our evidence, says **Nicholson**, that the prophets who handled the Sinai Law, who preserved the ancient traditions of Israel and handed them on, not least as the Deuteronomic traditionists – that these were the prophets.

(d) Nicholson's thesis in summary

So, **Nicholson** believes, the Deuteronomic traditions were preserved in Northern Israel in prophetic circles, and after the fall of Samaria these prophets came South and reformulated the traditions for the need of Judah in the **Seventh Century B.C.**

4C. A Critique of Nicholson's Thesis

1. The 'prophet like Moses' of *Deuteronomy* 18

Now, **Nicholson's** thesis is a clever one, but it is not without its difficulties. To take this last point first, – the passage *Deuteronomy* 18:15-18:18. Certainly this passage calls **Moses** a prophet, but it does not say that the rest of the prophets to come after **Moses** are simply to be concerned with the tradition of the Law. Indeed, it says nothing at all about the Law. The Words that the prophets are to speak are not the words of the Law, but the normal prophetic oracles, as v18 states specifically, “**I will put My Words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.**” We may recall how **Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel** both have the **LORD's** Words put into their mouths (*Jeremiah* 1:09, *Ezekiel* 2:08ff). This passage in *Deuteronomy* 18 is here not concerned with the traditions of the Law at all, but with the prophetic word – indeed with the question of true and false prophecy, as verses 19 ff. shows

2. Nicholson's thesis now only a partial possibility

Now, when this part of **Nicholson's** study is taken away, the rest of his study reduces itself to a partial possibility. It is true that the Northern shrines are condemned as apostate, and that the prophets do call back to the Old-time Faith. It is also true that the prophets are involved in Holy War. But we see from the Book *Deuteronomy* itself that the prophets were not the only people involved in these matters. *Deuteronomy* 31:09 relates explicitly that it was the Levites who were given charge of the Law of **Moses**, and *Deuteronomy* 20:02 does show the priest to be involved in Holy War. This is more explicit evidence than that which **Nicholson** produced for the prophets, but already we have dismissed the theory of Levitical tradition.

3. The matter of the 'Northern Kingdom priesthood'

Nicholson has raised a valid point by reminding us that the Northern priesthood was corrupt, but it seems wrong to assume therefore that all Northern priests were corrupt. There could have been some Levites who were good Yahwists, just as there were prophets who were good Yahwists. Could they not both have been involved in the Deuteronomic tradition? Religious Faith is something that is not unique to one group of people. Indeed, *Deuteronomy* itself declares that the Faith is the Faith of “**all Israël**”, not just of Levites or prophets. It is the Faith of the humble of the land – the obedient to the **LORD**, and these can be both priests and prophets – and also other persons as well.

5C. R.E. CLEMENTS' Thesis: The Deuteronomists were Reformers

1. Introduction: The Questions asked and answered

The question **Von-Rad** asked was, “What is the setting in life of the Book *Deuteronomy*?” His answer was, “The Cult,” hence he defined the Deuteronomists as Levites – Israël's cultic officials. The question that **Nicholson** asked was, “How were the old traditions in *Deuteronomy* preserved?” and his answer was to point to the prophets. Now, if we asked a different question, “What was the purpose of *Deuteronomy*?” and, “Why was it written what is the lesson that it is trying to teach?” we may come up with a very different answer. People don't write Books like *Deuteronomy* just because there happen to be ancient traditions about that they think ought to be written down. *Deuteronomy* is not just a record of ancient traditions, it is a Book that makes great demands on its hearers.

2. Deuteronomy as a Reformation Document: CLEMENTS' Thesis stated

Ronald Ernest Clements states his thesis in “Deuteronomy and the Jerusalem Cult tradition,” *Vetus Testamentum* 15, 1965, and this is in **Bishop Andrew Shergold's** library and the libraries at Bacoar and Padre Burgos. For **Clements** not all the traditions of *Deuteronomy* are old. In fact, the central themes of *Deuteronomy* are often very new and revolutionary, and the object of attack in

their revolutionary attitudes is the Jerusalem cult tradition. 'Revolution' is really the wrong word – rather 'reform'. *Deuteronomy*, like the prophets, calls for a return to the old time religion of Sinai, but some of the methods of presenting the message are rather revolutionary. Here are five of the main elements of *Deuteronomy's* Theology as outlined by **Clements**.

3. The Theology of *Deuteronomy* as summarised and stated by Clements

(a) The Ark of the Covenant

This is such a good summary that irrespective of what we make of **Clement's** thesis, the summary stands. In *Deuteronomy* the Ark is represented as only the container for the tablets of the Law – a kind of box (*Deuteronomy* 10:01-10:09, 31:09-31:13, 31:24-31:29). This may indeed be precisely what the original was – simply a kind of box, but for centuries the Ark had been in the Temple at Jerusalem, and had been regarded as **YHWH's** earthly throne. It was set on the Holy of Holies between the Cherubim, and was regarded as the throne on which the **LORD** sat during the New Year Festival. It was used in processions at the festival and was now a sacred object in itself. *Deuteronomy's* doctrine strongly opposes this notion and attempts to 'de-mythologise' the Ark.

(b) Election

The use of the word 'elect' (bahar) is not found before *Deuteronomy* to express the notion of the election of the nation Israëġ. The doctrine itself is, however, very ancient, and probably belongs to the Sinai tradition or even Abrahamic Theological traditions. However, the word was already in common use in Jerusalem where it described the relationship between the king and the **LORD** – the **LORD** had elected the Davidic dynasty, *Deuteronomy's* use of the term 'elect' suggests an attempt to transfer the Doctrine of Election from the dynasty to the people.

(c) Canaan as The Lord's Land

Canaan in *Deuteronomy* belongs to the **LORD** as His possession, but He has given it to Israëġ to occupy on condition that they obey the Law. In the Jerusalem 'cult' tradition the **LORD** 'owned' Mount Zion and had given it to **King David** as an everlasting possession. *Deuteronomy* again demythologises Zion and transfers the doctrine to the whole nation. The bond between the **LORD**, Israëġ, and the land however, is not cultic like the bond between the **LORD**, **David**, and Zion – it is a moral bond dependent on obedience.

(d) Name Theology

c.f.: *Deuteronomy* 12:05ff. This is perhaps *Deuteronomy's* most forceful attempt to demythologise Mt. Zion in the Jerusalem cult tradition. Zion was regarded as the seat of the **LORD's** Glory, which was the bright, shining aura that marked the **LORD's** Presence. We have met this notion in discussing Isaiah's inaugural vision – the Glory of the **LORD** sat on the Ark as the **LORD** sat on His Throne, and the **LORD's** Glory dwelt in the temple on Zion. *Deuteronomy* makes no mention of this doctrine, but instead talks of the **LORD** putting His Name in the Temple and causing His Name to dwell there. The background of Name Theology is uncertain, but there is a possible list in *Exodus* 20:24-20:26. However, there are all sorts of problems about *Exodus* 20:24-20:26. (DISCUSS).

(e) Centralisation

Perhaps the most important reforming doctrine of all is the doctrine of centralisation. Its background is totally uncertain. It may, as I have mentioned earlier, be based on an old tribal confederation ideal (if there was such a thing) or it may arise simply from the constant claims of Jerusalem to pre-eminence as a great religious centre. **Hezekiah** (*II Kings* 18:04) is said to have centralised before **Josiah**, and it may be that the Deuteronomists were already following the example set by **King Hezekiah**. But, whatever its background, it must have been adopted by the Deuteronomists as an attempt to purge the land of paganism. When religious affairs are not under close central supervision, all kinds of anomalies creep in. Perhaps by bringing the whole cult into

Jerusalem, the Deuteronomists hoped to keep a constant eye on it and make sure that all anomalies were purged from it.

3. The secularising and rationalising effect of the Deuteronomic reforms

(a) A secularising trend

So intent is *Deuteronomy* on reformation, that it is prepared to override old established religious practices. For example, it legislates permitting profane slaughter (*Deuteronomy* 12:15-12:28 EXPLAIN); tithes of harvest produce may now be brought in the form of money (*Deuteronomy* 14:24-14:26); altars of refuge are to be replaced by cities of refuge (*Deuteronomy* 19:01-19:13 EXPLAIN). All this is a tendency to a secularisation by the abolition of old religious customs, but its purpose is to ensure that the reforming doctrine can be put into practice.

(b) A rationalising trend

A further effect of reforming teaching is a tendency to rationalisation. In older law it was only necessary to state the Law, and there was no necessity to explain why it should have to be obeyed. It was religious law, and it depended on ancient authority. But, *Deuteronomy* goes to great trouble to explain why some individual laws should be obeyed. Of course, anything new must be explained, but the explanation has a double purpose – its second purpose is to ensure obedience. (*Deuteronomy* 24: 18ff. and explain).

4. The consequences of CLEMENTS' Thesis for understanding *Deuteronomy*

(a) The Deuteronomists are reformers

Now all this sheds a new light on *Deuteronomy*. What we have here is a reforming manifesto. It is not necessary to say much more to support our conclusion that the Deuteronomists were reformers. They stand in the old tradition of Sinai and call for a reform of the Jerusalem cult, i.e: they are like the prophets calling for a return to the old time religion of Mount Sinai. But, they have worked out a programme of how this is to be done in practice in the land of Judah.

(b) The Deuteronomists were northern Israelite 'reforming' refugees

Putting all this information together, we come to the conclusion that after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, refugees who had fled to Judah who stood in the traditions of Sinai were upset by the Jerusalem cult and so set about preparing a programme of reform. Thus the Deuteronomists originated in the North, but worked in Judah in the years between **722 and 622 B.C..** It may be that **King Hezekiah** was influenced by them when he tried to centralise, but certainly **King Josiah** was strongly influenced by them in **622 B.C.**, when the law book was produced. So, can we say anything about these Judaeans Deuteronomists? There is further evidence from the nature of *Deuteronomy*.

D. DEUTERONOMY & THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN TREATIES

1D. G.E. MENDENHALL *Biblical Archaeologist* 1954

1. A Bibliographic Orientation

George E. Mendenhall published an article in *The Biblical Archaeologist* in **1954** drawing attention to the parallel between the order of the different contents of *Deuteronomy* and the form of a Hittite Covenant treaty between a Suzerian and his vassals (i.e.: an emperor and his subservient kings). We shall review the parallels in a moment. However: His article stimulated a virtual industry that compared *Deuteronomy* with other Covenant treaties known from the Ancient Near East, e.g.: those of Assyria in the First Millennium B.C., and lively debate followed as to whether it was the Hittite treaty type or that of Assyria in the First Century B.C. that formed the pattern of *Deuteronomy*. Two

pieces of reading in this connection are hence helpful: **Moshe Weinfeld's** "Traces of Assyrian treaty formulae in 'Deuteronomy'" *Biblica* 46, 1965 /417-427; and **R. Frakenan's** "The Vassal treaties of Esarhaddon and the dating of 'Deuteronomy'," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 14, 1965, /122ff.. **Mendenhall** confirmed what **Von-Rad** had stumbled upon but failed to fully explain.

2. A comparison of the form of *Deuteronomy* with Ancient Hittite texts

G. Von-Rad had already described the form of *Deuteronomy* as that of a cultic festival form thus: (a) Prologue; (b) Law; (c) A Sanctioning rite; (d) Blessings and curses. However, Ancient Near Eastern treaties had the same basic form. The Hittite treaties of **1500-1200 B.C.** have historical prologues which recount the relationship between the overlords and the vassal, putting great emphasis on how good the overlord has been to the vassal in the past, thus trying to ensure obedience in the future. The Law is of course replaced by treaty stipulations which are a kind of law. There is usually a ritual performed, with vows and sacrifices, to seal the treaty. And finally, curses for breaking the treaty are to the end.

2D. *Deuteronomy* & Assyrian Treaties

1. The dating of *Deuteronomy* & the Vassal treaties of Esarhaddon

When the comparison with the vassal treaties came to light as a result of the investigations of **G.E. Mendenhall** which were published in **1954**, some scholars argued that *Deuteronomy* must be at least as old as **Moses** himself, because it showed the same basic forms as these Second Millennium B.C. treaties. However, in the early **1970s** Assyrian treaties of the **Seventh Century B.C.** showing the same basic form have been found, but they show a far clearer correspondence with *Deuteronomy*. The correspondences are closest in the curse lists of *Deuteronomy* 28 where we find a series of curses which are identical to those that are used in the vassal treaties of **Esarhaddon**. One example: *Deuteronomy* 28:25-28:24 (READ). Now listen to an extract from *Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon* 528-533: "**... make your land like iron so that no one may plough. As rain does not fall from a heaven of brass, so may dew and rain not come upon your fields and lowlands; in a place of dew may it rain coals upon your land.**" Now, these curses correspond not only in their wording and ideas, but also in the order in which they are listed. So, there is good reason to assume that the Deuteronomist knew and used the curse list in the *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* or some similar Assyrian treaty. Now, the *Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon* is dated about **672 B.C.**, i.e.: during the reign of **King Manasseh** of Judah, so we may fairly happily assume that *Deuteronomy* is also **Seventh Century B.C.** – probably after **672 B.C.**

2. The forms of 'Deuteronomy' and the Vassal treaties of Esarhaddon

The Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon also shows the same kind of forms as *Deuteronomy*. It has a prologue, stipulations, and curses. The prologue is shorter than that of *Deuteronomy*, but it has the same kind of purpose as *Deuteronomy* – i.e.: to ensure obedience to the stipulations that follow.

3. Conclusions from a comparison with *VTE* for understanding *Deuteronomy*

(a) *Deuteronomy* as a Covenant treaty between The Lord (Suzerian) and Israel (Vassal)

We must now begin to wonder whether **Von-Rad** is correct about the cultic setting of *Deuteronomy*. The form of *Deuteronomy* does not of necessity seem to be cultic after all, but purely literary, following a known literary device that was used in the drawing of treaties. The treaties also use the techniques of "If you" and "This day", and those techniques as we have seen are found in *Deuteronomy* and are ideal to its purpose. *Deuteronomy* then is re-asserting the Covenant

relationship between the **LORD** and Israēl, and the Covenant is a treaty – a treaty declaring that the **LORD** is Overlord, and Israēl a vassal.

(b) The consequences of *Deuteronomy* for Israel

Israēl's position is obedience, the **LORD** offers His Protection. In formulating the expression of Israēl's Covenant, the natural form to use was the one known from the treaties. This need not be cultic at all.

E. DEUTERONOMY, WISDOM, & WISDOM LITERATURE

1E. *Deuteronomy* and Wisdom

1. A Bibliographic orientation

As an orientation to this aspect of your study of *Deuteronomy* you may find it helpful to peruse a Journal article by **M.Weinfeld**, 'Deuteronomy: The present state of the enquiry,' in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 86, 1967, /249-262. There is a copy of this article in Bishop Andrew's Library

2. Introduction

Von-Rad argued that *Deuteronomy*'s preaching style and the content of many of its laws shows that its setting was in the preaching of the cult. But, there are reasons to doubt these conclusions as well. Many of *Deuteronomy*'s laws and its techniques of preaching find admirable parallels in the Israelite Wisdom Literature of the *Old Testament*. You have not yet studied this literature in this course, but for the moment I am asking you to assume that the *Book of Proverbs* is largely earlier than the **Seventh Century B.C.** or other dating we may have assumed for the Book of *Deuteronomy*. Certainly the Egyptian Wisdom Literature that forms the background to *Proverbs* is earlier than *Deuteronomy* on any dating scheme. (For further details and example of Egyptian Wisdom Literature c.f.: **J.B. Pritchard**, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*).

3. *Deuteronomy*'s Humanitarianism

(a) An Equation

One of the most marked features of *Deuteronomy* is its Humanitarianism. Throughout the laws there is a recurrent and persistent emphasis on the need to care for the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow, and the poor. This concern was not new in Israēl, and is to be found amongst the prophets, – this is one of the reasons why *Deuteronomy* has so often been thought of as a prophetic Book. But, there are several indications that much of *Deuteronomy*'s Humanitarianism shows more commonality with the Old Testament Wisdom Literature than with anything else. Some examples follow:

(b) *Deuteronomy* 23:15-16; *Proverbs* 30:10 (LXX); *Amenophet* 11:6-7

Here is *Deuteronomy* 23:15-23:16: **"You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you; he shall dwell with you in the midst of you in the place which he shall choose."** Now, *Proverbs* 30:10 (LXX i.e.: the 'official' Jewish translation of the *Old Testament* into Greek c.240 B.C.) reads: **"Do not hand over a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you shall be held guilty."** And, *Amenophet* 11:06-11:07: **"Cry not 'crime' with a man, hide the manner of the flight of the fugitive."**

(c) *Deuteronomy* 24:19-24:22 (READ) & *Amenophet* 26:9ff.

Here is *Amenophet* 26:09 ff: **“Do not notice a widow if you catch her in the fields, nor fail to be indulgent to her. Do not neglect a stranger with your oil jar, that it be doubled before your brethren.”**

(d) Deuteronomy 25:04; Deuteronomy 22:6-7; Proverbs 12:10

The *Deuteronomist*'s humanity extended beyond the care for the poor to the care for the defenceless and often abused animals. Thus there is a law prohibiting the muzzling of an ox whilst it is threshing the grain (*Deuteronomy* 25:04) and a law safeguarding the mother of the nest with eggs or young birds (*Deuteronomy* 22:06-22:07). The Wisdom teachers were also concerned with the humane treatment of animals as is seen from *Proverbs*. *Proverbs* 12:10: **“A Righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.”** These are but a few examples, and each comparison can be supported by linguistic and formal arguments. It therefore seems that *Deuteronomy*'s Humanitarianism may well have been derived from the sphere of Wisdom Influence. Here are some other examples.

(e) Two other brief examples

The Condemnation of taking pledges from the poor in *Deuteronomy* 24:06, *Proverbs* 22:27, and *Job* 24:03, 24:09 are deserving of comparison as are the rubrics concerning a withholding of the labourers' wages. Also, compare *Deuteronomy* 24:14-24:15 with *Job* 7:02 and 14:06, and both of these with *Amenophet* 14:05-14:06.

4. The stubborn and rebellious son of Deuteronomy 21:18-21:21; Proverbs 13:24 etc.

(When reading *Deuteronomy* 21:01-21:21, read **‘glutton and drunkard’** for the words ‘dolel w^e sobe’). *Proverbs* contains various sayings encouraging the discipline of children. Here is *Proverbs* 13:24: **‘He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline.’** *Deuteronomy*'s laws govern the case of a son upon whom such a home discipline has failed, and if the son fails to heed his parent's authority, he is to be stoned. The Proverbial literature also warns of death as the consequence of persistent disobedience: c.f.: *Proverbs* 23:13-25:14 & *Proverbs* 15:10. Likewise the Egyptian wise counselled the parents of the rebellious son; **‘Thou shalt cast him off, he is not thy son at all.’** (*Ptah-hotep* 210 ff.)

5. The wording of Deuteronomic Laws

(a) ‘Hear/obey’

The wording of the Deuteronomic Law also shows its close contact with Proverbial teaching. The verb **‘hear/obey’** is particularly appropriate to the instruction of children in Wisdom – so often Wisdom teaching begins, **“Hear my son your father's instruction ... ”**.

(b) ‘Chastise’

The word ‘chastise’ is also a ‘Wisdom Word’ (Yasar) – and the noun ‘chastisement’ (musar) or ‘discipline’ is extremely frequent in Wisdom. It is also very common to pair father and mother as the child's teachers (*Proverbs* 1:08). Also, the signs of the son's stubbornness and rebellion are that he is a ‘glutton and drunkard’, and these words occur in the *Old Testament* elsewhere only at *Proverbs* 23:21 where they also describe the evils which overtake a disobedient son.

6. Just weights and measures

I shall give only one further example of Wisdom Law in the Book *Deuteronomy*: *Proverbs* 20:10 and *Deuteronomy* 25:13-25:15 correspond. Here is *Proverbs* 20:10: (READ) N.B: Literally translated it reads, **‘stone and stone, ephah and ephah, both are an abomination to the LORD,’** and here also is *Proverbs* 20:23: **‘stone and stone are an abomination to the LORD’**. Now: The words **‘stone and stone’** and **‘ephah and ephah’** in that form occur again only in *Deuteronomy* 25:13-25:15 where the same saying has been expanded by the more repetitious formula: **“you shall not have in your bag stone and stone, large and small, but you shall have a true and just stone, for they are an abomination ... You shall not have in your house ephah and ephah, but you shall have a true and just ephah, for they are an abomination ...”**

7. Other Wisdom themes in *Deuteronomy*

From these few examples, (and there are many others), you will see that many of *Deuteronomy*’s laws are compiled by someone who was very familiar with ancient Wisdom. Here are some other Wisdom themes in *Deuteronomy*. I have given some references to start you off – you can chase up the others at your leisure.

The Judge:	<i>Deuteronomy</i> 1:13-1:18, 16:18-16:20, <i>Proverbs</i> 17:13, 18:05.
The Landmark:	<i>Deuteronomy</i> 19:04.
The False Witness:	<i>Deuteronomy</i> 19:15-19:21, <i>Proverbs</i> 19:19, 21:28 etc.
Newly weds:	<i>Deuteronomy</i> 24:05, <i>Proverbs</i> 5:18 and other Wisdom.
Adultery.	
Harlotry.	
First fruits.	
Lending.	

2E. Wisdom in *Deuteronomy*’s Prologue

1. *Deuteronomy*’s Prologue and the Ancient Near Eastern Treaties

I mentioned earlier that the treaties also have prologues, but these prologues are usually of an historical nature. However, there is little in *Deuteronomy* 4:44-11:32 that can be called history. The one significant section is *Deuteronomy* 9:07-10:11, but it is suspect because it is a ‘you-plural’ passage. Indeed, apart from the purpose of the prologue to exhort to obedience, there is really little point of contact between it and the treaty prologues which also exhort to obedience. Those who have studied the comparison of *Deuteronomy* with the treaties have also been at great pains to argue that *Deuteronomy* has an historical prologue (cf. **D.J. McCarthy** *Treaty and Covenant*), but the fact is that it just does not have such a prologue. Its prologue is hortatory and not historical. True, occasionally appeal is made to history, e.g: **“Take heed lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”**, but these appeals are brief and infrequent. They constitute a hortatory method (explain), and are not enough of themselves to warrant the title ‘historical in first intent’ for the prologue.

2. *Deuteronomy* & Wisdom Prologues

However, this problem is, in my opinion, easily solved, for prologues are also to be found in the Wisdom Literature – especially that of Egyptian Wisdom. Such can be found in *Proverbs*:

- a. *Proverbs* 1-9 is a prologue to *Proverbs* 10 ff..
- b. *Proverbs* 22:17-22:21 is a hortatory prologue for *Proverbs* 22:17-23:10.
- c. *Proverbs* 23:19 is a Prologue to *Proverbs* 23:19-23:21 etc.

Incidentally, the *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* do not have an historical prologue, but *VTE*’s prologue is very short when compared with that of *Deuteronomy*. So, we must assume that

Deuteronomy's prologue was influenced by the Wisdom prologue as well as by the Treaty prologue.

3. A Working example: The Shema': Deuteronomy 6:04-6:09

(a) Introduction

Now, there is internal evidence to support this comparison. Many parts of the Prologue show strong signs of the Wisdom method and influence. I shall take only one example here – the most familiar passage in *Deuteronomy*: *Deuteronomy* 6:04-6:09. (READ: *Deuteronomy* 6:04-6:09).

(b) 'Hear O Israel'

The Introduction **'Hear O Israël,'** corresponds well with the Wisdom teacher's, **'Hear my Son,'** and it is to be noted that *Deuteronomy* 6:07 explicitly requires that the Law be taught to the children. The comparison of **"Hear O Israël,"** with **'Hear My Son,'** implies that YHWH is Israël's Father. This is correct, for *Deuteronomy* 8:05 reads, **"As a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you."**

(c) The Lord's Law is put in his people's hearts

The putting of the laws in the heart is a familiar idea from Wisdom, cf. the phrases in *Proverbs* 3:05, **"write them on the tablet of your heart,"** *Proverbs* 4:21, **"Keep them in the midst of your heart,"** and *Amenenophe* 3:10-3:11, **"give thy heart to understand them, to put them in your heart is worthwhile."**

(d) The four places of instruction

Again, *Deuteronomy* 6:07 says that the instruction is to be given, **"When you sit down at home, when you walk in the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up".** Four occasions are mentioned here. The last of these three are regarded as important in the life of the Wisdom student in *Proverbs* 6:22 in exactly the same order.

(e) Binding the Law on your body

Finally; the command, **"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, they shall be as frontlets between your eyes,"** may be compared with *Proverbs* 3:03, **"You shall bind them on your neck, you shall write them on the tablet of your heart,"** *Proverbs* 7:03: **"You shall bind them on your fingers, you shall write them on the tablet of your heart,"** or *Amenenophet* 3:13-3:14, **"Let them rest in the casket of your belly, that they may be the key to your heart,"** or, *Proverbs* 1:09, **"for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck".**

4. Other Wisdom features in the Prologue

The Doctrine of the two ways: *Deuteronomy* 11:26-11:28; *Proverbs* 10 ff. passim.

Fear of the Lord as obedience: *Deuteronomy* 6:02, 6:24, S:06, 10:12, 10:20; *Proverbs* 1:07.

Teaching the Laws to children: *Deuteronomy* 5:28-6:03; *Proverbs*: passim.

The Lord as Father/Instructor. *Deuteronomy* 8:05; *Proverbs* 5:11-3:12.

Wealth leads to forgetting the Lord. *Deuteronomy* 6:10-6:12, 8:12-8:15, *Proverbs* 30:08-50:09.

All power and wealth are from the Lord. *Deuteronomy* 8:18, *Proverbs* 10:22, *Job* 1:21.

Clearly in outlook, Theology and articulation, there is a great degree of overlap between these two portions of literature.

3E. The Paranesis of *Deuteronomy*

1. The phenomenon of paranesis in *Deuteronomy*

This feature of *Deuteronomy* is perhaps its most remarkable. Paranesis is not found in Ancient Near Eastern Law, but it is very common in *Deuteronomy*. It has led some to regard the Book as prophetic and it led **Von-Rad** in turn to think of cultic preaching. But, *Deuteronomy*'s paranesis is very different from the prophetic style and we know nothing about Levitical preaching style. However, we do know a lot about Wisdom's paranesis, and *Deuteronomy*'s paranesis is very similar to that found in the Wisdom Literature.

2. The forms of paranesis

(a) Three forms of paranesis identified

There are three forms of paranesis common to both *Deuteronomy* and Wisdom, and they are found in both sources in the same proportion. I list them in ascending order of frequency:

(a.) An unqualified command to obey; (b.) A command to obey supported by an explanatory motive clause: e.g. **"You shall keep all my counsels and statutes that it might go well with you,"** (c.) A motive clause: **"That it may go well with you."** Of particular interest is the motive clause in both (b.) and (c.). It may contain a promise of welfare: **'that it may go well with you and your children after you;'** or progeny: **'that the LORD may multiply you as He swore to your fathers;'** or prosperity: **'because the LORD will bless you in all your produce and all the work of your hand;'** or longevity: **'that it may go well with you and that you may live long.'** All these examples are drawn from *Deuteronomy*, but they are substantially the same as found in *Proverbs* – promises of material blessing.

(b) A difference between *Proverbs* and *Deuteronomy* in corporate/individual address

There is one major difference. *Proverbs* is by its very nature addressed to the individual, whereas *Deuteronomy* is addressed to all Israēl, but both employ the same materialistic motive for obedience.

(c) 'For it is an abomination to the Lord'

There is one Theocentric motif which appears seven times in *Deuteronomy*, – **'for it is an abomination to the LORD,'** and interestingly, this same motif is almost exclusively limited to *Proverbs* within the *Old Testament*. It also occurs in *Ezekiel*, but this is obviously later than *Deuteronomy*.

3. Conclusion

From what we have said about *Deuteronomy* and Wisdom, we can see that not only are individual laws influenced by Wisdom, but that the Prologue and even its content and style are also so influenced.

F. THE 'DEUTERONOMISTS' AND THEIR RELATION TO KING JOSIAH

1F. *Deuteronomy* as a product of Wisdom and Prophet

1. *Deuteronomy*: A product of Wisdom and Prophet

From what we have said about *Deuteronomy* and Wisdom, we can see that not only are individual laws influenced by Wisdom, but that the Prologue and even its content and style are influenced by Wisdom. Although this discovery takes the fire out of **Von-Rad's** thesis of a cultic Book, we cannot also assume that *Deuteronomy* is divorced from the cult. It is very interested in the cult, and does have much to say about cultic matters, e.g: Levites, Ark, centralisation, tithes, sacrifices, three festivals, etc. Also, we have seen that 'Deuteronomy' does show many points of contact with the prophets, especially in its concern for the Sinai Faith. So, what does Wisdom have to tell us?

2. The Provenance of Wisdom

What I am about to tell you you are going to have to take on trust, as it is not until PICC B.A./B.D./B.MIN./B.TH. Course *Old Testament III* that you study Wisdom. The Wisdom texts as we have them are the deposits of schools. They are the text books of education. Individual Wisdom sayings go back to the family and to other sources, but they were collected together and used in education. So the style of Wisdom is the style of the educated. It is a literary and a teaching style rather than a preaching style. There is not much that we can conclude from *Deuteronomy's* use of Wisdom other than that its educators were educated men, and hence of high standing in society.

2F. The Deuteronomistic Movement

1. The development of the Deuteronomistic Movement

(a) The identity of the Deuteronomists

So we may conclude that the Deuteronomistic Movement came from the North, but in Judah it set about trying to reform the cult of Jerusalem and Judah. It included in its numbers priests and prophets and also men of education who were responsible for communicating the movement's aims to society.

(b) The growth of the Movement

There is very little we can say of the history of the movement besides this. Its origins and growth are obscure, but when it did begin to grow, it attracted to itself many men of intellectual influence. How the Deuteronomists did their teaching we do not know, but clearly, from the style of the Book they were a teaching movement, i.e: they popularised their ideas in teaching and in propaganda. Possibly this was done in the cult, in schools, in the market place, in the homes etc., we do not know.

2. The Deuteronomists and Josiah's Reformation

What we do know is that in **622 B.C.** the Deuteronomist manifesto was produced and brought to the king. Already, as we saw, **Josiah** had started to reform the cult before the Book was produced. We also have suggested that the reforms probably started because *Deuteronomy* had become influential. One of the failings of studies in 'Deuteronomists' had been their sole concentration on the Book itself. It has been assumed that it must have been the Book that caused the reformation, or if we take away the Book we have to look elsewhere for the cause, and usually we look to politics and the relationship with Assyria. But this need not be so. Take away the Book itself and we are left with the people who stood behind the Book – the Deuteronomists themselves. Their influence must have been far greater than the Book itself.

3. Josiah and the Deuteronomists

Now there is just one hint as to how the Deuteronomists obtained influence with **Josiah**. *II Kings* 21:23 tells us that **Josiah's** father, **Amon**, was assassinated by his courtiers, or his servants, but 21:24 goes on to tell us that the courtiers were themselves put to death by an uprising of the people of the land, and that these people of the land made **Josiah** king instead. Now, we must not imagine that the whole population of Judah arose against the conspirators. This was political intrigue, but it was an intrigue that ended with the extermination of the court of **Amon**. **Josiah** was enthroned by

some group drawn from outside the court – from the land of Judah. At this time **Josiah** was a mere boy of eight, and so subject to a regent. From *II Kings* 22 we see that many officials in **Josiah**'s court were intimately concerned with the Book *Deuteronomy*, including the High Priest and the Secretary of State. These men were probably members of the Deuteronomic movement who rose to power at **Amon**'s death. The upright of the land, they quashed the rebellion and enthroned the boy-king. **Josiah** was probably taught to be a good Deuteronomist from his youth up. Thus **Josiah** started his reforms and the movement produced its Book which was made the basis for the renewal of the cult in the eighteenth year of **Josiah**'s reign in **622 B.C.**

6. Conclusions

Deuteronomy stands in the same stream of thought and activity as we saw in the prophets. An appeal for the renewal of the ancient Faith. But the Deuteronomists did not only preach and teach, they tried to put their ideas into operation. They were successful for a while, but, as we shall see, Judah soon returned to her bad ways after the death of **Josiah** in **609 B.C.**

UNIT 17: THE LATE PRE – EXILLIC PROPHETS

A. THE SEVENTH CENTURY B.C.

1A. The international and Theological context of the Late Seventh Century B.C. prophets

1. Prophecy after Isaiah of Jerusalem

After **Isaiah**, prophecy went into the shadow for more than half a century. We are not certain as to precisely why this should have been so, but **Hezekiah**'s successor, **Manasseh (687-642 B.C.)**, whose reign was the longest in Judah's history, appears to have been anything but a faithful Yahwist (*II Kings* 21). It seems that his was a reign of terror, or so the Deuteronomist hints in *II Kings* 21:16, but the voice of prophecy was not entirely silenced. *II Kings* 21 does tell of prophets who spoke out against the regime of **Manasseh**, but we know nothing of these men. It is not until after **Manasseh**'s reign that we meet again the writing prophets, first of all in the person of **Zephaniah**, and then later in the person of **Jeremiah**.

2. The Assyrian Ascendancy

The age of **Manasseh** was also the age of Assyria. There was virtual peace within the Assyrian Empire and **Manasseh**, like most of the other kings of the West, offered no resistance. His name appears in Assyrian records as one of 22 western kings who supplied building materials to Assyria and who supplied troops in Assyria's Egyptian campaign. (For further reference, cf. **J.B. Pritchard** *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* (ANET) /291, 294.) Yet this was also an age of much activity in Yahwistic circles, for it was in the time of **Manasseh** that the Deuteronomistic movement really grew, and spread, and became a great power within the nation. Thus it is to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists that we will turn, but, before we do, we will look first at the prophets that came immediately after **Manasseh** and the Deuteronomists: **Zephaniah**; **Nahum**; **Habakkuk**; and **Jeremiah**.

B. ZEPHANIAH

1B. Questions of Introduction

1. The literary chemistry of Zephaniah

Like the other Prophetic Books at which we have already looked, *Zephaniah* is a collection of units, and like so many other of the Prophetic collections, there is a distinct editorial arrangement that is discernible in the Book: (1) *Zephaniah* **1:02-2:03**: Threats against the prophet's own nation; (2) *Zephaniah* **2:04-3:08**: Threats against foreign nations; (3) *Zephaniah* **3:09-3:20**: Promises. Also, like other *Old Testament* prophetic Books, it indubitably contains editorial material. Some scholars would deny the whole of the last section to **Zephaniah** on the grounds that its promises of hope accord poorly with the black outlook manifested in the first two sections.

2. The Date of Zephaniah: Zephaniah 1:01

According to the superscription in *Zephaniah* 1:01, **Zephaniah's** ministry began in the reign of **Josiah c.630 B.C.**, i.e: before the Reformation of **622 B.C.**. Thus it is that in the first oracle of the Book we find the prophet condemning the very abuses that *Deuteronomy* tries to be rid of, i.e: worship of Ba'al, idolatry, star worship, worship of the Ammonite god Milcom (*Zephaniah* 1:04-1:05). There is no reason to doubt that the date of the superscription is correct. **Josiah** purged these from Israel's worship, but **Zephaniah** preached before the purge took place.

3. Zephaniah: His Genealogy and Person

The superscription also traces **Zephaniah's** genealogy back through four generations to one called **Hezekiah**. This is the only prophetic genealogy that goes back so far, and some have suggested that it traces **Zephaniah** back to **King Hezekiah** who died some 60 years earlier. However, **Hezekiah** was a fairly common name, and there is nothing to indicate that **Zephaniah's** ancestor was or wasn't **King Hezekiah**.

2B. The Message & Theology of Zephaniah

1. The Message of Zephaniah: A Seventh Century B.C. Amos

(a) Introductory comment

Zephaniah's message was in the same vein as that of Amos

(b) The 'Day of the Lord' as Judgement

Zephaniah takes up the motif of the ‘Day of the Lord’ and amplifies the horror of **God**’s visitation. There are those in Jerusalem who present a face of indifference and apathy and who say, “**The LORD will do no good – nor will He do any evil,**” (*Zephaniah* 1:12). On these the **Lord** will be particularly severe.

(c) Zephaniah condemns social evil and abuses

Again, like **Amos**, **Zephaniah** is particularly severe in his condemnation of social evils and abuses. He attacks fraud and violence (*Zephaniah* 1:09), greedy traders (*Zephaniah* 1:11), and those who have trusted in silver and gold (*Zephaniah* 1:18). On all such is the visitation of the **Lord** to be severe.

(d) The nature of the ‘Day of the Lord’

Repeating the message of **Amos**, **Zephaniah** declares: “**The Day of the Lord is a day of Wrath, A day of darkness and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,**” (*Zephaniah* 1:15)

(e) A prophetic call to humility

Like **Amos**, **Zephaniah** stands in the old Faith of Sinai and so it is not surprising to find his message is not simply condemnation but one that makes demands. **Amos** demanded Justice, **Zephaniah** demands Humility. Internationally, this was the age in which Assyria dominated the West and small nations like Israēl had to learn the virtue of Patience. They had to learn how to wait humbly for the action of their **God**. Humility expresses an apt interpretation of the Covenant Faith for the age in which the prophet **Zephaniah** lived. In face of the pride of political force, there was only one true religious attitude – namely that of humility.

(f) A prophetic call to return to the covenant faith

But it is not just false hope and delusion that **Zephaniah** encourages. He calls the people to return to the Covenant Faith (*Zephaniah* 2:03) (READ). In this verse we see a glimmering of Hope for the future. Humble Obedience will perhaps afford protection on the ‘Day of **The Lord**.’ As in *Amos* this hope is only a ‘perhaps’, but at least it is a light in the darkness and a Hope for the future.

2. A Future Hope

(a) The nature of the future hope

It is because of the uncertain nature of **Zephaniah**’s hope for the future that many scholars have doubted the authenticity of such passages as *Zephaniah* 3:11-3:12 (READ). Here, the hope for the salvation of the remnant is a sure and certain Faith. But it is interesting to note that the themes are those of **Zephaniah** – the removal of pride, and the elevation of humility in the obedient to the Covenant (*Zephaniah* 3:13). It may be that **Zephaniah** developed a more positive hope – or at least his disciples did after him.

(b) The Zion tradition

Lastly, notice that although **Zephaniah** calls back to the Old Faith of Sinai, like Isaiah, he is influenced by Zion traditions. So, we find references to the ‘Holy Mountain’ (*Zephaniah* 3:11) and the ‘Restored Zion’ (*Zephaniah* 3:14 ff). But, perhaps these references come from the disciples rather than from the Prophet himself – for they are in the passages so often regarded as late for other reasons.

C. NAHUM

1C. The Decline and Fall of Assyria

1. Assurbanipal: The Zenith of Assyria

When **Josiah** ascended the throne of Judah in **640 B.C.**, Assyria was at the height of her power, although signs of decline were already setting in. **Assurbanipal** was the last of the great Assyrian kings, and he held his empire by diplomacy and military force. Assyria's greatest enemy was her immediate neighbour Babylon, so **Assurbanipal** made his older brother **Shamash-shum-ukim** deputy of that region. This failed to stem the discontent as **Shamash-shum-ukim** then became the ring leader of the revolutionary forces against his brother and led a revolt in **652 B.C.**. At the same time Egypt broke free from Assyria. **Assurbanipal** with his military might soon quelled the rebellion in Babylon. However, Egypt was never re-conquered. The Middle East now awaited a weak Assyrian king, and was soon to get one.

2. Assurbanipal's Succession: The Scythian Threat

The date of **Assurbanipal**'s death is uncertain, but it was some time around **633 B.C.**, during the early years of **Josiah**'s reign. **Assurbanipal** was succeeded by two of his sons, although neither were half of the man that he had been. The Scythians ran wild over Western Asia, and **Herodotus** tells us that they even invaded Palestine (some scholars think that the foe from the North in *Zephaniah* and *Jeremiah* is the Scythians.) But, Assyria's greatest enemies were nearer home – the Medes and the Babylonians.

3. The rise of Babylon and fall of Assyria

In **626 B.C.** the Babylonians under **Nabopolassar** inflicted a serious defeat on the Assyrians and Babylon now entered world history as a great military power. Assyria was now fighting not to retain an empire, but to maintain her independence and her life. In **614 B.C.** the Medes under **Cyaxes** took Asshur, the old Assyrian capital, and **Nabopolassar** made a treaty with **Cyaxes** to form a coalition against Assyria. In **619 B.C.** these allies took Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, and the Assyrians fell back on Haran. The strange thing about this story is that Egypt, who had been so much against Assyria earlier, now joined forces with the dying Imperial power. Egypt saw the danger that Babylon brought and felt that she must prop up the tottering Assyria to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East. However, despite Egyptian support, the Babylonians and the Medes took Haran in **610 B.C.**. An attempt to recapture it in **609 B.C.** failed and Assyria was finished.

4. The Death of Josiah

609 B.C. was also an important date in the history of Judah because it was in that year that **King Josiah** died. We know nothing of **Josiah**'s reign after the reformation in **622 B.C.**. *Jeremiah* 22:15 tells us that he ruled as a just king, so we must assume that his was an age of good moral standards, of justice in the courts etc.. This was probably the reason why there is no recorded prophecy in Judah between the Reformation and the death of **Josiah**. **Zephaniah** preached before the Reformation, and the first episode of **Jeremiah**'s ministry was, as we shall see, at the same date. Then the prophets were silent until we come to **Nahum**, but **Nahum** is not a prophet who is remembered for condemning Israel.

5. Josiah 'going up to Megiddo' in II Kings 23:29 ff.

There is one further point I wish to refer to before we look at the *Book of Nahum*. In *II Kings* 23:29 we have the record of how **Josiah** died. Now this verse has given trouble to commentators for many years, and even the Chronicler saw fit to give his own interpretation (*II Chronicles* 35:20 ff). Was **Josiah** going up to Megiddo to fight against Egypt or to parley with the Pharaoh? Was he

summoned by the Pharaoh, or did he go of his own freewill? The Chronicler says he went up to fight and this seems to be the most obvious interpretation. But why should **Josiah** fight Egypt? Well, it seems that Egypt was on the point of sending forces to assist Assyria, and Judah, as we shall see when we look at *Nahum*, was intent upon the destruction of Assyria. **Josiah's** expedition was an attempt to way-lay the Egyptian forces and prevent them from reaching Haran in time. The scheme was successful, for, as we know, the Assyrians were defeated. But, it cost **Josiah** his life, and Judah was to be the worse for that.

2C. NAHUM

1. The Date of 'Nahum'

Nahum is a cry of exhilaration at the downfall of Nineveh. The prophet refers to the fall of Thebes (*Nahum* 3:08) which took place in **653 B.C.**, and this is the only date we have. Presumably the prediction must be placed fairly near the downfall of Nineveh and so must be dated soon after **612 B.C.**

2. Nahum the prophet and the fall of Nineveh

Nahum himself is said to have come from Elkosh, but the place itself is unknown. Even the name **Nahum** may be a pseudonym, for 'Nahum' means 'Comfort'. There is indeed little that can be said about the prophet except that he experiences a kind of vengeful glee at the collapse of Nineveh/Assyria. He describes the siege, capture, plunder and destruction of the city in lurid detail. Assyria the old predatory lion (*Nahum* 2:11-2:12) and the seductive harlot (*Nahum* 3:04) is without help. She is a drained out reservoir (*Nahum* 2:08), her troops are weak like women (*Nahum* 3:13), and her leaders like locusts scattered before the winter cold (*Nahum* 3:17). We can see the prophet rubbing his hands with glee at every detail and wallowing in the spirit of revenge.

3. Nahum 1: The nature of 'Nahum'

In contrast to the vivid imagery of Chapters 2 and 3, *Nahum* 1 is pallid, colourless, and simple as a composition. It is part of an alphabetic *Psalm* which was probably inserted as an introduction to the Book. Now this perhaps gives us a clue to the nature of the book of *Nahum*. In *Nahum* there is none of the usual condemnation of moral abuses, but there is no recall to the right Faith. There is no notion of purifying Judgement and eschatological hope. Chapters 2 and 3 are less like an oracle than a continuous paean of revenge. This is not what we normally refer to as *Old Testament Prophecy*.

4. 'Nahum' as Liturgy?

The addition of a Psalm as an introduction suggests that the Book was used liturgically in the Israëlite cult, and it has been suggested that the whole of the book *Nahum* was either read or sung, as an example of how **God** dealt with the repressive foes of Israël. Of course there is an ideal setting for such an extended Hymn in the New Year Festival at the celebration of the **Lord's** Victory over the forces of chaos.

5. 'Nahum' as an oracle against the nations

But must we then assume that this Book is in no way prophecy? Not at all. For although revenge is a baser aspect of Nationalism, **Nahum** is quite clear that Assyria is being punished for sin. Nineveh was a city full of blood and plunder (*Nahum* 3:01), and a city that has inflicted an increasing evil upon every nation with whom it has come into contact (*Nahum* 3:19). *Nahum* is like the first part of

Amos, or the last part of *Jeremiah*. It belongs to the class of oracles against the nations – i.e. of judgement on the nations for their sins, and as such is an acceptable part of *Old Testament* traditions

D. HABAKKUK

1D. Habakkuk: An Introduction

1. General Observations

(a) An otherwise unknown prophet

Habakkuk, like **Nahum**, is an otherwise unknown prophet. The superscription tells us nothing about him and we have to infer the date of his preaching from the content of the book itself. but, even the Book itself is composite, for in Chapter 3 is a Psalm which is provided with the normal type of Psalm heading found in *Psalms*.

(b) The shizinoth and the cult liturgical usage of Nahum

In *Nahum* 3:01 there is mention of the ‘shizinoth’ which is some kind of musical instruction found in *Psalm* 7. Part of the Psalm heading comes at the end of the Chapter – **“To the Choirmaster: with stringed instruments”**. The inclusion of a Psalm in the book has suggested to some commentators an interpretation similar to that given to *Nahum* – namely that the whole Book is arranged for cultic usage. However, a second interpretation is possible.

2. The Structure of Habakkuk

The Structure of the first part of *Habakkuk* is that of a dialogue between the prophet and **God**.

1:02-1:04: The prophet appeals to **God** against the ruthless conduct of the wicked. **“How long?”** the prophet cries, **“must I cry out that there is violence and wickedness in the land? When will you do something about it?”**

1:05-1:11: **God’s** answer. **God** replies that He is raising up the Chaldeans (i.e: The Babylonians) who will exact a punishment on the oppressor.

1:12-1:17: The prophet renews his complaint that **God** does not intervene to end the cruelty of the wicked. The prophet therefore declares in *Habakkuk* 2:01 that he will take his stand and wait for the Revelation of **God**.

2:02-2:04: **God** answers, promising that the Revelation will come, though it may be delayed. Then He will see that by contrast with the wicked, the Righteous will live by their Faithfulness.

2:05-2:20: There follows here a series of five woes on the wicked, and then follows the Psalm.

3:01 ff: *The Psalm of Habakkuk*.

3. The Psalm of Habakkuk as a key to the theme of Habakkuk

Now, the Psalm consists of a description of **God’s** Coming in Power and Judgement and closes with an assertion of utter Faith in **God’s** Goodness, despite adversity. So we may see in it a fitting conclusion to the Book, for Chapter 2 had started with the prophet waiting for **God’s** revelation of His Justice, and with **God’s** Promise that the Revelation would come. Chapter 3 probably presents that Revelation in the form of a Psalm, and the book fittingly concludes with the acceptance of the revelation by the expression of utter faith in **God’s** Goodness. Thus it would seem that the whole Book reads as a coherent unit, but even so, it is different from the normal prophetic Book in that it is not just a collection of oracles, and it may still be seen as a compilation for cultic usage. Furthermore, its theme is similar to that found in many of the Psalms – How long will oppression last? Why should the wicked rule? i.e: the subject of the Book is that of Theodicy – how can **God**

be just when there is so much oppression and suffering in the earth? This is a frequent theme in the Psalms.

4. The date of *Habakkuk*: The identity of the oppressor

It may now be possible to date the Book. The mention of the Chaldeans in 1:06 suggest that it belongs to the time of the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylon. The Chaldeans or Babylonians are seen here as those who will exact judgement on the oppressors, and it is commonly suggested that the oppressors in 1:02-1:04 are the Assyrians, now in decline. The second complaint of the prophet in 1:12-1:17 will then be interpreted along the lines that the prophet is seeing the Babylonians, **God's** promised deliverers, as themselves oppressive, and as bad as the Assyrians were. But the problem is that at the time of Assyria's fall, the Assyrians were no longer an oppressive force in Israël. So, it has been suggested that the original oppressors may be the Egyptians who took control of Palestine after the death of Josiah until they were overthrown by the Babylonians. But it could equally be that the oppressors are not foreigners at all and were simply the wicked and oppressive rich of Judah itself. Anyhow, whoever they were, the Chaldeans or Babylonians were for a time seen as deliverers, and so the Book must be dated about the time of the Fall of Nineveh.

5 *Habakkuk* and the *Habakkuk Pesher* of Qumran

One final note on the structure of the Book. The Qumran Commentary on *Habakkuk* makes no reference to the Psalm in Chapter 3. Does this mean that the Psalm was not an original part of the Book, or does it mean that the people of Qumran were just not particularly interested in it? If the Psalm was not a part of the original book then we still wait for the promised revelation of God's Justice, and **Habakkuk** has raised questions for which he himself had no answer.

UNITS 19 & 20: JEREMIAH

A. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JEREMIAH

1A. A Chronological, Historical, and Political orientation

1. The rule of Jehoiachim

After the death of **Josiah** at Meggido in **609 B.C.**, Josiah's son **Jehoahaz** was elevated to the throne as his successor. However, after what happened at the Battle of Megiddo in **609 B.C.**, the Egyptians were as good as the new rulers of Judah, and they deposed **Jehoahaz** and installed his brother **Jehoiachim** as king in his place. Under **Jehoiachim**, the politics of **Josiah** were reversed. The land returned to her pagan ways whilst **Jehoiachim** for the while rested secure in the lap of Egypt. From *Jeremiah* we can gather that **Jehoiachim** was a harsh and unpleasant ruler who did not hesitate, for example, to execute a prophet who dared to criticise him (*Jeremiah* 26:20ff.). Meantime, **Jehoiachim** was compelled to change his allegiance because the Egyptians were defeated by the Babylonians at Carchemesh in **605 B.C.** However, he did not stay faithful to Babylon for long. **Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon** marched on Judah to punish his infidelity, but **Jehoiachim** died before he arrived.

2. Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, Gedeliah: faction, politics and Jeremiah

King Jehoiachim's successor to the throne **Jehoiachin** – capitulated to **Nebuchadrezzar**, and was deported to Babylon together with many of the leading figures in the kingdom. **Nebuchadrezzar** placed **Zedekiah**, a son of **Josiah**, on the throne to rule as a subject monarch in **597 B.C.** **Zedekiah** remained on the throne for about ten years, and during this period Jerusalem was rent apart by conflicting political factions. One side advocated submission to Babylon whilst the other advocated revolt and an alliance with Egypt. **Jeremiah** stood firmly on the pro-Babylonian side, and was deeply involved in the conflict with the pro-Egyptian party. His stance, as we shall see, caused him to be faced with bitter opposition and hatred. He was accused of treason, imprisoned, and in danger of death. After the fall of Jerusalem in **587/6 B.C.**, the Babylonians allowed him to join the community set up at Mizpeh under **Gedaliah**, but **Gedaliah** was assassinated, and the company fled to Egypt taking **Jeremiah** with them.

3. Some key dates

Here are some key dates for your orientation: In 840 B.C: Josiah the 'boy king' acceded to the throne, and remained king until killed in action against Pharaoh Neco in 609 B.C. In 622 B.C: King Josiah undertook his religious reforms based on *Deuteronomy*, but alas, in 609 B.C: Josiah died. There followed the accession of Jehoahaz, and then the Babylonian imposition of Jehoiachim. In 597 B.C King Jehoiachin capitulated to the Babylonians, and Zedekiah was enthroned by the King of Babylon. In 586 B.C Gedaliah was enthroned and assassinated.

N.B: At the Battle of Carchemesh in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Assyria.

2A. The Life of Jeremiah

1. Introduction: four episodes in Jeremiah's life

The Introduction to *Jeremiah* dates the prophet's call in the 13th year of the reign of **King Josiah**, i.e: five years before the reformation of **622 B.C.** – so **627/626 B.C.**, and so it is common to see four episodes in the ministry of Jeremiah: (a.) From his call until the reformation of **622 B.C.**; (b.) From the reformation until the death of **Josiah** in **609 B.C.**; (c.) From the death of **King Josiah** until the Fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.; and (d) from **586 B.C.** until his death. We shall look at each of these phases of Jeremiah's ministry in detail.

2. Jeremiah's ministry before Josiah's Reformation

(a) The date of Jeremiah's pre-reformation ministry

Jeremiah contains a lot of biographical material about episodes in the life of the prophet and the years of the ministry from **609 B.C.** onwards are well documented with such records. But, apart from the superscription, the early period in **Jeremiah's** ministry is never mentioned in the narratives. This has led many scholars to believe that the superscription is not to be trusted, and that **Jeremiah's** ministry did not begin before the reformation. Some scholars suggest that there is an error in the text, and that the date of the superscriptions should read, "**the twenty third year of Josiah's reign**", i.e: **616 B.C.**, just before the death of **King Josiah**. A second suggestion is that **626 B.C.** is not the date of the prophet's call, but the date of his birth. But neither suggestion finds any support in the versions or in the text itself. There is a problem, however, for those who accept that **Jeremiah** first preached in **626 B.C.**, namely, to know what oracles belonged to this period.

(b) Material related to the early period of Jeremiah's ministry

Now there are many clear reasons for accepting that the oracles in chapters 7 ff belong to the latter phases of ministry and so we are left with *Jeremiah* 1-6, and these oracles are usually ascribed to the early period: **Jeremiah 1:** Relates Jeremiah's call and two visions, and ends with a prediction of danger from the North; **Jeremiah 2 and 3:** A series of oracles condemning Judah for her sins, and

the type of sins mentioned are similar to those known to pre-date the reformation of **622 B.C.**, especially the sins of idolatry in the high places; **Jeremiah 4** returns to the theme of invasion; **Jeremiah 5**: A condemnation of the corruption of all classes of society in Judah; whilst finally **Jeremiah 6** again returns to the theme of invasion.

(c) The problem of the 'Northern foe' in *Jeremiah 1-6*

Now the problem is, "Who was the foe from the North in these chapters?". Those who advocate a late date have a simple answer – the Babylonians. But at an earlier date before the rise of Babylon, it is unlikely that Jeremiah would have been thinking of a Babylonian invasion. Also, in this early age, Assyria was in decline and Jeremiah was hardly thinking of that nation. Now, we have already seen that in **612 B.C.** the Scythians were invading the land to the North of Palestine, and **Herodotus** tells us that they came South as far as Gaza. So, many scholars have thought that the Scythians were the foe from the North. This may be so, but there is a problem here, for the Scythians were rather marauders and brigands than a serious imperial threat. They never took any of the Syro-Palestinian fortified cities, and Jeremiah's prediction is of a strong military power. Perhaps Jeremiah did foresee the rise of Babylon, but certainly we are left with a problem.

(d) Jeremiah and the Deuteronomic Reforms

There is a second problem about the early date. If **Jeremiah** was demanding religious reform before **622 B.C.** he must have had a positive attitude to **Josiah's** reforms and to *Deuteronomy*. But, nowhere are these things mentioned in *Jeremiah*. Scholars have tried to find references to them in the oracles of the prophets, but nothing certain has yet emerged. However, there are two positive hints that **Jeremiah** was on friendly terms with the Deuteronomists. The first is that much of the editing of *Jeremiah*, as we shall see, is Deuteronomic. The Deuteronomists must have cherished his oracles and edited them, and it is unlikely that they would have done so if **Jeremiah** had opposed them in their reforming policies. The second hint is that in later years **Jeremiah's** closest friends were all sons of the people who were involved in **Josiah's** reforms, many of them sons of **Shaphan** the secretary in **Josiah's** reign – cf. **Ahikam** (*Jeremiah 26:24ff.*), **Gemeraiah** (*Jeremiah 56:10ff.*), **Elasah** (*Jeremiah 29:03 ff.*). Many writers have suggested that **Jeremiah** became disillusioned with the Deuteronomists after the reformation. Maybe. We don't know. Certainly the Deuteronomists did not become disillusioned with **Jeremiah**.

(e) The 'reluctance' of Jeremiah

There is one further aspect of these early chapters I should like to mention here. You will remember that Isaiah, when God asked for a prophet saying, "**Whom shall I send?**" sprang forward eagerly saying, "**send me,**" (*Isaiah 6*). **Jeremiah** acted in the opposite way. God speaks. (READ: *Jeremiah 1:05*). **Jeremiah** acts with great unwillingness and tries to talk his way out of it (*Jeremiah 1:06*), but God insists (*Jeremiah 1:07*). Here, right at the start, we see **Jeremiah** to be a man doing a job that he does not want to do. Preachers and commentators have gone to town on this aspect of **Jeremiah**. They have tried to show how in his oracles he longs to lead an ordinary, simple life, but is compelled from within by the Word of God. Those of you becoming ministers will find in **Jeremiah** a fund of Sermon material. However, in another age, it was precisely this feature of **Jeremiah** that made his name a byword for someone who is always complaining. There are certain passages in *Jeremiah* which are often referred to as his *Confessions*, and these are all in that same vein.

3. Jeremiah's ministry between the reformation and the death of Josiah

Jeremiah's Silence

This is perhaps the easiest period on which to comment as it is one big blank. There are no oracles in the Book which can with certainty be allocated to that period, and certainly the superscription also

suggests that Jeremiah did not preach again until the reign of Jehoiachin. Why was he silent so long? We don't know.

4. Jeremiah's ministry between the death of Josiah and fall of Jerusalem

(a) Introduction

The period is subdivided into: (a.) the reign of **Jehoiakim**; (b.) the reign of **Zedekiah**.

THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

(b) The temple address

The utterances and reports of this period are scattered throughout *Jeremiah* 7-20, 22, 25, and the narratives which describe **Jeremiah's** life. If we can attribute any chronological value to the ordering of the Book, then this phase of **Jeremiah's** ministry opened with a condemnation of the Temple and the cult (*Jeremiah* 7). This chapter is known as the *Temple Address* and it is summed up in *Jeremiah* 7:04. (READ.) What we have here is an attack on the Zion Theology of the Jerusalem cult. **Jeremiah** declares that it is deceptive to put all your trust in a Theology which says that the Temple will always stand secure. This trust is of no avail when they continue to break the Covenant Faith. Consider, says **Jeremiah**, what happened to Shiloh of old, and it was once the Temple of the **Lord** (*Jeremiah* 7:12). Instead of trusting in cultic objects the people should be lamenting their sins and asking for forgiveness (*Jeremiah* 7:29).

(c) The consequences of the Temple Address for Jeremiah

The Call to Repentance is a central feature of **Jeremiah's** message and recurs regularly throughout the Book. *Jeremiah* 26 tells us of the consequences of **Jeremiah's** *Temple Address*. The beginning of the chapter (*Jeremiah* 26:01-26:06) tells us that it resulted in bitter enmity against **Jeremiah**. The priests consider him to be worthy of death, and it is only on the intervention of **Jeremiah's** influential friends at court, who remind the people that **Micah** preached a similar message, that **Jeremiah** is released from the gallows.

(d) The cost of Jeremiah's ministry in terms of his life

From this point on, **Jeremiah** continued to preach the same message, that Judah must amend her ways and turn to the **Lord**. From this point on too, the opposition to Jeremiah grew more and more bitter. Plots were made against his life (*Jeremiah* 18:18), even by men of his own home town Anathoth (*Jeremiah* 11:21 ff.), and eventually he was scourged and put into the stocks (*Jeremiah* 20:01f) As a last warning, **Jeremiah** has **Baruch** his scribe write down his sayings and recite the in the Temple (*Jeremiah* 36). **King Jehoiachim** seizes the scroll of **Baruch** and burns it. Then he ordered the arrest of **Jeremiah** and **Baruch** who are compelled to go into hiding until **Jehoiachim's** death. It is only when the Babylonians draw near to the city that he appears to have taken up residence in Jerusalem once again.

(e) The Confessions of Jeremiah

It is to this episode in **Jeremiah's** ministry, i.e: during the reign of **Jehoiachim**, that his so-called 'Confessions' belong. (*Jeremiah* 11:18-11:23, 12:01-12:06, 15:10, 15:15-15:20, 17:14-17:18, 20:07-20:13, 20:14-20:18). These are in the forms of dialogues with **God** or in the form of laments, like the individual laments of *Psalms*. In them, **Jeremiah** reveals the crisis that has been brought about in his life by his acceptance of the prophetic call. He is very fond of life and of his fellow men, but his call to prophesy has involved him in the condemnation of those he loves. The result is a state of tension between the word and **God**, and the confessions are **Jeremiah's** expression of his dilemma before the one who caused it. Here we see the extension and development in the life of the prophet of the very problem that was present right from the start, when he was willing to accept his call to prophesy.

THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH.

(f) Jeremiah's prophecy in the reign of Jehoiakim

During the reign of **Jehoiakim**, **Jeremiah** had been preaching that disaster would befall the land and overtake the nation if it did not return to the Covenant Faith of the **Lord**: (1) **Jeremiah** attacked idolatry (*Jeremiah* 10:01-10:16); (2) **Jeremiah** attacked Israel's departure from the Covenant Faith (*Jeremiah* 11:01-11:08); (3) **Jeremiah** predicted disaster to the city (*Jeremiah* 10:17-10:25, 8:04-9:22); (4) **Jeremiah** prophesied exile (*Jeremiah* 9:17-9:22); (5) **Jeremiah** portrayed his message in the acted symbolism of wearing a prisoner waist cloth (*Jeremiah* 13); (6) **Jeremiah** illustrated it by reference to the work of the potter and by breaking the potter's vessel (*Jeremiah* 18:01-18:07, 19:01-20:06). Jeremiah's prophecies came true. Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonians in **597 B.C.**, and since the Word of the LORD through **Jeremiah** had been vindicated, **Zedekiah** showed great willingness to follow the prophet's advice.

(g) Fulfilment and faction under Zedekiah

It was during this period that Jerusalem was torn by the struggle of the pro-Egyptian party with the pro-Babylonian party; and the pro-Egyptian, or at least the anti-Babylonian party proved far stronger and more influential than its opponents. **Jeremiah** thus found himself with the minority position by advocating no rebellion against Babylon. The anti-Babylonian party was strongly supported by the cultic prophets under the leadership of one Hananiah, and with these also, **Jeremiah** found himself at a loss (*Jeremiah* 27-28). He wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon (*Jeremiah* 29) but even they would not hear him, and their reply advocated that **Jeremiah** should be put in the stocks again. But, once more **Jeremiah's** words were vindicated, for the turmoil of the anti-Babylonians brought the army of Babylon to the city gates once more. At this stage **Jeremiah** was very outspoken and demanded patient submission to Babylon. But even now his words were regarded as those of a traitor and he is thrown into prison and saved again only through the good disposition of the king and the influence of his friends at court. All this is described in great detail in *Jeremiah* 37 and 38. The city did not withstand the siege and **Jeremiah** was offered preferential treatment by the Babylonians in **587/6 B.C.**, but he refused their offer, and chose to stay in the land in the company of **Gedaliah**. The intrigues that lead to the death of **Gedaliah** are described in great detail in *Jeremiah* 40-43, but with his friend's death, the third phase of **Jeremiah's** ministry comes to an end. **Jeremiah** is taken to Egypt when **Gedaliah's** company flees there.

5. Jeremiah's Egyptian Ministry: 586 B.C. until his death

(a) Jeremiah ministers and passes from the scene

We have no idea how long **Jeremiah** continued to live in Egypt. But even at this stage we find him still inveighing against the infidelity of the **Lord's** people and their blindness to the message that the **Lord** is trying to teach through history (*Jeremiah* 43:08-43:13, 44:01 ff). He eventually passes into oblivion and we hear no more of him.

(b) A Concluding note to Jeremiah's life and ministry

I have spent some considerable time on the life and history of **Jeremiah**, because, "the Book of **Jeremiah** does not so much set before us religious truth as present a religious personality," (**A.B. Davidson**). *Jeremiah* gives us more information about the prophet than any other Book in the *Old Testament* tells us about the person who stood behind it. There is a reason for this – namely that there is so much biography in *Jeremiah*, and that so much of **Jeremiah's** own words are almost autobiography, cf. his own confessions. But this does not mean that he does not have a message, and it is to this that we now turn, having recapitulated in list form the events and eventualities within and behind the ministry of **Jeremiah**.

B. JEREMIAH: A CHRONOLOGY

Hereunder is a table of the main events in **Jeremiah's** life and ministry.

640	B.C.	Josiah becomes King of Judah (<i>II Kings</i> 22:01)
627	B.C.	Jeremiah's first oracles (<i>Jeremiah</i> 1-6) calling for repentance and reform (<i>Jeremiah</i> 1:02)
622	B.C.	Josiah's Reforms (<i>II Kings</i> 22-23)
612	B.C.	Fall of Nineveh (cf. <i>Nahum</i>)
609	B.C.	Death of Josiah (<i>II Kings</i> 23:28-23:30) Jehoahaz King for three months (<i>II Kings</i> 23:31) Jehoiakim made king by Pharaoh Neco (<i>II Kings</i> 23:34)
609/608	B.C.	Jeremiah's Temple Sermon (<i>Jeremiah</i> 7) Jeremiah's trial (<i>Jeremiah</i> 26) Sometime later Jeremiah prophesies about the broken bottle and is put in the stocks by Passhur the Temple overseer (<i>Jeremiah</i> 19-20)
605	B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar becomes King of Babylon. Jeremiah dictated his words to Baruch (<i>Jeremiah</i> 36:01, 45:01 ff) Nebuchadnezzar defeats the Egyptian army and advances into Syria.
604	B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar in Palestine In December 604 BC , Jeremiah's scroll is read in the Temple before the King (<i>Jeremiah</i> 36:09) and Jeremiah goes into hiding
604/603	B.C.	Jehoiakim changes his allegiance from Egypt to Babylon, he is to remain loyal to Babylon for three years, and then he rebels (<i>II Kings</i> 24:01)
601	B.C.	The Egyptians defeat the Babylonians in battle (probably the occasion of Jehoiakim's defection)
599	B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar sends advance troops into Palestine
598	B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar in Palestine The Rechabites and others seek refuge in Jerusalem (<i>Jeremiah</i> 35)
597	B.C.	Death of Jehoiakim (<i>II Kings</i> 24:06) Jehoiakin reigns for three months (<i>II Kings</i> 24:08-24:09) Siege of Jerusalem. Jehoiakin capitulates (<i>II Kings</i> 24:10-24:12) Jehoiachim taken into exile with the city's leaders (<i>II Kings</i> 24:13) Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle is made king instead (<i>II Kings</i> 24:17ff)
595	B.C.	Uprising in Babylon The unrest spreads and foreign ambassadors come to Jerusalem to discuss throwing off the Babylonian yoke Jeremiah warns them not to do so (<i>Jeremiah</i> 27) but is opposed by Hannaniah (<i>Jeremiah</i> 28) Jeremiah writes in the same vein to the exiles (<i>Jeremiah</i> 29)
594-593	B.C.	Zedekiah is summoned before Nebuchadnezzar (<i>Jeremiah</i> 51:59) and Jeremiah sends an oracle against Babylon with his party
589	B.C.	Judah is again in revolt together with other Palestinian cities Zedekiah seeks Jeremiah's advice (<i>Jeremiah</i> 21:01-21:07, 37:03-37:10, 38:14-38:23) The Babylonian armies return to Palestine
588	B.C.	Jerusalem besieged. All Palestinian cities taken except Lachish and Azekah (<i>Jeremiah</i> 34:07).

Occasion of the *Lachish Ostraca*.

Zedekiah looks for assurance and a miracle, but Jeremiah offers no comfort (*Jeremiah* 21:01-21:10, 34:01-34:07)

Lachish and Azekah fall. Only Jerusalem remains.

The Egyptian armies enter Palestine, and the Babylonians withdraw from Jerusalem to fight them.

Jeremiah predicts the resumption of the siege, (*Jeremiah* 37:01-37:10)

The affair of the Hebrew slaves (*Jeremiah* 34:08-34:22)

588/587 B.C. **Jeremiah** arrested and held in prison for about a year until the siege ends (*Jeremiah* 37:11-37:21, 38:01-38:28, 39:15-39:18, 32:01-32:16)

587 B.C. Fall of Jerusalem (*II Kings* 25 and *Jeremiah* 52) in July.

Jeremiah released and offered preferential treatment by the Babylonians (*Jeremiah* 39:01-39:14, 40:01-40:06)

Gedaliah appointed governor of Judah and Jeremiah joins his community at Mizpeh (*Jeremiah* 40:05-40:06)

587 or Later Assassination of **Gedaliah** and flight of his followers with **Jeremiah** to Egypt (*Jeremiah* 40:07-43:07)

Jeremiah continues his preaching in Egypt (*Jeremiah* 43:08-44:30)

Jeremiah's preaching and Theology in table form

TABLE "A"	Chapter	The Lord warns Israël through His Servants the Prophets	Israël rejects the Words of the Prophets	The Lords Judgement upon Israël
	<i>II Kings</i> 17	13	14-17	18
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 7	25	26	32-34
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 25	4 – 6	4,7	8-11
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 26	4 – 5	5	6
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 29	19	19	17-18
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 35	13-15	15	1?
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 36	1 – 8	9-26	27-31
	<i>Jeremiah</i> 44	4	5	6

C. JEREMIAH's MESSAGE

1C. Jeremiah and the Covenant Faith: Sin and Repentance

1. Jeremiah: Prophecy from the heart

Jeremiah's message, unlike that of so many of the other prophets, is not conditioned by fixed traditions or by the cult. His message is much rather a cry from the heart and is the projection of his personality upon the nation which he loves. When we understand the prophet himself and his

ministry, we can begin to understand his message. Of course, the basis for all his preaching is, as with so many of his predecessors, the Covenant Faith of Israēl, and it is with this that we must start.

4. The Call for a change of heart

When we looked at the Temple Sermon in *Jeremiah* 7, we saw that its theme was a call to Israēl not to trust in the religious paraphernalia, but to turn to the Covenant and to obey it. Now it has been claimed that **Jeremiah** was the prophet who transformed Israēl's religion from a national to a personal Faith, and there are certain reasons for upholding this view. **Jeremiah** does not address his message on the whole to individuals, but to the nation of Israēl. Yet he reveals an interest in the inner personality rather than the outward forms. He regarded sin not so much as outward acts, but as an inner condition of the heart! He constantly talks of an 'obdurate and stubborn heart' and at times is rightly pessimistic about the ability of Man to change that heart. **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"** (*Jeremiah* 13:23). This well known question is planned in the context to illustrate how difficult **Jeremiah** believes it would be for a man to change his attitude of heart. And yet he repeatedly calls upon his people to change their heart and to break with the past. (*Jeremiah* 4:04-4:14). By comparison with such a change, the ritual paraphernalia of the temple and the cult are of no avail (cf. The Temple – *Jeremiah* 7, the ark – *Jeremiah* 3:16, circumcision – *Jeremiah* 9:25f.). What is needed is not circumcision, but circumcision of the heart (*Jeremiah* 9:25-9:26).

3. Turning

The first step in the change of heart must be an inner repentance. A word that recurs frequently in Jeremiah's oracles is **"Turn"** (especially *Jeremiah* 2-4), i.e: a total re-orientation is asked. Now, just as **Isaiah** saw that not all Israēl would follow his teaching but that the future of the nation must depend on a remnant, so **Jeremiah** shows signs that he has little hope for Israēl to change and that the future of the Faith must depend on the turning of the 'few'. **Jeremiah** is in a sense advocating an individual Faith, but it is not an individual faith cut loose from a national faith. The basis of the Faith is the Covenant, and individual repentance means individual turning again to that Covenant and joining the nucleus of a new Israēl with a new heart. But here we begin to pass to another aspect of **Jeremiah's** teaching – his hope for the future.

2C. Jeremiah's future Hope

1. An introductory note

There is a problem about determining Jeremiah's attitude to the future, namely in deciding what is Jeremaianic and what is editorial.

2. Jeremiah 30-31

This text portion, normally called the *Book of Comfort* is doubtless in the main Jeremaianic. Here **Jeremiah** looks for the restoration of Israēl (Northern Kingdom) purged from sin and living in harmony with the South (*Jeremiah* 31:02-31:05, 31:12-31:22). This was to be fulfilled through the giving of the New Covenant by repentance and living 'in Christ' of the *New Testament*. The picture is of a future 'golden age' similar to that portrayed in the oracles of *Isaiah*.

3. Jeremiah 29

In the letter to the exiles in *Jeremiah* 29 which for certain contains Jeremaianic elements, the prophet argues with those who have gone into exile. The exiles believe that Faith is inextricably tied up with living in the arena of Jerusalem, and so believe that their exile will not last long. **Jeremiah** advises them to prepare for a long stay in Babylon. **“Build houses and live in them,”** he says. Lead a normal life and don’t sit waiting for release. Your Faith is not tied to a place, but to a condition of heart and to the Covenant.

4. *Jeremiah* 25:11-25:12, 29:10

Here **Jeremiah** predicts a seventy year exile, but a return began after fifty years. Some believe this date to be editorial, but we would hardly expect a late editor who knew the length of the exile to make a mistake. No, the temple was not rebuilt and rededicated until **520-515 B.C.**, approximately seventy years from **587/588 B.C.**. Also, **Jeremiah** is probably using a large round number to contrast with **Hananiah’s** false teaching that the exile would last only two years.

5. *Jeremiah* 32

In *Jeremiah* 32 stands an account of how **Jeremiah** bought a field at Anathoth. He did this in the last years of pre-exilic Judah’s life and intended it as a sign that he had confidence in the future of Judah. He was preaching disaster, but he saw that the coming disaster was not to be the end. **“Houses and vineyards shall again be bought,”** (*Jeremiah* 32:15), and **Jeremiah** was showing his confidence at this by buying a field long in advance.

6. *Jeremiah* 31

Now, apart from his prophecy of the Golden Age, **Jeremiah’s** hope seems rather mundane. He gives practical advice to the exile for the interim period, and for the future he sees some kind of a restoration of national life. Are the two pictures compatible? Perhaps the answer is in *Jeremiah* 31 where **Jeremiah** speaks of the New Covenant. Now there is certainly some editorial material in this chapter, but most scholars believe its sub-stratum is Jeremaianic. Certainly what the chapter says accords with the teaching of **Jeremiah**. He looks to the future, to the restoration of the **Lord’s** people on the basis of the Covenant. But the Covenant itself is to be changed. It will still be a communal and national Covenant made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but it is to be written in men’s hearts – i.e: its motivation will be internal.

7. *Jeremiah’s* future hope summarised

Now, if we pull all the threads together, it may be said that **Jeremiah** looked on the future in a practical way. Nothing cataclysmic was to happen, and the exile was not to be brief. However, at **God’s** chosen time the nation would be restored on the basis of the Covenant. But, by this time a change would have taken place in men’s hearts and the basis of the restored community would be the new Covenant of the heart. Thus it was possible for him to look forward to an ideal golden age when a man would live at peace in the life of the Covenant, the life which **God** had planned for them.

4C. *Jeremiah’s* Confessions and his involvement in Society

1. Introduction

We have already seen that Jeremiah was very much a man of the world and involved in the life and the affairs of his people. Yet, we saw, he was also compelled to condemn his people. I want now

to take a closer look at his Confessions so that we can see how the tension in **Jeremiah's** life affected his ministry, and to see what new insights it brought.

2. Jeremiah: His will and the problem of Theodicy: *Jeremiah 11-12*

It is impossible to set **Jeremiah's** Confessions in chronological order, and different scholars deal with them differently. I intend here to take them in the order in which they come in the text, but we must realise that the earlier passages could represent later insight. As we saw earlier, the tension was in **Jeremiah's** life right from the start of his ministry. When he first felt the call to prophesy, he was unwilling. Thus it was with a certain reluctance that he first spoke, and it is natural that he should have looked for some encouragement to urge him on with the job. But no encouragement came. Instead, there was opposition, and one of the most bitter blows in his life was when his own townsfolk and friends turned against him (*Jeremiah 11:21*). It is hardly surprising that the prophet thus rebuffed should call for vengeance on them *11:20*). Perhaps **Jeremiah's** cry seems harsh to us today, but the prophet was wrestling with the same problem that faced Habakkuk – the problem of Theodicy. His cry for vengeance is based upon the belief that the evil doer merits punishment by right – because **God** is Just. Yet the punishment does not come, so Jeremiah launches into a lament and complaint to **God**, “**Why does the way of the wicked prosper?**” (*Jeremiah 12:01*). The Lord's answer, which comes in *Jeremiah 12:04ff* is really no answer at all if ‘answer’ constitutes a solution to the philosophical problem of suffering. The answer is a reprimand to the prophet – this is no time for self pity or for questions about Divine Justice – this is the hour for action.

3. Jeremiah's purity and austerity of Life: Repentance: *Jeremiah 15*

Jeremiah was looking for the comfort and encouragement of man, but such was not to be, for man's hearts must be changed. If the mere discouraging words of men are enough to put you off, what will you do when the real trial comes? (*Jeremiah 12:05*). “**If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you ever compete with horses?**”. In the poem of *Jeremiah 15:15-15:20*, similar themes recur. The prophet longs to carry out his mission in the company of good friends and in a happy social setting. We see from *Jeremiah 16* that **Jeremiah** felt compelled to renounce marriage and the joy of having children. His message was so dramatically impressed on his mind that he felt he must stand opposite society and not be involved in it, and yet he longed for the day to day involvement of a normal social life. In *Jeremiah 15:18* **Jeremiah** even questions as to whether God is misleading him altogether. Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? The **Lord's** reply is again a rebuke. The **Lord** does not ask for self pity, but for a change of heart – and even the prophet must change his heart, “**If you return, I will restore you ...**” (READ). Note here that the **Lord** leaves the choice to **Jeremiah**. The Divine compulsion of the **Holy Spirit** does not remove the prophet's ability to choose, and though many have felt His compulsion, not all have chosen as **Jeremiah** did!

4. Desire for vengeance on the scorner versus compassion and love: *Jeremiah 17*

In the confessions of *Jeremiah 17:14-17:18*, **Jeremiah** again deals with the problem of alienation. Is he really the mouthpiece of **God** who has uttered the oracles without feeling? Why, men have mocked him and said, “Where is the disaster you have foretold? Let it come!” Has he not wished at times that it would come, and quickly, so that its scornors may be punished! His words should have been spoken from love and care for the people who had strayed from the Covenant – did he not often speak them with vengeance

5. The Climax: Jeremiah deceived? *Jeremiah 20*

Jeremiah's agonies climax in the lament, *Jeremiah* 20:17-20:18. **Jeremiah** feels deceived by **God**, made a laughing stock before man. He is compelled to go round day by day crying, '**violence and destruction,**' and yet he begs to give it all up. But somehow he cannot, for he realises that it is not a question of his mood or feeling, but of God's compelling will. So, once more he calls for vengeance. Then, in the second poem starting at verse fourteen, in complete despair at his situation, he curses the day on which he was born.

6. Conclusion: Jeremiah: God's Message and Jeremiah's personality

We often see no personality behind the words of **Amos** or **Isaiah**, so it is salutary to see so much of **Jeremiah**. The prophet was not a madman or crank. He was very human – one who longed for the comfort of friendship and daily life, and yet one who had to sacrifice them in the service of **God**. It is because **Jeremiah** is so human and because he is one who experienced what so many Christians through the ages have felt that the Book of his oracles has become a kind of preacher's handbook.

D. THE JEREMIAH PROSE TRADITION

1D. The structure of 'Jeremiah'

1. An initial working attempt

The Book 'Jeremiah' can be divided roughly into four parts: (1) *Jeremiah* 1-25: Oracles of Jeremiah in poetry and in prose; (2) *Jeremiah* 26-45: Biographical narratives; (3) *Jeremiah* 46-51: Oracles against foreign nations; (4) *Jeremiah* 52: An historical appendix taken from *II Kings* 24:18-25:30. Now, the book is far from being in its original form, for *The Septuagint* omits about 2,700 words of the text (1/8 of the whole), and inserts the oracles against the nations after *Jeremiah* 25:13. The problem is further complicated by the mass of prose material in the Book.

2. The theory of BERNARD DUHM

One German scholar at the end of the last century, **B. Duhm**, thought that all the prose material was editorial and that some of the verse oracles were not Jeremianic. He argued that **Jeremiah** only wrote about 60 very short poems or oracles. But not all scholars have found the analysis so crudely simple.

3. The theory of SIGMUND MOWINCKEL

(a) MOWINCKEL's theory in outline

The most widely accepted theory about the compilation of **Jeremiah** is that proposed by **Sigmund Mowinckel**. He distinguishes three categories of material: (A.) Jeremianic poetic oracles: (Mainly *Jeremiah* 1-25); (B.) Historical Narratives: (Mainly *Jeremiah* 26-45); (C.) Speeches composed by the Deuteronomist, on the basis of Jeremianic material: e.g: *Jeremiah* 7.

(b) The role of Baruch

In *Jeremiah* 36 we read of how **Baruch**, **Jeremiah's** scribe, wrote out *Jeremiah's* oracles. This scroll, **Mowinckel** believes, roughly corresponds to (A) – the Jeremaianic poetic oracles of 1-25, although he admits that not all of 1-25 was in **Baruch's** scroll. Sometime in the exile the narratives (B) were written and combined with (A) by a redactor. After the exile the Deuteronomic edition of **Jeremiah's** sayings (C) was added, and thereafter the Book evolved as above.

4. The theory of J.P. HYATT

There are countless other theories of the compilation of *Jeremiah*, but only one has attracted attention in recent years – that of **J.P. Hyatt**:

Baruch's Scroll. 607 B.C.	2nd Ed. by Baruch 586 B.C.	Deuteronomic Ed. 550 B.C.	Post Exilic
Oracles	Oracles Confessions Memoirs	Oracles against Nations	Book of Comfort

The real problem here is caused neither by the oracles, nor by the prose narratives, but by the prose sermons. It causes no difficulty to anyone's interpretation to say that the oracles are Jeremaianic and that the narratives were written by an editor, but how do we interpret the sermons? Do we say that they are Jeremaianic or do we say they are not? If we say they are, then we can reconstruct **Jeremiah's** message from them, but if we say they are not, then we have a problem.

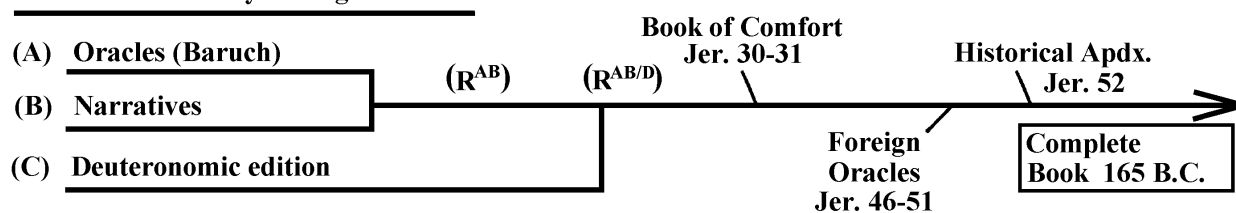
2D. The Deuteronomic factor: BRIGHT & NICHOLSON

1. JOHN BRIGHT's theory: The view of certain Conservative scholars

Now the sermons are cast in Deuteronomic language and are full of Deuteronomic themes and theology. More Conservative scholars have, of course, argued that they were written by **Jeremiah** and that the Deuteronomic style is his prose style. Others, e.g. **J. Bright**, have said that they were written by disciples or Deuteronomists who remembered the gist of what Jeremiah had said but could not remember his exact words. Others have said that they were free compositions of the Deuteronomists. Now, who is correct? What I have said so far can all be gleaned from standard commentaries. But, in **1980**, the now late **Ernest W. Nicholson** of Oxford University prepared a thesis on the Jeremiah prose tradition, and it is to this which I now turn. (N.B: **Nicholson's** work is set out below and is part 1 of 2 parts: the second comes at the end of these course notes.)

2. E.W. NICHOLSON's Thesis: The Exilic Deuteronomists Part I

Mowinckel's Theory in diagram form.



Nicholson starts by pointing out that we cannot deny that the Deuteronomist has been active in the writing of prose sermons. The style, language, Theology etc. are all Deuteronomistic. So, it is useless to deny the Deuteronomist's activity. Now, when we looked at *Isaiah* and *Deuteronomy*, we saw that traditions are not static. A prophet speaks and his oracles are preserved by others who

re-use them and re-apply them to the needs of a later age, viz: the age of the exile, and presented his oracles interspersed with their Sermons, trying to draw out lessons which would benefit the people of the exilic age. This is known as the Deuteronomic method, for we see that they did the same thing when they wrote their history and the Book *Deuteronomy*. They expanded the text with sermons which try to teach the lessons to their contemporary hearers. Now, if this is the case, it should be possible to find out what lessons the Deuteronomists were trying to draw from **Jeremiah**, and **Nicholson** believes that the prose tries to teach several such lessons.

3. The Absolute Authority of the Prophetic Word

One of the most important lessons which is taught not only in the Sermon but also in the prose biography is that the prophetic word carries absolute authority and that failure to obey it brings severe judgement. This is a lesson the Deuteronomist tries to teach in *II Kings* 17 where we find that the **Lord's** wrath comes to Israel by the prophets (*II Kings* 17:13), and that if Israel rejects the words of the prophets (*II Kings* 17:14-17:17), the judgement is announced (*II Kings* 17:18). The same lesson is taught in the story of **Jehoiakim's** burning of **Baruch's** scroll in *Jeremiah* 36; and *Jeremiah* 1-8 relate how the **Lord's** Word came by the prophet; *Jeremiah* 9-26 describe the rejection of that Word; *Jeremiah* 27-31 declare the Judgement that is to follow. Now in this chapter (*II Kings* 17) there is a clear distinction drawn between the apostate **king Jehoiakim** and the pious **Josiah**. The scroll is like the Law Book. It is taken from the temple to the king by a group of court officials. When **Josiah** read the Law Book, he rent his clothes and showed penitence. It is not without reason that *Jeremiah* 36:24 says of **Jehoiakim**, “**He was not afraid nor did he rend his garments**”. There is a sharp contrast with **king Josiah** being drawn. Following **Jehoiakim's** rejection of the scroll, **Jeremiah** utters an oracle of curse. Following **Josiah's** acceptance of the Law, the **prophetess Huldah** uttered an oracle of blessing (*II Kings* 22:16-22:20)

4. The lesson drawn

Jeremiah's oracles carry the same authority as the Law – they are God's Word. Rejection of them results in curse and disaster. By drawing the contrast with Josiah, the Deuteronomist drives the lesson home. *Jeremiah* 36 is based in history, but as it stands it is trying to teach a serious lesson.

5. The lesson duplicated: Jeremiah 26

A second chapter which deals with the main theme is *Jeremiah* 26 – the account of the trial of **Jeremiah** after he delivered the *Temple Sermon*. Why should this story be separated from the account of the *Temple Sermon* in *Jeremiah* 7? And why should the story of the **prophet Uriel** be inserted at the end of the chapter? The short tale of **Uriel** seems so irrelevant to the story of **Jeremiah's** trial. The answer lies in seeing in this chapter another tale about the rejection of the Word of the **Lord** spoken by the prophet. *Jeremiah* 26:03 declares the hope that the people will hear the prophet's word and repent. The chapter goes on to show how the people did not repent but put **Jeremiah** on trial for his life. In *Jeremiah* 26:16 ff, a contrast is again drawn, this time with **Hezekiah**. *II Kings* 18 shows us that the Deuteronomic historian regarded **Hezekiah** as a most pious monarch, and in *Jeremiah* 26 there is a clear contrast with **Jehoiakim**. **Hezekiah** listened to **Micah** – what will **Jehoiakim** do in reaction to the word of the prophets. The answer is clear. What did **Jehoiakim** do in the case of **Uriah**? He even sent to Egypt to take him back to Judah and execute him. Meantime **Jeremiah** is kept safe because of the intervention of his friends from court, but again the Word of the **Lord** by the prophet has been rejected, and there will be a penalty to pay. This theme of Judgement following the rejection of the Lord's Word is dominant in many of the prose passages of *Jeremiah*.

6. A closing interim comment: Biography in the service of History and Theology

So far I have dealt with only one of the Theological themes of the Jeremiah prose and have touched on only a few of the prose passages. For the moment I am going to leave this subject, but I shall return to it later and go over some of the themes of the Jeremiah prose. But enough has been said to show you that the prose of Jeremiah is not just record or biography. It is biography with a punch – it teaches a lesson. This is history alright, but it is history interpreted to teach the reader a lesson. We shall see later what the other lessons were, but already we can see something of how the Book ‘Jeremiah’ developed. It was not just a collection of oracles and stories strung together. It was oracles of the prophet used and re-used and re-interpreted and re-applied by his disciples and by the Deuteronomists – and it is them that we must thank for the stories about the prophet that have survived.

UNIT 20: THE EXILIC AGE & LAMENTATIONS

A. PALESTINE DURING THE EXILE

1A. Data related to destruction and deportation by Babylon at Jerusalem

1. *Jeremiah* 52:28-30

Biblical statistics in three text portions convey the extent and nature of the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the City of Jerusalem: In **597 B.C.** 3023 people were deported from Jerusalem to Babylon; in **587/6 B.C.** 832 were deported; whilst finally in **582 B.C.** 745 were deported. This is the only place in the Old Testament where the third deportation, that of **582 B.C.** is mentioned, and we are not told the cause of it. Possibly it is somehow to be associated with the murder of Gedeliah, or perhaps it is related to some insurrection of the people of which no record remains.

2. *II Kings* 24:14-25:21

II Kings 24:14-25:21 records that in **597 B.C.** 10000 were deported (*II Kings* 24:14), a further 7000 deported (*II Kings* 24:16) in **586 B.C.** when the ‘rest of Judah’ was deported. *II Kings* 25:21 reads, “So Judah was taken into Exile out of his land.”

3. *II Chronicles* 36:20

No mention is made here of separate deportations. According to *II Chronicles* 36:20, everyone was taken into Exile.

4. Analysis of data: The perspective of *II Kings* explained

Now, what do we make of these different figures? Was the land emptied or virtually emptied of people? *II Kings*, in relating the deportations, is mainly concerned with the problems of the Davidic

Succession and what was to happen to the Davidic Dynasty. This is why the *Books of Kings* end with a note concerning the fate of **King Jehoiakim** in Babylon. So it is natural that the editor should put all the emphasis on the deportation which interested him most, namely the one in which the king was taken into Exile in **597 B.C.** So he relates to us that in **597 B.C.** all men of influence and importance were removed from the land – cf. *II Kings* 24:14: all the princes, soldiers, craftsmen, smiths, were taken into Exile – only the poorest of the land remained i.e: the land was deprived of its leadership, both social, political, and military. Again, *II Kings* 24:15 tells us of the removal of the royal court and governing officials. According to *II Kings* 25:12 only the peasants were left – and the vinedressers and plowmen. So according to *Kings* the first deportation was the main one, and the reason why it was the main one was because it was at that time that **Jehoiakim** was taken into Exile.

2A. The land during the exile

1. The perspective of *Jeremiah* 52 and ‘Chronicles’

Although the figures in *Jeremiah* 52 differ from those in *Kings*, the viewpoint is the same. The first deportation was the largest, and the removal of the king is the most prominent feature of the deportations. But, according to *Chronicles*, the Exile resulted in a complete hiatus in the occupation of the land. The land lay desolate during the Exile to ensure that it had its Sabbath rest, (*II Chronicles* 36:20). Now the Chronicler’s interest is different from that of the author of *Kings*. To the Chronicler the legitimate successors to the throne of David are not the **Sons of David**, but the priests. After the rebuilding of the Temple it was the priesthood that ruled the land until the Restoration of the Monarchy in the Maccabean era after the death of **Alexander the Great**. If the Priesthood is to succeed to the leadership, then the land must first be virtually purified by fulfilling the Sabbath requirement of rest from cultivation. So the Chronicler insists that the land is barren.

2. The land and her people during the Exile

But, did the land lie desolate? Jeremiah’s figures are quite low and it stands to reason that Gedeliah, if he was left in charge of the land, must have had something to rule over. If we accept Jeremiah’s figures, then it was only the influential leaders and the military personnel that were removed. And why should others be taken away? The only reason for deportation was to ensure that conquered territories could not rise in revolt. To do this, the conquerors took away their leaders and their armies. It would have been pointless and expensive to take everyone away.

3. Glimpses of life in the land of Judah during the Exile

Anyhow, there is other evidence that there were many who remained in the land during the Exile. After **586 B.C.**, according to *Jeremiah* 40:12, **Gedeliah** revived Mizpeh as a cult centre. It had been a religious centre in the time of **Samuel** (*I Samuel* 7) and after the Exile it was an important administrative centre (*Nehemiah* 3:15 and 3:19). According to *Jeremiah* 41:05 men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria came to Jerusalem with offerings to the **Lord** in **586 B.C.** After the Exile Gibeon was a flourishing city (*Nehemiah* 3:07, 7:25) as also was Anathoth, **Jeremiah**’s birthplace (*Ezra* 2:23, *Nehemiah* 7:27). Now all these places are ancient centres of Yahwism and it seems that their sanctuaries and cults must have continued to function throughout the Exile. But, in order to get a proper picture of conditions in Judah during the Exile, we have to turn to one of the most important Exilic works, the *Book of Lamentations*.

B. LAMENTATIONS

1B. Questions of Introduction and the Theology of *Lamentations*

1. The structure in which 'Lamentations' is cast.

Lamentations comprises five poems of lament corresponding with the five chapters of the Book. The first four poems are acrostics, the verses beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in succession. The third poem begins each of the three lines of the first verse with א, of the second verse with ב and so on. The fifth poem, although its verses are not alphabetically arranged, contains the same number of verses as the number of letters that are to be found within the Hebrew alphabet, twenty-two. Now, *Lamentations* is an extremely emotional Book, and it is perhaps surprising to us that emotion could be fitted so neatly into a stereotyped form like the acrostic poem. But, the lament as a literary style was well known to the Hebrews who used it frequently in their Psalms.

2. *Lamentations* and the prophet Jeremiah

Lamentations is traditionally ascribed to the Prophet **Jeremiah**, but this tradition is based on an erratic interpretation of *II Chronicles* 35:25 which tells that **Jeremiah** uttered lamentation over **King Josiah** (died 609 B.C.). **Jeremiah's** laments must have been lost to history, for *Lamentations* does not refer to **Josiah** or to his times. Neither, incidentally does *Lamentations* suggest Jeremianic authorship. None of **Jeremiah's** pet themes and nothing of his personality flows through the poems, and it is never known to have been the prophet's style to write in acrostics.

3. Author(s) defined by content

It is perhaps best to think of the author or authors of the poem as anonymous persons living in Jerusalem during the exile. The poems themselves are best thought of as liturgical laments to be sung at fast days during the year of Remembrance of the Fall of Jerusalem. (On such fasts c.f.: *Zechariah* 7:01-7:05 and the comments on this text in PICC B.A./B.D./B.MIN./B.TH. course *Hebrew VI: Zechariah in Hebrew*.) In *Lamentations* Poems 1 and 5 are general summaries of the disaster; Poems 2 and 4 are detailed, and depict the horrors of the Fall of Jerusalem; whilst Poem 3 is an intensified expression of trust in the goodness of God throughout the disaster.

4. *Lamentations*: A Theology of Theodicy

(a) The brutal realism of the Fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews

Lamentations is pervaded by a stark realism which does not withdraw from painting in vivid and detailed colours the horrors and carnage of destruction. The enemy is coarse and brutal, and gloats over the dying children of Jerusalem. The writer is lifting the whole terrible event to God as a basis for his lament and his protest. The problem with which he wrestles is one of Theodicy in view of the catastrophe of **587/6 B.C.**. What is the meaning of the city's humiliation? Can these events be seen as the **Lord's** Will? What is the **Lord's** plan for Israel? Has He cast off and deserted His people forever? In *Lamentations* we see the passing of an old age and the advent of a new. Israel had pinned its hopes on Davidic monarchy (cf. Zion Theology), but now all are in ruin. Why should this be? Is there no future for the nation? And yet, at the very centre of the Book the Psalmist raises hope for the future.

(b) A message of future hope

However: At the very centre of *Lamentations* is a message of future hope. Here are three key texts all from *Lamentations* 3: (a) *Lamentations* 3:22: '**The Steadfast Love of God never ceases**'; (b) *Lamentations* 3:25: '**The Lord is good to those who wait for Him**'; and *Lamentations* 3:31: '**The LORD will not cast us off forever.**' That said, the Psalmist has no idea what God has in store for His people, and yet he is certain that there is more to come and that the story is not yet ended.

2B. Palestine during the Exile

1. A picture of the land during the exile

(a) Introduction

Now this Book tells us more than any other that we have of conditions in the land during the Exile. What is the picture? Five key texts tell the story and half lift the curtain on the scenario.

(b) *Lamentations* 1:18-19

The people have gone into captivity because Israël rebelled against the **Lord's** Word. The prophets had declared that this would happen, that the **Lord** would cast off His people. They were right. Now the people saw that the prophets were right. And yet, the Psalmist is convinced that the Covenant Faith of the **Lord** is not yet ended (*Lamentations* 3:22 quoted above).

(c) *Lamentations* 1:11

There is hardship in the land, and hunger, for the people groan in their hunger as they search for bread. Other conditions far from prosperous are also portrayed.

(d) *Lamentations* 5:6 & 5:18

But, it seems that some relief supplies come from Mesopotamia, despite the reluctance of the Israëlites to accept it. *Lamentations* 5:18 records that the Temple is in ruins and that Zion lies desolate.

(e) *Lamentations* 2:6 & 3:3

Here king and priest have been cut off from the land and the old festivals are no longer celebrated (*Lamentations* 2:06). But, (*Lamentations* 3:31), there is a living hope in the land. The cult may have ceased to function as it did of old in the days of the kings. But still religious hope lives on.

(f) *Lamentations* 3:58-3:66 & 4:21

What Hope even envisages the reversal of present conditions when the oppressing enemy will be destroyed and punished. Meanwhile (*Lamentations* 4:21), Judah's immediate neighbours and her traditional enemies scorn her, but they too, will be punished in time. (c.f.: *Obadiah*).

2. Devotion during the exile

So, the picture is of a city in ruins and desolation, which has lost her old cult. But some new forms of piety are taking over, the piety of fasting and Lamentation. The Book *Lamentations* itself is like a liturgy for such a service. Possibly someone led the worship by reciting these poems. *Zechariah* 7:03 tells us that fast had been observed in the fifth month at Bethel and that it was kept up after the exile. The men who came from the North to Jerusalem (*Jeremiah* 41:05) came with their heads shaved, their clothes rent, and their bodies gashed i.e: they came in mourning and Lamentation. *Jeremiah* 41:06 tells us that Ishmael went out to meet them weeping. Life could not be lived without the Faith, but the conditions of the exile called for a completely new form of cultic activity. We can imagine the people sitting amidst the ruins of the Temple performing their ritual of Lamentation, and perhaps using the very words that are in *Lamentations*. We know that these services took place in the Temple because the men from the North in *Jeremiah* 41 were coming to Jerusalem for the service, bringing their offerings with them.

3. Towards a Theology of the Exile.

Perhaps the real stigma of the exile to those left in the land was the fact that they could look back to the last decades of the monarchy and recall that Judah had really tried to reform under **King Josiah**. *Deuteronomy* had also promised that reform would bring blessing. Certainly after **Josiah** there had been some backsliding under Jehoiachim, but Judah had shown her willingness to reform. Why then should the **Lord** have out her off? Although *Lamentations* toys with the idea that God has

deserted His people, yet the answer given is that God is still there and that Zion is not yet dead – the people must wait patiently (*Lamentations* 3:25-3:27). Even sitting in silence and at prayer there is Hope – the Hope is implicit in the act of Praying (*Lamentations* 3:29). It is also prayer and the utterance of Lamentation that will show the **Lord** that some people still have Faith – the prayer presents a motive for the **Lord** to act and to intervene in His Justice (*Lamentations* 3:22, 5:19). The **Lord** is Just and Righteous and His ‘**steadfast Love never ceases**’ (*Lamentations* 3:22), so He must have the faithful at heart here is the ground for Hope. Even after Judgement the **Lord’s** Righteousness and consistency endure (*Lamentations* 3:31-3:33). There is no sense that God will pardon because that is His job. Repentance is demanded, and it is the only reasonable attitude of Mankind. But Man cannot utter His repentance and expect immediate results, he cannot demand that God should act. He can only wait patiently in meekness, hope, Faith (*Lamentations* 3:25 ff.).

4. A concluding note to the work on *Lamentations*

The Exilic age may have been a time of deprivation, despondency, and hardship; but it was also an age which brought forth many deep insights into the nature of God and Humankind’s relationship to Him. The emphasis on meekness and patient waiting in *Lamentations* was to be re-echoed in the prophecies of *Isaiah* 40-55 who drew for us the portraits of the gentle, meek and patient servant who suffers for man – a portrait that was to be drawn large in years to come by **Our Lord** in His earthly ministry. But to return to our consideration of the Exile, and this time to a consideration of the Babylonian exiles.

C. THE EXILES IN EGYPT & BABYLON

1C. The exiles abroad

1. A Note concerning the Egyptian exiles

From *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations* we have seen something of the conditions of life in Judah during the exile, and some of the problems of those who were left in the land. But we have now to think of Israël as a nation no longer confined to the land of Palestine, for there were Jews in Egypt and Babylon. The fate of the Egyptian Jews is really a subject for the student of post-exilic Judaism, and one which is dealt with in *Old Testament III*. Archaeologists have found at Elephantine on the Nile the remains of a Jewish settlement, but the date of its foundation is uncertain. It may have something to do with the flight of **Gedaliah’s** community and certainly **Jeremiah** preached in Egypt at the close of his life. *Jeremiah* 44 tells us a little of the Egyptian exiles but not very much. They were clearly disillusioned by the Fall of Jerusalem and regarded it as a punishment, not for apostasy from the **Lord**, but for the attempt to introduce new ideas into the religion of Israël. **King Josiah** had tried to reform, and it was his fault that all this had happened. “We were alright”, they said, “when we worshipped the Queen of Heaven before Josiah tried to purge the cult. We were wrong to give up our old superstitions.” So the Egyptian exiles returned with renewed vigour, despite **Jeremiah’s** preaching, to the pre-Reformation paganism and superstition. This is about all we know of the Egyptian exiles until we come to the time of the Elephantine community.

2. The conditions of the Babylonian exiles

But we do know quite a lot about the Babylon exiles. Although they were taken as prisoners to Babylon, it is misleading to think of them as prisoners of war herded together in prisoner of war camps. They were not confined to prisons, but were re-settled in Babylon as resident aliens, and were permitted to re-settle in houses of their own and to seek an employment. So it is that **Jeremiah** in his letter to the exiles urges them to settle peacefully, to build their houses, raise their

children, and to live a normal life. Doubtless at first they were settled as agriculturists or at least in the power strata of society. But with time many of them were to work their way up, and at the end of the exile we find **Nehemiah** occupying a position of authority in the Persian royal court. This is the situation that the *Daniel* stories also reflect.

3. The contrast between the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities

Nor were the Jews kept apart from each other. When **Jeremiah** wrote his letter, he must have written to a community that was living together. Likewise we shall see that the Jewish community was able to contact **Ezekiel** who lived in a home of his own at Tel-Abib on the river Chebar. This is the difference between the exile c.f.: Samaria in **722 B.C.**, and the exile of Jerusalem in **587 B.C.**. The Assyrians had integrated the northern deportees with the Assyrian community, and thus obliterated their coherence and individuality. The Babylonians seem to have permitted Jews to form settlements and live in their own communities. Thus it was that Judah was able to survive the exile where the Northern Israelites did not.

2C. Theological and Cultic dimensions

1. A New Theology

But the Babylonian exiles had their own problems. There was confusion amongst them as to what the **Lord** was doing with them. Many of them lost Hope and Faith. They had seen the collapse of the old Zion Theology and little hope was now held out for that outward form of the Davidic Covenant. There were plenty of prophets in Babylon who were willing to offer interpretations, but their interpretations were rather shallow and they seem to have clung to an idea of an early restoration, as we can gather from **Jeremiah's** letter to the exiles. Nonetheless, there must have been many homesick Jews who were willing to listen to them and so to find themselves in greater disillusionment when the early restoration did not materialise.

2. Religion and Cult

There were also problems about worship. Religion and cult were matters of ritual and for worship it was necessary to have hallowed ground which was ritually clean. In Babylon all was unclean, and so the question was asked, **“How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?”** (*Psalms* 137:04). It was natural that a new approach to religion should develop. Faith became a more personal and individual affair. There was a new emphasis in private prayer, a feature of which was to face Jerusalem (**Daniel**), and also on fasting as a private ritual of spiritual offering to replace the older sacrifices. The Law took on a new importance and great emphasis was laid on those laws which would be regarded as distinctive badges for Judaism, for there was a great mind to maintain national and religious individuality. Thus the food laws, the Sabbath, and circumcision became all important. Also, new places of assembly for the people were required. Clearly no temple would be erected in the land that was not the **Lord's** land, and so we find the emergence of the synagogue as a place of communal prayer and worship. The history of the early synagogue is uncertain, but most scholars agree that it must have grown out of the needs of the exile.

3. Yahwism becomes Judaism

Together with the new stress on Law and on individual religion, there arose a new consciousness for sin and need for Atonement. Now, it is not my purpose to trace all these new developments, for many of them became fixed in Israel's religion only after the exile. But I have briefly outlined them to show you that the Fall of Jerusalem had a radical effect on Israel's religion. This was the age in which what was to become Judaism was beginning to appear, and we begin to pass from the study of

the Israëlités and the Judaeans to the study of the Jews. So, although many of the old features of ancient Israël were to survive, much was to be changed, and that change is perhaps most strongly illustrated by a study of the Book of Ezekiel. In this prophet's Book we find all sorts of strange and new things which would never have been dreamt possible in the old order of things in pre-exilic Israël. Indeed, **Ezekiel**, like **Ezra** after him, has often been called 'the father of Judaism'.

UNIT 21: EZEKIEL

A. INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

1A. Literary characteristics, date, chronology, diversity, and allegory

1. The 'feel' of the Book: some literary characteristics

The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel is one of the most peculiar and the most puzzling at first sight of all the Books of the Old Testament. It is unlike the works of the prophets that went before it, and there is nothing really like it that comes after. The text is often difficult to translate, and in many places appears to be corrupt, as a glance at the bulk of the footnotes in **Kittel** or *Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia* will show you. You can see in the Book constant changes of style, and a glance at the superscription in *Ezekiel* 1:01-1:03 suitably summarises the chaos. In verse 1 the prophet is speaking in the first person, but in 1:2-3 he is referred to in the third person. *Ezekiel* 1:01 gives a date – the thirtieth year – but does not relate that date to any event in history, and so is meaningless. *Ezekiel* 1:02 gives a second date, a very precise one, '**the fifth year of the exile of Jehoiachin,**' i.e: **592 B.C..**

2. The date and Chronology of Ezekiel's Book

Unlike any other *Old Testament* Prophetic Book, *Ezekiel* contains many dates, and the Book is arranged in almost a chronological order. These dates you will find in *Ezekiel* 1:02, 8:01, 20:01, 24:01, 26:01, 29:01, 29:17, 30:20, 31:01, 32:01, 32:17, 33:21, 40:01. Only four of them are not in correct chronological sequence, but they show us that the Prophet's preaching covered the period **592-572 B.C..** The '**thirtieth year**' in the superscription may be the prophet's age, it may be the thirtieth year after some important historical events such as the accession of **King Jehoiakim**, or it could be anything (e.g: **King Josiah's** reforms of the year **622 B.C.**). Much time and energy has been wasted on this to date, but it probably refers to **Josiah's** reforms in **622 B.C.** Now, although **Ezekiel's** Book is well furnished with dates, it is to be asked whether these dates are not in fact editorial, and if they are, the question arises as to how long after the time of the prophet they have been inserted. This is a difficult question to answer, but before we look at the structure of the Book, let us first see the diversity of the material which it contains.

3. The diverse material of *Ezekiel*

(a) Visions

To begin with, there are many visions in the Book such as the inaugural vision of the **Lord's** Glory in *Ezekiel* 1, or the vision of the departure of the Glory from the Temple in *Ezekiel* 10, or the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones in *Ezekiel* 37.

(b) Sermons in Casuistic Legal style

There are also long sermons in repetitive quasi-legal style such as in Ezek. 18. The style here is that of Casuistic Law, **'If a Man does ... then ...'**

(c) Diversity in length

There is material as diverse as the brief verse from the 'song of the Sword' in *Ezekiel* 21:09 to the long sermons of bitter abuse which cruelly parody the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel as lurid harlots (*Ezekiel* 16 and 23).

(d) The 'acted sign'

Ezekiel is also the prophet of the acted sign, more so than any other prophet before or after him:

(1) 4:01 ff: The sign of the tile on which Zion is built; (2) At *Ezekiel* 5:01 ff.: **Ezekiel** shaves his beard like a captive; (3) At *Ezekiel* 4:04 ff. **Ezekiel** lies for long periods on his side symbolising the captivity of the people; (4) *Ezekiel* 12:03 ff. sees **Ezekiel** digging through the wall as a symbol of his flight from the ruined city; (5) At *Ezekiel* 12:17ff. **Ezekiel** eats bread and water for his food, i.e.: the food of the exiles; (6) At *Ezekiel* 21:11ff. **Ezekiel** dances menacingly with a sword as a sign that weapons of war are shortly to come against Jerusalem; whilst at *Ezekiel* 24:15ff. **Ezekiel** turns the death of his wife into a symbol of the carnage that is to overtake the city.

(e) Ezekiel prophesies the future accurately

Ezekiel is also the visionary par-excellence, the prophet of the Lord who sees the future and foretells events to the day. So, in *Ezekiel* 24:02 he foretells the Fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and in *Ezekiel* 32:21f. that prophecy is fulfilled.

(f) Divine transportation and seeing events in other lands

Ezekiel is a prophet of God given insight into other minds and into the things of God. He is a prophet who moves in the realm of Divine transportation and through the working of the Spirit can see what is going on in other lands. We shall discuss this presently.

(g) Prophetic literary forms: From prophetic oracle to Masal

Ezekiel's preaching varies from the conventional prophetic oracle to the highly elaborate oracles that recur frequently in his book (masal). I will say more about these in a moment.

(h) Ezekiel as a priest

But **Ezekiel** is not just a prophet. He is also a priest who has devoted the last chapter of his Book to the ritual and Priestly regulations for the new Temple.

4. Allegory in *Ezekiel*

(a) An orientation comment

Now with all this variety of material in his Book, it is obvious that a lot of questions are going to be asked about the prophet and the structure of his book, and one of the first questions that is usually asked is where and when did the prophet preach? Before we look at this, though, I need to say a further word about the use of allegory in *Ezekiel*.

(b) Allegory in 'Ezekiel'.

'Allegory' corresponds in all its detail to the reality that it tries to portray – cf. *Ezekiel* 24:13. (READ) Here, the cauldron represents Jerusalem, the contents her guilty inhabitants who are taken from it. The 'rust' is Judah's blood guilt which cries for vengeance (cf. Abel's blood). The fire

evaporates the broth, melts the cauldron (and of course burns the bones in the broth) – and so the rust goes with it. There are other allegories: The wild vine (*Ezekiel* 15); the two eagles (*Ezekiel* 17); the lioness and her whelps (*Ezekiel* 19:02); the uprooted vine (*Ezekiel* 19:10ff.); the rusty cauldron (*Ezekiel* 24:03f); the ship of Tyre (*Ezekiel* 27); the Egyptian crocodile (*Ezekiel* 29:02f., 32:02f.), the cedar tree (*Ezekiel* 31), and the orphan harlot (*Ezekiel* 16: 23).

2A. The Provenance/Setting of Ezekiel's Ministry

1. Different questions and suggestions to be considered

(a) The problem of provenance

So many different questions and suggestions have been raised and made about the location of the prophet in history and in geographical terms, that it is impossible to summarise them all here. The problem is that what seem to be editorial notes locate the prophet in Babylon, whilst the text shows more interest in Jerusalem and Judah. So some have argued that the editorial notes must be disregarded, and that he preached only in Jerusalem, while others have said he preached only in Babylon and was granted visions by the Lord of what was going on in Jerusalem. Some, for example **Oesterley and Robinson**, have suggested that the answer is a two-phase ministry, half in Jerusalem and half in Babylon, the second phase being after the deportation of **597** or **586 B.C.** when **Ezekiel** was himself taken away captive.

(b) Dating *Ezekiel*

But, scholars cannot agree over the date of the prophet. As varied suggestions as the reign of Manasseh in the **7th century B.C.** and the Maccabean age in the **third century B.C.** have been proposed. The answer to the problem really lies in the answer to the question, “How much of the Book is editorial?” but, as we shall see presently, this is an extremely difficult question to answer as well.

2. A Babylonian setting preferred.

It seems to me that the most reasonable solution to the problem is to accept that the prophet's ministry was entirely in Babylon. This is certainly the convinced opinion of the person who gave the geographical data in the Book, and I see no reason to disagree with that opinion. All arguments against it simply ignore the plain sense of the text. Nothing could be more explicit than the statement in *Ezekiel* 1 where **Ezekiel**, describing his inaugural vision, says, “**I was among the exiles by the River Chebar**”. Again the statement in *Ezekiel* 8;03 is perfectly clear that **Ezekiel** was taken to Jerusalem in visions only, and not that he was preaching in Jerusalem. In *Ezekiel* 6:01, when he is ordered to face towards the mountains of Israëel, it is quite clear that he could not have been in Jerusalem, otherwise he would have been living in the middle of those mountains.

3A. Ministry in the power of God's Spirit

1. The Visionary material of 'Ezekiel'

(a) Literal or literary 'visions'

If it is true that **Ezekiel** was preaching in Babylon, what are we to make of his visions? *Ezekiel* 8 contains a wealth of details about the pagan cults that were being practised in the temple, and it has been said that it is unlikely that the prophet could have related this vision without a first hand knowledge of what was going on. Now, there are several ways to answer this problem. Firstly, we know that the exiles kept in contact with Jerusalem by letter and messenger in this period, for **Jeremiah** sent his letter and messenger to the exiles, and got a reply. So, **Ezekiel** might have found out about what was happening in the Temple in this way. Secondly, **Ezekiel** shows himself as having Priestly interests, and it is probable that he was a priest taken into exile at the time of the first deportation. So he would have taken with him an intimate knowledge of the Temple in Jerusalem and its abuses. So, **Ezekiel**'s visions could have been visions of the horrors of idolatry in general which he used as a lesson to the exiles.

(b) The evidence of *Ezekiel* 9-10

Certainly Chapters 9 and 10 are more like panoramic visions than an intimate analysis of a historical situation. The vision of the Cherubim and the Glory of the **Lord** may be related to the ark and the Sanctuary in the Jerusalem Temple, but this vision requires only 'remembered' pictures.

(c) A deciding factor: *Ezekiel* 11 and Ezekiel's vision of Pelatiah

The real crux is Chapter 11 where Ezekiel sees in a vision the death of one of the apostate leaders in Jerusalem, Pelatiah. The prophet could have reconstructed idolatry from memory, but not an historical event. Either Ezekiel was told of what happened, or he saw it with his own eyes, or he saw it in a vision. The text claims that it was a vision. His visions of idolatry could have been perfectly real to him but would have been shaped by his memory of the Temple. No memory alone could therefore shape this vision, and it was not memory that shaped it.

2. The Ministry of the Spirit as the essential factor in Ezekiel's ministry

Considering that much of the material is of a visionary nature (cf. **Ezekiel**'s inaugural vision and the dry bones vision), and since Vision is an accepted Prophetic phenomenon resulting from the moving of the Holy Spirit – it is no surprise that it fits **Ezekiel**'s character to offer an interpretation of his Book, life, and ministry on these lines, and that it seems to make best sense of the text. But scholars have offered other arguments against setting *Ezekiel* in Babylon. For example, in *Ezekiel* 2:05 the prophet is sent **“to the people Israël”**, and in *Ezekiel* 5:05 we read that he is sent **“not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, but to the house of Israël”**. But these words would equally apply in the Exilic situation, for Israël was now in exile. Anyhow, in *Ezekiel* 3:11 it is explicitly stated that **Ezekiel** is commanded, **“Go, get you to the exiles your people”**. And it seems that **Ezekiel** obeyed, for certainly in the end the people of the exile became very proud of their prophet who taught them as he did, and they flocked to hear him as they spoke (cf. *Ezekiel* 35:30 (?) ff. – though perhaps they came for the wrong reasons – it is suggested in the text!) Now this is all very well, the critics would answer, but you have not yet tackled the basic problem – namely, how much of the Book is editorial, and, how far can we trust the editors?

B. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK EZEKIEL

1B. The Literary divisions of *Ezekiel* and their chronological dimension

1. The Literary Divisions of 'Ezekiel'

Here is a brief, very brief 'overview' of the literary structure of *Ezekiel*.

- Ezekiel* 1-5: Inaugural Vision.
4-24: Oracles, Symbolic signs and Allegories against Judah.
25-32: Oracles and allegories against foreign nations.

- 33: On the Fall of Jerusalem.
- 34-39: Visions of the New Israël and Oracles.
- 40-48: Visions of the New Temple and restored community

2. Questions of Introduction in the light of editorial chronology

The dates throughout the Book suggest that these sections are arranged mainly in chronological sequence, and in the scheme the news of the Fall of Jerusalem is seen as a turning point in the prophet's life. Up to **586 B.C.** he can preach and give warnings, but thereafter it is his duty to become a watchman and pastor to the house of Israël, and so his mind turns to preparing for the restoration of the nation. But, there are inner inconsistencies which suggest 'editorial' work – e.g: The image of the watchman belongs to the time of the city's fall, and yet it appears in *Ezekiel* 3:16-3:21. There are also 'doublets' in the Book; e.g: *Ezekiel* 18:21-18:25, 33:10-33:20, 43:01-43:12, 44:01-44:08, 10:08-10:17, and chapter 1, and chapters 3:16-3:21. But, 'doublets' don't necessarily show and editorial hand. Again, the passage on Gog and Magog shows many features of the Priestly style and, if one runs with the Documentary Hypothesis for the composition of the *Pentateuch*, may have been elaborated by a 'Priestly Editor.'

2B. The literary style of *Ezekiel* and its bearing

1. The literary style of *Ezekiel*

But, it is the style of the prophet as a whole that has caused many problems. The writer fluctuates between beautiful verse and appalling prose. Many scholars have regarded this as of little significance, but some have argued that Ezekiel could not have been responsible for the prose when his verse is so good. So, **Holscher**, one of the most blundering and so-called 'radical' of the old 'source critics' of *Ezekiel* excluded all the prose and some of the verse, and eventually claimed that it was only one seventh of the Book that derives from the prophet. But, the problems with this method is that it is far too mechanical and makes no allowance for the variation in style. After all, the lyricist may be an excellent poet, but he can be an appalling novel writer. Besides: this method of analysis depends solely on literary considerations and takes no account of the Theological teachings of the prose and verse, or of the style demanded by them. Nor does it allow for the consideration that the same kind of personality shows through between prose and verse. Other scholars have been equally radical, and it seems blundering. **C.C.Torrey**, for example, argued that the Book in its present form dates from the Third Century B.C., and that the **Prophet Ezekiel** lived in the **Seventh Century B.C..** But to attain these conclusions **Torrey** has to cut from the text whatever does not suit his thesis. This cannot be a proper method of approach. You can make a text mean anything you like if you juggle about with the words for long enough.

2. Concluding observations on the structure of *Ezekiel*

It must be admitted that as far as the Book *Ezekiel* is concerned, we have not yet reached a position where we can say with satisfaction that 'this is the structure, that is editorial, and that is original'. All we can do for the moment is to accept that the editor has not lead us too far astray, but be prepared for the occasional editor evidence. So we must accept, pending further research, that **Ezekiel** was a prophet whose ministry was in Babylon, and that his contacts with Judah were either by vision as the text says, or by some other means which we can clearly define no longer. The book itself is to be regarded as a unity, certainly edited by the disciples, but it is no longer possible to determine what is editorial and what is not, if any work is editorial.

C. EZEKIEL'S TEACHING

1C. Ezekiel's Call and the Theology of Jerusalem

1. *Ezekiel 1*: 'Ezekiel's 'Call Vision'

The account of the inaugural vision sets the tenor for the whole of the rest of **Ezekiel's** Book. In *Ezekiel 1* we see a vision of the Majesty of God which is painted in a symbolism that reflects a mixture of the Jerusalem Temple worship of **The Lord** and Mesopotamian art and Theology. We see the **LORD** arrive, as in the New Year Festival (if you run with **Sigmund Mowinckel** on that) enthroned upon His Ark Chariot and conveyed by His Cherubim. The Cherubim are figures associated with the angels who are in the nearest Presence of God, and who guard and support his throne and throne room. In their context here in *Ezekiel* are described in a manner analogous to Babylonian figures and Palestinian forms, all associated with religion. The complex vision of wheels within wheels, and eyes within these wheels, may, as **Zimmerli** argues, reflect Palestinian chariotry, or the means of conveying the Ark, but in the picture language of this Vision, they convey something of the Indescribable Majesty and Glory of **The Lord**.

2. A prophetic 'cartoon strip': The story of the Glory

Now, the **Lord's** Glory is His bright, shining Presence which is experienced in Theophany, and which, according to the Jerusalem Temple cult tradition, dwells bodily in the Sanctuary of the Temple. Thus, before the Fall of Jerusalem, **Ezekiel** sees that same Glory depart from the Temple (*Ezekiel 10*), and it is only in his vision of the future Temple that he sees that Glory return (*Ezekiel 43:01 ff.*). **Ezekiel** is a priest steeped in cultic ideas. So his visions, like this one, are full of symbolism and not, as some suggest, signs of madness. The Call Vision gives to him such a sense of the **Lord's** Holiness and Otherness that he falls on his face and has to be commanded to stand and receive his message (*Ezekiel 2:01*). So it is natural that his message should be that Israel as a nation is a nation of rebels (*Ezekiel 2:03*) and that his words should be of lamentation, mourning, and woe (*Ezekiel 2:10*). Yet his message is not entirely woe – there is a strong element of Hope in his teaching.

3. The Theology of Jerusalem as a fallen orphan through harlotry

In *Ezekiel* we have the allegory of Jerusalem as the orphan and harlot. The **Lord** showed to her kindness and what thanks did He get? None, for the city became an harlot, and left the one who had helped her. So, Jerusalem's sin is worse than that of Sodom (*Ezekiel 16:44f*). Jerusalem should not forget that her mother was a Hittite, people from the nations whom she scorns (*Ezekiel 16:03, 16:45*). The **Lord** saw her weltering in her blood and gave her life (*Ezekiel 16:06*). And yet she turned to harlotry, so the **Lord** will punish her with the sword until His fury is satisfied (*Ezekiel 16:39 ff.*). What **Ezekiel** is trying to say to the exiles here is that Jerusalem's infidelity has so defiled the sanctuary that punishment is inevitable and the exiles must not pin their hopes on the continuance of the holy city. Her sins were so terrible that the **Lord** had to destroy her – there was no alternative (*Ezekiel 8:18, 9:10*). They could not be saved by the Law (*Ezekiel 20:25f*), not even if such great men of Faith as **Daniel/Dan'el**, **Noah**, and **Job** were in the city would the city be spared (*Ezekiel 14:12*). Indeed, they will be brought out of their city, and subjected again to the Judgement of the wilderness (*Ezekiel 20:33 ff, Hosea*). Only with the sharp edge of the sword will the **Lord's** wrath be satisfied (*Ezekiel 21:15-21:17*). But, even the exiles are not pure for they turn to their idols and take them into their hearts (*Ezekiel 14:01 ff*). But their sin is more than just idolatry, it is a blasphemous denial that the **Lord** acts at all. Many of the exiles were a people disillusioned who had given up hope of the **Lord** acting, and had turned to enquire of other gods.

4. The Lord's intentions of exile and restoration

This situation cannot be tolerated and the exiles too will be punished, and the Lord will show that He acts. But His anger is not only against Israēl, for the nations round about gloat over the fall of Jerusalem, and they too will be punished (*Ezekiel* 25:03 ff., 25:08 ff., 25:12 ff.). The **Lord** is not impotent – He will act! But the **Lord's** action is not just to destroy. The **Lord's** action is to purify and bring to life. And so we find the visions of the restoration of Israēl and of a golden age of the future (*Ezekiel* 36:08), and the dead nation in the valley of dry bones will be brought back to life (*Ezekiel* 37). In the end the new king will be established in Zion, (*Ezekiel* 40-48). This in outline is the message of *Ezekiel*, and of course, some of it comes before the second deportation, and some of it after. It is not right to see the prophet's turning to the future taking place after the Fall of Jerusalem and not before. But **Ezekiel's** teaching is much more important for some of its details than for its broad outline, and to these we shall now turn.

2C. The Doctrine of Individual Retribution

1. The Pre-Exilic Doctrinal position

Until the time of the exile, it was standard doctrine in Israēl that the sins of the fathers could be visited on their children. A man was not always responsible for the evil that befell him. If his father had sinned, then he could have been punished for that sin. The prime example of this is in *Joshua* 7 in the account of the sin of **Achan**. Although it was **Achan** who sinned, his family was held responsible corporately with him for that sin and so had to bear the penalty too, and in the case of **Achan** and his family it was the death penalty.

2. The Second Law of the Decalogue

The notion of corporate responsibility for sin is written into the second Law of the Decalogue where we read that the **Lord** visits the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Of course, the principle works in reverse, for the good deeds of the fathers can accumulate blessings for the children after them. The first recorded attempt to change this law is found in *Deuteronomy* 24:16, **“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall die in his own sin”**. This is the first known statement of individual responsibility, but it only applies to the Law Court, and *Deuteronomy* still recognises that corporate responsibility is the principle of God's activity in Judgement, for *Deuteronomy* preserves the Old statement in the second law of the Ten Commandments, known more usually to scholarship as ‘The Decalogue’ (*Deuteronomy* 5).

3. The development of the doctrine in the exilic period

Now, when we come to the period of the exile we find that a completely new situation has arisen. The old prophets could declare that Israēl as a corporate unit was to be punished for her sins – but now Israēl was no longer a corporate unit – Israēl was a scattered people. Furthermore, in exile, children were being born and brought up who had no first hand experience of their fatherland and could feel no responsibility for the sins of their fathers the reign of Jehoiakim or earlier. They had a right to ask why they should be held captive in Babylon for sins that they had not committed.

4. The message of *Ezekiel* 18.

(a) Each person, their sin, repentance, and its consequences

In this situation, **Ezekiel** had something to say. We find this great statement of individual responsibility in *Ezekiel* 18. Here **Ezekiel** draws a picture of three generations of men – a righteous father, a sinful son, and a righteous grandson – and he argues that righteousness and wickedness are

not transferable from one generation to another. Each man is rewarded or punished according to his own conduct. In *Ezekiel* 18, then, there are four independent theses found in five statements: (1) *Ezekiel* 18:05-18:09: Each man receives his own reward; (2) *Ezekiel* 18:14-18:17: Ditto; (3) *Ezekiel* 18:10-18:13: Each man receives his own punishment; (4) *Ezekiel* 18:21-18:23: A past life of sin may be cancelled by a present repentance; and (5) *Ezekiel* 18:24: A past life of fruitfulness may be cancelled by present sin.

(b) A brief evaluation

Now, it is easy to pick holes if we want to, which I don't, in *Ezekiel's* theses. For example, it is true that children suffer the consequence of their father's iniquities (of the child of the broken home). But, it is also true in a sense that a man cannot be held responsible for the sins of his fathers, no matter how he suffers the consequences of those sins. Anyhow, in the situation **Ezekiel's** words must have brought an encouragement and strength to the exiles, for now they could set themselves to the task of working out their own destiny – and indeed, this is precisely what **Ezekiel** advises them to do, c.f.. *Ezekiel* 3:17-3:21, 14:12-14:23, 18:01-18:32, 33:01-33:20.

5. Summary and perspective

Despite **Ezekiel's** teaching on individual responsibility, he is not blind to the fact that individual children suffer for their parent's sins – how could he be when his whole religious tradition had told him so? Thus, like the prophets of old he could still declare that the nation as a whole was suffering corporately for its iniquities. There are therefore two aspects to Ezekiel's teachings – but of course there are two aspects to this problem. Ezekiel was not the first to tussle with this problem and you will find out in PICC Courses B.A./B.D./B.MIN./B.TH. *Old Testament III/Judaism III* and B.A./B.D./B.MIN./B.TH. *Old Testament Wisdom Literature* that the Wisdom writers constantly struggled with it – especially in the *Book of Job*.

3C. Ezekiel's Eschatology

1. Introduction

It is not easy to talk about the prophet's eschatology as if it were a unified phenomenon, for there seem to be three phases to the prophet's ministry, and in each his mind was on different things.

2. Ezekiel's Ministry to the time of the Fall of Jerusalem (587/6 B.C.)

In the first period, which lasts until the fall of Jerusalem in **587/6 B.C.**, **Ezekiel** is mainly concerned to free the exiles from their dependence on Zion Theology. He sees that the exiles must learn to adapt to new conditions, and so he attacks Jerusalem Theology by declaring that the city is not inviolable, and that soon it will fall. For the exiles to be free to cultivate their own faith they must be rid of all notions of returning to Zion soon. So **Ezekiel's** teaching at this time is of Judgement and disaster. His sayings and symbolic acts, especially in *Ezekiel* chapters 4-12, 16-17, 19 and 20-24 are all directed to this end, and here there is little message of hope for the future.

3. Ezekiel's ministry post 586 B.C.

But, after the fall of the city the whole tenor of his teaching changes. **Ezekiel** knew he had now become a watchman whose duty it was to watch over and care for the pastoral needs of the people. So in this period we find a note of conditional optimism or conditional encouragement in his words. Now he teaches salvation for the faithful and death for the wicked. He attacks the old rulers of Judah who were shepherds that fed themselves and cared nothing for their flock (*Ezekiel* 34), but he

exhorts the exiles to repent and return to life with the Lord (*Ezekiel* 33:01-33:20). But **Ezekiel** says little about the nature of that life, only holding out the hope and encouragement of it. Meantime he is sure in his mind that the nations which gloat over Jerusalem's fall will be severely punished.

4. The last phase of Ezekiel's ministry.

Finally, we enter a different phase of the prophet's ministry and teaching, and we find a very different message. This phase is the last, but it is difficult to date exactly. **Ezekiel** now holds out a picture of the coming era of Salvation, of a new golden age. A re-united kingdom of Israel will flourish in Palestine (*Ezekiel* 36-37), and the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem with a new cultus (*Ezekiel* 40-48). The **Lord** will return to His Temple, and His Glory will abide there forever. Meanwhile a catastrophe will overtake those who still threaten Jerusalem (*Ezekiel* 38-39). As **Jeremiah** (*Jeremiah* 31) had foreseen a new covenant in man's hearts, so **Ezekiel** foretells of a new heart in man and the gift of God's Spirit to enable him to live according to God's Will (*Ezekiel* 36:26ff).

5. Apocalyptic features of Ezekiel's material

Some of these visions of the future show features that bring them into the realm of Apocalyptic. This is again a subject addressed in ICPICJC 103 B.A./B.D./B.MIN./B.TH. *Old Testament III/Judaism III*, but briefly, apocalyptic gives a picture of the end using imagery inspired by the Spirit. Often the pictures seem weird at first sight (e.g. *Daniel* and *Revelation*), but they are an inspired poetic creative writing of a 'myth' of the end, just as Genesis 1-3 is an inspired writing of the 'myth' of the beginning. This other worldly place is approached only in the last chapters of *Ezekiel* – in the Gog and Magog vision (*Ezekiel* 38-39) and in some of the elaborations of the visions of the New Temple in *Ezekiel* 40-48. The Gog of Magog vision tries to portray an oppressing tyrant in the mythical person of Gog who is slain in battle, a battle from which Israel emerges victorious. Gog is the personification of evil and of all the powers of chaos that fight against the **Lord** for Israel's destruction. Now, once we get into the realm of Apocalyptic it becomes more and more difficult to analyse what the prophet thought of the Eschaton as so much of the symbolism is obscure but you will be dealing with this in *Old Testament III* in more detail.

6. A pervasion by Zion Theology

What is particularly interesting about **Ezekiel's** vision of the future is that it is centred on Zion. Despite the prophet's earlier denigration of Zion Theology, we have in *Ezekiel* 40-48 a return to that very Theology, and for that reason many commentators have thought that these chapters could not have come from Ezekiel. But it is equally possible that the prophet only attacked the Zion Theology in the first place because at the time it was the right thing to do, and the Theology itself had become corrupted. Also, **Ezekiel's** vision is not of a present inviolable Zion but of a future one.

(N.B: The 'dry bones' vision of *Ezekiel* 37 is NOT a text about the resurrection of the dead, it is about the resurrection of a nation. It will require a Divine miracle to bring this about and bring the nation back to life. Only the **Lord** can perform that miracle.)

D. EZEKIEL 40 – 48

1D. The foci of Ezekiel 40-48: Worship and Zion

1. The new Temple of the new Zion at the centre of the earth

The picture in these chapters is of a community centred on worship. The focal point of the new Zion is a new temple which is even more elaborate than the old one was. Zion now stands at the centre of the earth, and is the seat of world domination. But the cult is not just the old cult restored – it is the old cult purged.

2. The Priests and Levites

The Levites are no longer to be priests because of their former idolatry (*Ezekiel* 44:08) and they are relegated to the status of Temple servants. The cultic priests instead are to be the Zadokites, who alone remain faithful to the **Lord**.

3. The leadership of the community

The new community is to be a compact social group living around the Temple, but their leader is not to be their king – he is to be a prince. Perhaps we can see how the beginning of a process which culminated after the exile in the election of the priesthood to the leadership of the community. Certainly there is an implicit rejection of the use of the term ‘melek’ (‘King’) c.f.: *Ezekiel* 45:09-45:17. This is another point at which chapters 40-48 seem to stand distinctive to the rest of *Ezekiel*, for *Ezekiel* 36:23-36:24 gives the hope that the future community will be lead by the Davidic king.

4. The zones of purity in the Temple

A new feature of the new temple is to be the zones of purity, e.g: the laity are to be excluded from the central court and only the Zadokites can enter the sanctuary whilst the uncircumcised and the foreigner is not to be allowed in the Temple percents at all. (This measure was later to be adopted in Herod’s temple – c.f.: *Ezekiel* 44).

5. Rites and Propriety

Of course, many of the old laws about weights and measures etc. are here inserted. But, there is a new emphasis on proper ritual, proper rites of mourning, and proper rites for the offering of sacrifices etc. (*Ezekiel* 45-46). Amongst these new rites we find a new emphasis on the element of atonement for sin – cf. the long prescription for keeping the Feast of the Atonement in *Ezekiel* 43:18-43:27. This is the first mention of this feast in the *Old Testament* outside the so called ‘P’ passage of *Leviticus* 25:27-23:52 and *Numbers* 29:01-29:11. This Day of Atonement is for the cleansing of the altar, but there is a second Day of Atonement for sin (*Ezekiel* 45:18-45:20).

6. The land

Finally, these chapters end with an account of the redistribution of the land. The scheme is ideal and bears no relation to history to date. It envisages the borders of Israel restored in the North and South to their Solomonic limits, but the western border is to be the Mediterranean and the eastern border the Jordan. Israel now held the coastal plain and always had had tribes across the Jordan – so the scheme is highly idealistic.

2D. A Utopian Vision and Conclusion

1. An Idealistic Utopian Vision

Ezekiel’s vision is of an earthly Zionist’s utopia and it has never yet come into being. **Zadok** did not become the high priest after the exile, the temple was never built according to *Ezekiel’s*

specifications, and the land was never redistributed as **Ezekiel** would have wished. But there must have been many in Exile who looked to *Ezekiel's* picture and were encouraged and filled with hope for their future mission.

2. Summary and Conclusion

We have been able to cast our eyes only briefly over *Ezekiel*. We have seen that it is a strange amalgam of oracles of woe and oracles of hope, of laws, visions and Wisdom sayings, of allegories and acted symbols, of anti-Zionism and pro-Zionism, of straight sermon and 'different' apocalyptic. It may be that one inspired man compiled this Book, or it may be that it derives from a school of disciples. But, whatever its origin, it certainly represents the attempt of the teacher, prophet, and priest to cope with the bitter problems that faced a disillusioned community living far from their ancestral home. Its effects were not negligible even though its scheme for the future was never operative, for after the return from Babylon, things were never to be the same again.

DEUTERO – ISAIAH: A NOTE

Isaiah 40-55 is a text treated in its own right: c.f.: ICPICCJC B.A./B.D./B.TH./B.MIN 304 *Hebrew III: Isaiah 49-53* and 305 *Hebrew IV: Isaiah 40-45*,; and teaching materials related to it in addition to the normal textual exegesis are to be found there.

UNIT 22: THE EXILIC DEUTERONOMISTS & A FINAL COMMENT

A. THE DEUTERONOMIST HISTORIANS

1A MARTIN NOTH: *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Schule* and its critique

1. Other Exilic Works

Apart from *Lamentations*, *Ezekiel*, and parts of *Jeremiah*; there were other works that come from the time of the Exile, especially *Deutero-Isaiah*. These I deal with in separate lectures – but there is a yet further ‘school’ that was active in the exile – the exilic Deuteronomists.

2. The conclusion of the ‘D’ history as key to its provenance

The ‘D’ history ends with the last chapter of the Book of Kings, and even if there was a first edition of that Book before the exile, at least the final edition could not have been completed before the last named event – the release of Jehoiachin from prison in his thirty seventh year of exile i.e. in **561 B.C.** (*II Kings* 25:27ff). Furthermore the ‘D’ history shows no knowledge of the return from exile after **540 B.C.**, so we must assume that the Deuteronomist was writing between the years **560** and **540 B.C.**.

3. MARTIN NOTH’s *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*

Now, in his *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, **Noth** argues that the ‘D’ historian was writing for a disillusioned people and was trying to explain to them why the catastrophes of **597 B.C.** and **587/6 B.C.** had overtaken them. The whole of the ‘D’ history, he says, is explanation of past history. Central to that explanation is the Law. At the beginning of the history the principal of judgement is explained in *Deuteronomy* 4:25-4:27 – that disobedience brings curse – and the same principle is repeated after the completion of the conquest under **Joshua** (*Joshua* 23:16). Constantly throughout history the **LORD** warned Israel by every prophet and seer (*II Kings* 17:13) of the consequences of her disobedience and constantly called Israel back to her Law – but to no avail (*I Samuel* 12:14, 12:25, *I Kings* 9:06, *II Kings* 17:23, 21:14 f). Israel rejected the Law and ignored the warnings of the prophets – so now the disaster had overtaken them as foretold. So, according to **Noth**, the ‘D’ Historian is explaining through this history that he wrote what happened to bring about the situation of the exile, and why. It is a particularly bleak picture. God had judged, and with vehemence.

4. A critique of NOTH’s Thesis: H.W. WOLFF and the Deuteronomist Kerygma

Now not all scholars are happy with **Noth**’s thesis. **Noth** denies that the ‘D’ history holds out any hope for the future – it is merely an explanation of the past. But it seems unlikely that any school would have gone to such lengths to write this history without some hope that it would do its readers good in the future. **586 B.C.** was not the great FINITUM EST of Israel and of the **LORD**’s people. The element of Hope in the ‘D’ history has been studied particularly by **H.W. Wolff** who notes that the Deuteronomist historian does have a Kerygma. He does not envisage a future golden age that will come irrespective of circumstances, but he does hold out a hope which is conditional. Israel must turn to the **LORD** () and then He will have compassion on her and restore her. The Law is still central despite the catastrophe. Israel must return to the Covenant and renew that Covenant with the **LORD**. There is nothing in the ‘D’ history to suggest that that Covenant has been irrevocably terminated – indeed the ‘D’ history hails back to that Covenant. But, the responsibility lies with Israel, she must turn and obey. The word ‘turn’ () is a key word in this Kerygma (*I*

Samuel 7:03, *I Kings* 8:33-8:35, *II Kings* 17:13, *II Kings* 23:25). The possibility of forgiveness revives if Israël returns to the LORD, (*Deuteronomy* 4:29-4:31, 30:01-32:06, *I Kings* 8:46-8:50). Here is a clear word of hope for the future if Israël turns again to the Covenant. Furthermore, the ‘D’ history does not end with calamity. It ends with the note of Jehoiachim’s rehabilitation. Now, this last passage is also a passage of hope, for it goes beyond the disaster and throws long glimmerings of light which are beginning to shine – and what could be a better indication of hope for the future. The Davidic king has been released and rehabilitated – and certainly this is a hopeful sign.

5. Summary

So, in the exile, apart from the prophets, the Deuteronomists were preaching a Kerygma of Encouragement and Hope – and central to that hope is the old theme of the Law and its curse. It was perhaps the ‘Deuteronomists’ emphasis on the Law that was to form the basis for the legalism of Judaism in the post exilic era.

2A. The Jeremianic Prose Traditions: The Thesis of Ernest W. Nicholson

1. Introduction: NICHOLSON’s THESIS and the prose tradition

(a) Rejection of the prophetic word brings curse

At this stage I want to return to the Book of Jeremiah and specifically to the Jeremianic prose and the work of **E.W. Nicholson**. Now we saw earlier that the Jeremianic prose is Deuteronomistic, and that it also has a Kerygma which is similar to that of the ‘D’ history. We saw that *Jeremiah* 26 and 36 both deal with the rejection of the teachings of the prophets – or the rejection of the Word of God as given through the prophets who are calling Israël back to the Covenant Law. And, we saw that the curse of the Law was what would result from the rejection of the prophetic word. But there is more to the Deuteronomistic message than just the curse of the Law. Certainly the curse of the Law is a central theme to the understanding of the Jeremianic prose. (READ: *Jeremiah* 9:12-9:18, 16:10-16:13, 22:08-22:09).

(b) Repentance to the Lord

Now, the same Kerygma of Hope is present in the Jeremianic prose as was found in the ‘D’ history. The writer calls to Israël to ‘turn/repent’ () and to obey the Law, and hence will come Israël’s Salvation. (READ: *Jeremiah* 18:07-18:10, 24:04-24:07, 29:10-29:14).

2. NICHOLSON’s THESIS vis-à-vis the prose tradition.

However, in Jeremiah’s prose we see an advance on the ‘D’ history, for although it is still Israël’s ‘turning’ which will secure forgiveness and Restoration, such ‘turning’ is now assured by the **Lord** Himself who takes the initiative so that Israël will return (Read: *Jeremiah* 24:07). So the conditional ‘if you turn’ has now receded and the element of promise has come to the forefront of the Kerygma. This element of Promise is then developed more fully in another prose passage – one of the most important in Jeremiah – the passage about the ‘New Covenant’ in *Jeremiah* 31:31-34. Now, it may be that the prophet himself did proclaim a New Covenant but the passage is again in Deuteronomic prose style. The old order of Israël’s religion had been based on Covenant, and so will be the new order to come. but there will be a difference, for the **Lord** Himself will take the initiative and will put the Law of the Covenant in men’s hearts so that they will know God. The conditional has left the Kerygma – it is now declarations of future conditions (cf. *Deuteronomy* 30:06) which give the same message in different terms. (READ: *Deuteronomy* 30:06 ff). Another passage in a similar vein is *Jeremiah* 32:36-32:41 (READ).

3. The theme of 'Hope' in the Jeremianic Prose

Now these passages in the Jeremianic prose which embody expectations for Israël's future are for the most part dominated by a promise of the return from exile and restoration of the land (*Jeremiah* 18:07-18:08, 24:04-24:07, 29:10-29:14, 32:06-32:07, 32:43-32:44). It is this hope for return that is the dominant characteristic of the Jeremianic prose, and it is a marked element in the 'Book of Consolation' (*Jeremiah* 30:02-30:03, 31:28) and there is a hint that the national community is to be led by a Davidic king (*Jeremiah* 30:08-30:09). This hope for a restored **King David**, is of course, in accord with the hope expressed at the end of the 'D' history in the narration of the rehabilitation of **King Jehoiachin** (cf. also *Jeremiah* 33:14-33:16 where the reactivation of the promises to **David** in the Davidic Covenant is suggested.)

4. The provenance and identity of the Deuteronomists

Now the question arises, "Where were the Deuteronomists working?" For whom were they writing? Were they in the land of Judah or in the land of Babylon? Whatever, they show a great deal of concern with the question of a return from exile. This concern is of course found in the Book of Deuteronomy, in the 'D' History, and in the Jeremianic prose. (READ: Deuteronomy 30:01-30:06.) If such passages are a 'Word of Hope' then they could hardly have been addressed to those in Judah, for they were not concerned about the hope of a return to the land. This was a Babylonian problem and it seems that the Deuteronomists were offering encouragement to the exiles in Babylon by saying that they shall return to the land when they return to the Law.

5. Concluding remarks vis-à-vis NICHOLSON's Thesis

In these lectures I have only given a brief sketch of what **Nicholson's** book contains. He deals with other subjects also, such as **Jeremiah** and the false prophets and he sees false prophecy as a great problem for the exiles. We touched on this topic briefly in the Jeremiah lectures. Read **Nicholson's** book. It will teach you a lot about *Jeremiah*, the Deuteronomists, and, most important of all, about methods of interpretation in Biblical Renewal.

B. A FINAL WORD TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN OLD TESTAMENT II

1B. A summary and some closing questions

1. An overview of Units 1-25 in a sentence

In the past two and a half terms we have worked out many subjects: Psalms and Cult, Kingship, Prophecy, Covenant Faith, Deuteronomism, Eschatology, Exilic Theology, and many other themes. It may have seemed to you at times that there has been little coherence between these subjects and I will leave you with these thoughts in question form.

2. Some closing questions

So: here are some closing questions that you can take with you as you continue your Christian pilgrimage and your study. (1) What do you think is the unifying principle of Old Testament Faith? Is it Covenant? Is it the Spirit of Inspiration? Is it a Theology? Is it a cultic practice? What is it? (2) Was it because of a unifying principle that Israël survived the catastrophe of the Exile, and grew into Judaism, – the Judaism which set the stage for the advent of Our Lord? (3) If it was the unifying principle – was that principle not a principle at all, but rather the work of the Person of God Himself?
