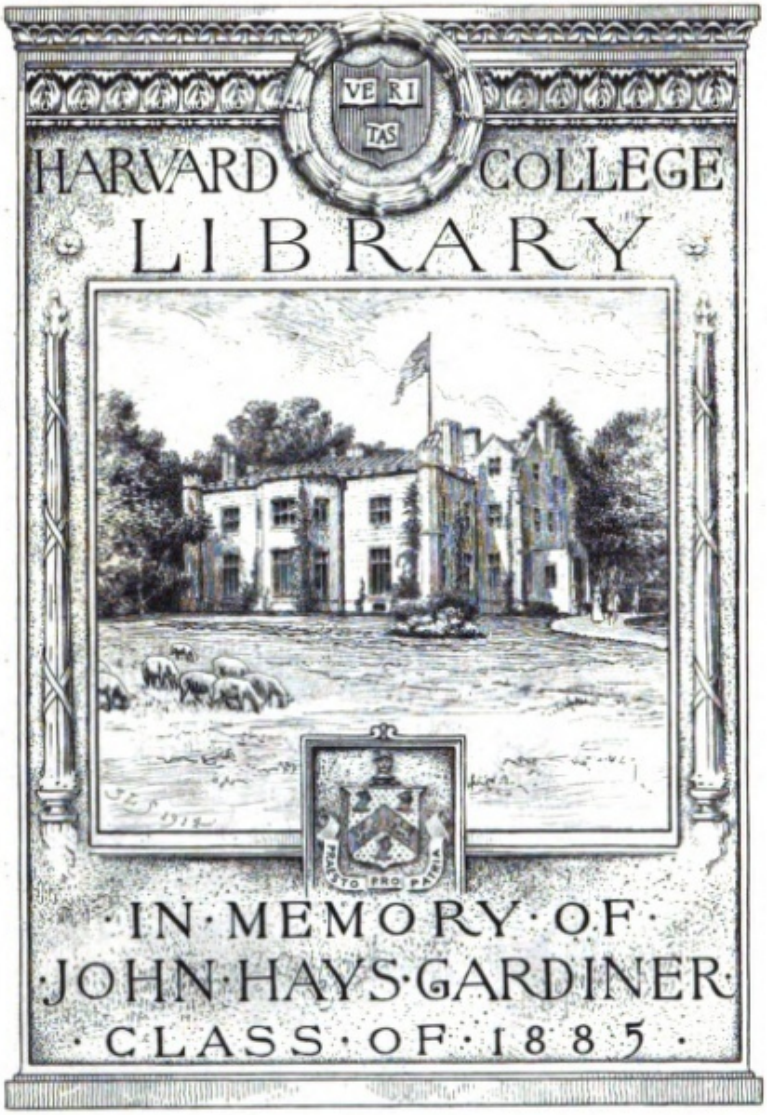
Digitized by Google
Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Bi 759.11



Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE GREAT EPIC OF ISRAEL

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE GREAT EPIC OF ISRAEL

THE WEB OF MYTH, LEGEND, HISTORY, LAW, ORACLE, WISDOM AND POETRY OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS

BY

AMOS KIDDER FISKE, A.M.

AUTHOR OF "THE MYTHS OF ISRAEL," "MIDNIGHT TALKS AT THE CLUB," "BEYOND THE BOURN," ETC., ETC.

New York
STURGIS & WALTON COMPANY
1911

All rights reserved

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Harvard College Library
Bequest of
John Hone Sturgis
1910

Copyright 1911
By STURGIS & WALTON COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped. Published February, 1911

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

TO HIS DEVOTED WIFE

CAROLINE CHILD FISKE

THE AUTHOR DEDICATES THIS VOLUME

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PREFACE

IT is the purpose of this volume to encourage a revival of the reading or study of the ancient Scriptures of the Jews, not by scholars or those who make a professional use of them, but by the people at large. To this generation they have as a whole become unattractive and fallen into neglect, except for a conventional and enforced respect, on account of the false light in which they have been left for so many centuries. The present object is to put them in their true light and give them a new interest for the modern man.

The common intelligence will no longer accept the dogma that they are divine revelation, except as divine revelation is to be traced in all human development; or that they are the specially inspired word of God and contain in all parts infallible truth, to be unquestioningly accepted, for the common intelligence has come to know better. It has been taught to discriminate and to apply reason, and its liberty is not to be excluded from this one field. All truth may be accounted divine, all great thoughts and noble sentiments may be regarded as inspired, but no more in this literature than in others, ancient and modern. The

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

voice of God did not vociferate in one small country for a few centuries and then fall into silence. The spirit of God did not inform men in that one place and time and then withdraw itself to the remote bounds of the universe. It was and is and will be from everlasting to everlasting and forever the same, in all time and place, and it pervades all life.

The author pretends to no new discovery. What he has to say is derived from the researches of many scholars who have wrought with growing assiduity and with increasing light during the greater part of the past century. The results are known to teachers and preachers, who still shrink from teaching and preaching the truth freely and candidly, as some at least of them know it to be. Current theology and divinity are too much under the duress of old dogma to speak out. The lore of scholars is open to those who choose to study it, but for the most part it is too detailed, too argumentative, too heavy or too dry, for the common reader, and it works slowly through a reluctant clergy and an unlearned laity.

The present writer is under no bonds. He has no fear or shrinking. He loves the truth and desires to spread it abroad, knowing that only good can come of the light, while darkness harbors much that is evil. It is not originality that he professes, but independence, not special ability, but the dower of common sense and a capacity

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

for setting forth clearly what he learns and thinks, to be "understanded of the people." It is from interest that he has studied this subject, and he writes in the hope of exciting interest in others and contributing to the spread of knowledge of the truth as it is revealed through human experience. He does not encumber his pages by citing authorities or dealing with controversy, having only room to give results as sifted and judged by himself. But the fruits of long and varied research and all the references that may be desired, to a recent date, are stored in the "Encyclopædia Biblica," to which all are directed for details, reasons and conclusions. Comparatively little has been added since its publication.

Nothing could be farther from the writer's wish than to impair or undermine the foundations of religious faith. To be abiding these must be of truth and they must rest upon knowledge and reason, as they are revealed to man in his progress onward and upward. Unlike material piling they must be kept sound not by being buried in darkness and dampness, but by being exposed to light and air. Judaism, like other religions, consecrated its Scriptures. Christianity borrowed from both Judaism and heathenism in framing its dogmas, and it accepted the consecration of the Jewish Scriptures for the sake of these. But Judaism has advanced, and Christianity has advanced, in spite of clinging to outworn dogmas

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and the consecration of councils in dark ages. The church still needs to advance and to preserve all that is sacred in its literature; but illumination is the test of sanctity. No mass bound up in past ages is all sacred nor can it contain all that is sacred. It should be tried and that which is good should be held fast.

The consecrated writings of the Jews are here treated as an epic of the people of Israel in their great days. Such in effect they really are, and they are so presented in the order of their development for better understanding and greater interest. The chief claim to originality in this work lies in so presenting them. The author hopes it will serve its desired end of making them more read, better understood and more profitable to the soul of man.

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

PAGE

I

THE PECULIAR PEOPLE 3

II

LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAEL 16

III

THE MAKING OF THE EPIC 29

IV

THE MYTHS OF ISRAEL 44

V

HEROIC AND HISTORIC LEGENDS 74

VI

DAVID AND SOLOMON 98

VII

THEOCRATIC ACCOUNT OF THE TWO KINGDOMS 120

VIII

PROPHETS OF THE KINGDOMS 158

IX

PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND AFTER 192

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

PAGE

X

THE JEWISH LAW 229

XI

THE PRIESTLY HISTORY 253

XII

ILLUSTRATIVE TALES, RUTH, JONAH, ESTHER 278

XIII

LYRICS, SONGS AND HYMNS 287

XIV

WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY 305

XV

THE BOOK OF JOB 319

XVI

THE BOOK OF DANIEL 339

XVII

THE GREAT EPIC IN REVIEW 356

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE GREAT EPIC OF ISRAEL

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE GREAT EPIC OF ISRAEL

I

THE PECULIAR PEOPLE

THE most remarkable thing in what we call ancient history is the peculiar intellectual, moral and religious development of a small people who occupied a narrow territory, shut in from the Mediterranean Sea, on the pathway between the great empire of the Tigris and the Euphrates and that of the Nile. Compared with those empires the nation formed by this people was not ancient, and in national resources and power it was utterly insignificant. The land which it acquired by conquest and held with difficulty had long before been overrun by the armies of Babylonia and Egypt, and held in possession by one or the other of those great powers, whose civilisation was old before Israel was born. Records and inscriptions discovered within the last twenty-five years show that Palestine was subject to Egypt and ruled by its governors as late as 1400 B. C., when the Nile region had been a seat of power, learning and religion for more than two thousand years, and the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

land of the Euphrates had been its rival for many centuries.

In a fortunate interval of quiescence between these great "world powers," a part of the people who became known as Israel escaped from a condition of servitude and oppression within the borders of Egypt, and made their way through the deserts of Arabia, with only petty tribes native to the region to contend with, and with accretions from others got possession of a strip of territory east of the Jordan. Lingering there until they gained cohesion and strength, they finally crossed the river and after bloody conflicts with the tribes occupying the land known as Canaan, and in later times as Palestine, succeeded in establishing themselves in possession. For a long time their hold was precarious. Broken into tribes or clans, they had no regularly organized government, and when attacked by hostile neighbours, as they frequently were, they depended upon leaders, or "heroes," who rose to command them in battles of defence or vengeance. Finally, when they had grown sufficiently in numbers and in strength, and experience had taught them the necessity of national power, with civil and military organisation, if they were to survive and flourish, they established a kingdom, a little more than 1,000 years before the Christian era. In the meantime they had learned much from their strongest neighbours, the Philistines and the Phœnicians, especially the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

latter, with whom they maintained relations of amity while the former were their bitter enemies. Coming from beyond the river they were called Hebrews or those " from beyond." They adopted and modified the language of the conquered Canaanites, borrowed writing from the Phœnicians and some time after the establishment of the kingdom developed a literature.

Where these people originally came from is not certainly known. We have little more than their own traditions, preserved in their own peculiar way, to guide us in seeking for their origin. They were probably nomadic tribes of Arabians, akin to the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites, which had wandered with flocks and herds, perhaps to the borders of the Euphrates Valley and to the confines of Egypt, and some of which in a time of famine had been kept in the latter country until they fell into a state of servitude, or forced labor, under its rulers. They certainly had traditions of escape or deliverance from this servitude and of the struggle through the deserts to freedom, and for centuries they cherished fear and hatred for Egypt, while their earliest writers took pride in giving them a mythical ancestry in the Chaldean Empire.

It was a century and more after the kingdom was established and some time after it had been divided by the tearing away of the larger and more flourishing part by revolt on the death of Sol-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

omon, that the remarkable literary development of this people began. Just when the Hebrew language took form in writing cannot be ascertained, but like all primitive peoples Israel preserved its first traditions by oral transmission. Like others it had its myths and legends, its tales of deliverers from bondage or peril and of heroes in warfare, and these were chanted in songs or narrated in stories from generation to generation until they became a common stock of material for coming writers. Like all ancient people also, it had its religion, its conception of deity and his relation to man, and in regard to this its most striking peculiarity appears.

In spite of successive versions during several centuries, the mass of literature which constitutes the great epic of its national life still contains traces of a time when it shared with other early races a belief in many gods representing the powers of nature. Its designation for the deity, Elohim, is a plural and a relic of that time. One of the most ancient fragments embedded in its literature speaks of the "Sons of God" who had converse with the daughters of men and begat giants and men of renown, after the manner of other old mythologies. The use of the word "Sons of God" here is equivalent to "Gods," as "Sons of prophets" was used to designate members of schools or coteries of prophets, "Children of Israel" or of Moab was used for Israelites or Mo-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

abites, and "Sons of men" had the same meaning as men. Another ancient fragment, properly translated, speaks of wine as cheering gods and men, and there is also a relic of the old polytheistic faith in the myth of the Garden of Eden where "the Lord God" is represented as saying of Adam, "the man is become as one of us to know good and evil."

In the early patriarchal stories and the legends of heroes the deity, originally a tribal god called by the name of Yahweh, ("Jehovah"), was sometimes represented as appearing on the earth in the form of a man. He was evidently conceived of in this guise in the Eden myth when he "walked in the garden in the cool of the day" and talked with Adam. In this guise he appeared and talked with Abram under the Oaks of Mamre while on his way to Sodom to ascertain if its iniquity was as bad as it had been reported to be. Sometimes he is represented as sending an "angel," or messenger, who was a kind of similitude of his own personality, as in the case of the "angel of God" who appeared to the mother of Samson and promised the child's birth. Again in the Jacob myth he is described as testing that personage by wrestling with him all night and giving him a new name. There are other instances of his appearing in the guise of a human being, but in later conceptions he became invisible, and the sight of him was supposed to be dangerous, if not fatal. Moses is

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

represented as being vouchsafed a look at his back after he had passed by while the hand of the god covered the man as he stood in a cleft of the rock. Often he is described as speaking to man while he remained himself invisible, and often as manifesting his presence in fire, or light or darkness or some natural phenomenon.

In the mixture of tradition, legend and myth connected with the escape or deliverance from Egypt, this deity is represented as peculiarly the God of Israel and as having his abode on Mount Sinai, or Horeb, where he awaited his time for rescuing the people from their bondage. He had no relation to the rest of mankind except as a mighty enemy to those who were enemies of his people. They had their own gods, whose reality and whose rights in their own domain were not disputed. It was as the God only of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and of their descendants that he appeared to Moses and through him and Aaron inflicted the plagues upon Egypt and brought his people out with a "mighty hand and an outstretched arm," divided the waters of the Red Sea and guided them in cloud and flame, while the Egyptian armies were overwhelmed. Here he was a god of craft and not of justice, so far as any but his own people were concerned, a god of severity and anger with his own people when they disobeyed his commands given through their leader, a god of battles and vengeance in conflict

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

with their enemies. He appears in clouds and thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai to fulminate his laws through Moses. In the Song of Deborah in the time of the "Judges," which is older than these myths and legends of the "Exodus," his dwelling place is supposed to be on Mount Sinai, and he comes from there careering over the mountains in storm clouds to rescue his people from the army of Sisera.

Such a conception of deity is as mythical as that of other ancient peoples. The tribal god Yahweh had dwelt in the mountain fastnesses and guarded and guided his people, inspiring them with fear and communicating his commands through those who assumed to be his servants or his spokesmen, and who doubtless believed themselves to be such. He had the characteristics of an unseen despot and was the ideal of a mighty ruler in a barbarous age. He was placated not only by humble submission, but by offerings and sacrifices, the more precious the more acceptable and prevailing. There are traces of evidence that in the earliest days these extended to the sacrifice of children in the worship of Yahweh as in that of Baal and of Chemosh. There is a vestige of this in the story of Jephthah and his daughter, and the myth of the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah was symbolical of the substitution of the choicest animals for the highest pledge of devotion. Until late in the history of the two Kingdoms there was little dif-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

vices. Solomon, notwithstanding his worldliness and his yielding to heathen enticement, was assumed by the chroniclers of a later time to be so endowed with wisdom that he needed no prophet. It is probable that no one had the temerity to act in that capacity with so mighty a potentate in his little realm; but one appeared to encourage a revolt against him and to represent by symbolical action the tearing away of the better part of the kingdom and the setting up of a rival monarchy under the leader of the revolt, Jeroboam the Son of Nebat.

It was well along in the turbulent history of the new Kingdom of Israel, when an alliance of its King, Ahab, with the royal house of Phœnicia threatened a lapse from the worship of Yahweh to that of Baal and Ashtoreth, or Astarté, that the spirit of prophetism was aroused to an ardent defence of the national God and his worship, the loss of which would mean the abandonment and destruction of the nation. There is little evidence that the character of the worship in the northern Kingdom then differed materially from that of the neighbouring peoples of Phœnicia and Syria or the Canaanite tribes, or that the ethical standard had greatly improved, when the legendary figure of Elijah appeared in the conflict against a relapse to heathenism. The reality behind that misty figure was a fiery champion of the national religion and of the mighty god to whom the people owed

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

their deliverance from Egypt, the possession of the land which they had inherited from mythical ancestors with whom that god had made a compact of mutual fidelity. Elisha, who carried on the contest when the house of Ahab was slaughtered and the kingdom was in dangerous conflict with Syria, is scarcely less legendary and obscured in the mists of history; and there is still little sign of the higher ethical and religious spirit that was about to develop.

This first appeared, so far as its authentic utterance has been preserved, in Amos, a herdsman of Judah, who went to the chief shrine of the Northern Kingdom at Bethel to utter his solemn rebukes and impressive warnings. The shadows of conflict with hostile powers of the north and east were then impending, and in the prophet's mind the only hope of escape was in renewed fidelity and devotion to the God of Israel and obedience to his commands. Now the national offence took on a moral character. It consisted in the wickedness and injustice of the time, the iniquities of the people and their rulers. The commands of God were not for sacrifices and burnt offerings, or vain oblations and feast days, but for justice and mercy and purity of life. Therein was that obedience and devotion in which alone was safety and salvation from powerful enemies. That became the keynote of prophecy from that

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

time, the fundamental principle in the constitution of theocracy.

And the doctrine of theocracy, or the rule of God, became the loftiest article of political faith of the "peculiar people," the constant and impressive burden of their great epic, which has rolled down the centuries from that day to this. Other nations believed that their gods ruled in the affairs of men, but their conceptions were rude and barbaric in comparison with those of the prophets of Israel, in whom the highest genius of the nation found expression. In them the conception of Israel's God was exalted and purified. He was the God of justice, of righteousness, of mercy, of love for those who obeyed him and severity for those who were disobedient and rebellious. While Israel was still his peculiar care, he was above all Gods and all nations and peoples. They were subject to his will and were used to serve his purposes. He was the creator of heaven and earth and of all mankind, but he had chosen this one people for his own and would preserve it forever. He would use others to chastise it when it went wrong and to correct its evil tendencies; he might even destroy it as a nation, but he would surely redeem a purified and righteous remnant and restore the Kingdom of Zion with a reunited Israel, which should grow in power and finally bring all the earth under its sway.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

This was the sublime doctrine of theocracy which developed through the great prophets and survived all disasters. The destruction of Samaria by Assyria and of Jerusalem by Babylon could not extinguish it. It was in part the effect and in part the cause of the chief characteristic of the peculiar people, an enormous pride of race, an overweening sense of superiority, a potent national consciousness, out of all proportion to the nation's magnitude or material power. Nor was this without foundation in the genius of the people, which rose in moral, if not intellectual altitude, far above, not only the surrounding people with which they came into immediate comparison, but the vast empires by which they were finally overwhelmed and subdued though not extinguished, scattered but not trodden out. It was this indomitable self-assertion that enabled them to weld their literature, except what they chose to reject, into one sublime epic which they stamped as divine in its origin and as sacred in its character, and imposed upon a large part of the world at their own valuation "even unto this day." Their promises were unfulfilled, their hopes were disappointed, their nation was destroyed, they were scattered over the face of the earth, despised, rejected and persecuted, and yet their pride of race was never extinguished, and they refused to be effaced as a peculiar people, still holding that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob was the ruler of the world, with

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

a special love for the race with which he made an everlasting covenant. And the wonder of human history is the power their superior pretension has had for so many centuries in guarding their "sacred" literature, as a holy heritage of mankind, from the calm analysis to which all other ancient literature has been subjected, and sealing it against the judgment of human reason.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

II

LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAEL

WHAT may properly be called literary development did not begin among the people of Israel until after the victories of David had established the kingdom, and it made little progress before the prosperous reign of Solomon was over. It gained its first real impetus in the Northern Kingdom after the division into two rival realms, of which that was at first the more powerful and flourishing, and the more progressive. Though Solomon had established a relation of amity with Egypt and taken a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh as one of his many wives, when Jeroboam headed a revolt against the King's oppressive treatment of the people of the proud tribe of Ephraim he fled to that country and was evidently treated with consideration by its ruler. It is probable that he brought back much of the tradition and the lore which were afterwards used in the early literature of his kingdom. He or some companion of his may have been the real person most versed in the "learning of the Egyptians" at that time.

Long before, no doubt, there had been an oral literature in the customary form of songs and

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

chants, of legends and mythical tales, and many of these were first reduced to writing in the time of David and Solomon. Two collections are referred to by the titles, the "Book of the Wars of Yahweh" and the "Book of the Upright," and some scraps from each were preserved, with indications that they furnished the groundwork of later narratives. David's lament over the death of Saul and Jonathan is said to have been taught to the people and afterwards enbalmed in the "Book of the Upright," which indicates that the written form was later than David's time. Solomon's speech at the dedication of the temple is believed by some to have found a place in the same repository. Hebrew poetry, of which the chief rhythmical characteristic was a repetition or variation of expression called "parallelism," had evidently a considerable development before it was ever reduced to writing. The "Song of Deborah" at the victory over Sisera is the earliest example preserved and though sadly mutilated in the process it is a veritable antique gem. What is called the "Blessing of Jacob" near the end of the Book of Genesis, which sets forth the characteristics of the tribes under personal names, in the semblance of what is not altogether a "blessing," had its origin before the division of the Kingdom, but not earlier than the peaceful reign of Solomon. The discourses of Balaam in the Book of Numbers, which have a similar char-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

acter, must have originated at about the same time. Whatever the occasion or the original authorship of these productions, they were quite independent of the setting in which they are now found.

The first writers had not only the advantage of a rich heritage of oral literature, but they undoubtedly had considerable knowledge of the learning of Egypt, the art of Phœnicia and the wisdom of the East. Communication by caravan between the Euphrates region and that of the Nile through Syria, Israel and Philistia was much more common than we have been accustomed to suppose, and in the long interval of peace in which Israel and Judah were left untroubled, except by the petty nations close about them, there was ample opportunity for an interchange of influences. The earliest Hebrew writings which were preserved in something of their original form in the final Scripture of the Jews, were the stories of the heroes of the period between the partial conquest of Canaan and the founding of the kingdom, familiar to us by the title of "Judges." These tales were freely handled by the later writers who made use of them and set them in a framework of their own, but they retain much of the pristine flavour. Appended to these in the last chapters of the Book of Judges are some later narratives relating to the same period which afford a vivid picture of life in the primitive days when the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"Judges" were supposed to have "judged." A natural sequence to the hero stories were the first accounts of the making of the kings, Saul and David, which form distinct parts of the books bearing the name of Samuel, intermingled with other material of later date.

It was about the middle of the Ninth Century B. C., after the reign of Ahab in the Northern Kingdom, with his alliance with Phœnicia and his conflicts with Syria, in which the weird figures of the prophets Elijah and Elisha appear, and when Jehoshaphat of Judah was a vassal of that kingdom, that the first attempt was made to form a narrative of the events which preceded the conquest of Canaan, covering the escape from Egypt, the struggle through the deserts and the battles by which land was won first east of the Jordan and then between it and the Philistines, extending north to the Phœnician and Syrian borders. Preliminary to this was the effort, common to all ancient peoples in beginning a relation of their history, to account for their origin, which was usually attributed to a mythical ancestry, and even to account for the existence of mankind in general and of the earth itself. Between four and five centuries had then passed since the deliverance from Egypt. There could have been no record of the events, but the space was filled with traditions and memories, some of them embodied by that time in written material. How the people

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

had come into Egypt and what their previous history had been was probably unknown even then, though there may have been traditions and tales, extending far back to pastoral days before the dark period of servitude. Of the origin of the world and of the human race there could be only mythical accounts, which had to be either borrowed or invented. Of knowledge there was certainly none, and of revelation the only source was the human imagination unguided by science.

What material existed in the form of stories of the patriarchs and myths of the creation and primitive man, and what legends of Moses and Joshua may have been already written down is only a matter of conjecture, but it is well established that a narrative appeared not earlier than the middle of the Ninth Century B. C., which constituted one of the main sources of the books of the Pentateuch and Joshua, and is known to scholars as the Yahwistic source, on account of its common use of the name Yahweh for the deity. This was afterwards retrenched and modified and blended with another document of like character which appeared about a century later, known as the "Elohistic" source, because of its general use of Elohim to designate the deity. The record of which these form the main material underwent expansion and modification afterward, and one of the latest of its parts is the impressive chapter

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

with which it begins giving an account of the creation.

The earlier of the two main documents referred to above contained the first nucleus of the written law of Israel, which was afterwards developed to constitute one of the main elements of the great epic that was to be completed centuries later. It was a brief codification of what had apparently become the customary requirements and prohibitions of a primitive state of society. It was called the "Book of the Covenant," and was said to have been read by Moses "in the audience of the people" at Mount Sinai, and to have been communicated to him by Yahweh himself on the top of the mountain. More than two centuries after this was embodied in the "Yahwistic source," in the time of the prophet Jeremiah and the reign of Josiah of Judah, nearly a century after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria, an event occurred which not only gave a new development to the law, but a new color to all the quasi-historical material in the great epic. That was the discovery in the temple at Jerusalem of a "book of the law," which aimed at a suppression of heathen practices in the worship of Yahweh and the concentration of that worship at the temple in Jerusalem, to counteract the tendency to lapse into "heathenism" which beset the people. It was intended to support the doctrine of the theocracy as

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

that had already been developed by the prophets. The substance of this with later additions is contained in the book known as Deuteronomy.

The highest development of the genius of Israel was reached in the prophets, under the stimulus of events which preceded and followed the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrians, B. C. 722, and those which similarly attended the destruction of Jerusalem, 586, B. C., by the Babylonians under Nebuchadrezzar, and the exile of the leading spirits of the Kingdom of Judah to the land of the conquerors. These prophets were the great champions and orators of the theocracy. Some of their productions were undoubtedly delivered orally and addressed to the kings and rulers or to assemblies of the people, and afterwards written down and elaborated by themselves or others. Some were labored compositions, containing highly wrought rhythmical passages and poetical imagery. In their final collection some of them were ill-arranged and sadly marred by excision and interpolation. They contained predictions and warnings, such as other political orators of antiquity were wont to utter, some of which were justified by events while others were not. They are not wholly free from evidence of having been made by copyists and editors to conform to events after these had happened.

The earliest of the Hebrew prophets whose impressive oracles are preserved in the Great Epic

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

was Amos, that Judahite herdsman who was impelled to go into the Northern Kingdom in the time of Jeroboam II, about 760 B. C., to denounce the iniquities which threatened to bring the wrath of Yahweh upon that land, doomed to destruction less than forty years later. The greatest was Isaiah, who rose at Jerusalem when Samaria was undergoing its final agony and Zion itself was menaced by an Assyrian army under Sennacherib. Other voices were raised during the same period, but under the long reign of Manasseh there was a reaction against the stern theocracy of the prophets, and comparative silence. Then, under Josiah and his successors, when Judah's life was again threatened from the East, appeared Jeremiah to revive with fierce ardour the preaching of submission to the God of Israel and reliance upon his power for the salvation of the nation. But the doom of Judah was not averted. In the exile itself the voice of prophecy was raised by the rivers of Babylon in the oracles of Ezekiel. He spoke in the name of Yahweh but used much imagery and symbolism borrowed from the heathen land. Finally, when Cyrus of Persia vanquished Babylon and permitted the captive Jews to return to their beloved Zion there was an outburst of jubilation from an unknown prophet whose utterances with others of equally unknown origin, became attached to those of Isaiah in the book bearing his name.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

There were "minor prophets" contemporary with these and others of a later date, but this peculiar development of the literary genius of Israel reached its height in these, and overshadowed every other form of expression for more than two centuries. The epic owes more of its greatness to this than to any of its other elements. But other elements were in the making at the same time. The ancient documents relating to the mythical and legendary period before the Kingdom was established were worked over with some infusion of the spirit of the prophets and of the law as it found expression in the Deuteronomic Code. This was the spirit of theocracy, which taught that all trouble or disaster of the nation or the tribes was due to the sins of the people or their rulers in worshipping false gods, or to their neglect of the worship of Yahweh and failure to obey his commands. It is evident that the chief literary treasures of the Northern Kingdom were transferred to Jerusalem on the destruction of Samaria and were there blended with those of Judah in the revision of ancient narratives, including those relating to the period of the Judges and of the first Kings Saul and David.

The first kingdom was established about 1020 B. C. David became King of Judah at Hebron about 1000 B. C., probably as a vassal of the Philistines, and a few years later established himself as the monarch of all Israel at the old Jebu-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

site stronghold on Mount Zion, emancipated himself from Philistine subjection and extended the borders of his kingdom by subduing the hostile forces that surrounded it, maintaining amicable relations all the while with Phœnicia. He was succeeded by Solomon about 970 B. C., at the end of whose reign, in 933, the division of the kingdom came. An independent account of Solomon and his reign appeared not long after his death, which became the groundwork of the chapters of the first Book of Kings relating to him. There were annals or "chronicles" of the other kings of both kingdoms, which some believe to have been combined into one great book after the destruction of Samaria and not long before the siege and capture of Jerusalem. This, with the end of the David stories, the account of Solomon's reign and some legends of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, constituted the chief material of the two books of Kings as they were embalmed in the Epic. These were compiled in their earliest form before the fall of Jerusalem and revised during the exile. There was much literary activity among the Jews in that fifty years of expatriation at Babylon, which was regarded as the penalty for recreancy to their God.

Literary activity continued after the return from exile especially in elaborating and putting in final form what had been produced before. This concerned itself largely with what was called "the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

law," which was still attributed to the direct commands of Israel's God through Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. Ezekiel, who was originally a priest, had in his latest oracles, written after the return to Jerusalem was assured, outlined the future state to be established, with Mount Zion and a new temple as its centre, and within this outline was wrought what is designated by scholars as the Law of Holiness. Ezra, another priest, who conducted one of the bodies of returning exiles and took part in re-establishing the worship and settling the ecclesiastical polity at Jerusalem, also drew up a book of the "Law of Moses" which was read to the people. Afterwards, in the priestly circles remaining at Babylon, the body of Levitical law was fully developed, with a quasi-historical framework of its own, and was finally blended with other material in the redaction of the Pentateuch, or five "books of Moses," and the Book of Joshua. This latest code furnished the impressive first chapter of all and supplied modifying traces in Genesis, considerable passages in Exodus, practically all of Leviticus and passages in Numbers. There is little of it in Deuteronomy, but it reappears in material passages in Joshua. Another example of post-exilic literary activity is the entire recasting of past history in the priestly spirit as it appears in the book of Chronicles, divided in modern times, like the Book of Kings, into two.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

What may be called the framework of the great epic was wrought out in progressive fashion during a period of five centuries. It presents more clearly than any formal and systematic history the experience and the polity of the peculiar people during a thousand years, escaping as a horde of fugitives from the confines of Egypt, struggling with privation and manifold difficulty through long stretches of desert under a religious leader, fighting or eluding hostile tribes on the way, gaining a foothold on one side of the Jordan and gradually conquering a goodly realm on the other, establishing a kingdom which split asunder, falling under the crushing power of the empires of the east, but clinging to its faith and its traditions until a remnant of exiles restored the ancient fane and built on the ruins of their "sacred nation" a priestly community which imposed its authority and its system of faith upon a large part of the world for many centuries.

Welded upon this framework were varied products of the genius of this people, illustrating its life, illuminating its experience and perpetuating its thought and sentiment. There were proverbs and wise sayings, collected from time to time in the later days and massed in a "book" of such, which has no parallel of its kind. There were hymns and sacred songs, produced at different periods and under varied circumstances of which there is no record, but finally developed and ap-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

plied in the ritual and ceremonial of the temple of Zion. These, gathered in a "book of psalms," are without rival in human literature. There were products of deep meditation upon problems of existence in the sublime poetry of Job and the sombre brooding of Ecclesiastes, or the preacher. There were idyls and stories impressing some lesson of Jewish experience and faith, and when at last the hope of material greatness faded, there were apocalyptic visions of its revival in God's own time, for had he not made a covenant with Israel, the breaking of which was inconceivable to the devout mind of Hebrew seers? With these the massive epic was bound up and sealed as divine by all the authority that could be invoked for it by men who assumed to speak for the dread ruler of the universe, and who persuaded themselves and the world that their voice was his.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

III

As already stated, it was after the middle of the ninth century B. C., in the Northern Kingdom, that the narrative appeared known to scholars as the Yahwist Source of the Pentateuch and Joshua, and it had a truly Homeric character. The Elohist source of perhaps a century later used much of the same traditional material; but, so far as preserved, it appears to have begun with the story of Abraham and not of the creation. When the two were blended into one at Jerusalem after the destruction of Samaria, parts of both were sacrificed to the union, but here and there we find parallel and somewhat inconsistent accounts of the same circumstances; and in many places seams and sutures of mixed material are apparent. In the copying and editing that took place after the promulgation, in the latter half of the seventh century B. C., of the law which constituted the original substance of the book that came to be known as Deuteronomy, some touches of the theocratic doctrine then developed by the prophets were impressed upon the narratives.

Still later, in the time of the exile and after the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

return of the priests to the new temple at Jerusalem, where these narratives were made the framework of the fully developed law, further changes were made, chiefly by excision and interpolation, but here and there by modified statement to suit the final purpose of redaction. The original narratives ran through the conquest of Canaan, and passages from them appear in the Book of Joshua and the first chapter of Judges, with traces in the second chapter of the latter book; but the five books associated with the name of Moses and making the framework of the law were first consecrated as the true "word of God," the Canon, or rule of life, for surviving Israel. It was that introductory section of the epic which was first translated into Greek at Alexandria in the Third Century, B. C., as the "Book of the Law," and formed the basis of what is called the Septuagint version of the Jewish Scriptures.

In the first of the five books and the first half of the second there is a rich vein of the work of the "Yahwist." It begins with the Adam and Eve and Garden of Eden myth in the second chapter of Genesis, which, with the story of the flood, was derived from Babylonian lore; and it puts in idyllic form stories of the "patriarchs," the putative ancestors of the tribes of Israel. In these we find the source of the doctrine that the possession of the land was derived from a compact between Yahweh and Abraham, and a promise renewed to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Jacob. The stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Ishmael as the ancestor of the kindred tribes of Arabia, of Esau as the progenitor of the nearer kin of Edom, and of the daughters of Laban representing the kinship of Syria, are told with a fascinating realism that makes them seem like matters of fact. The pride and glory of the Northern Kingdom to which the original authors of the material belonged, are celebrated in the story of Joseph, while the character of Judah is degraded in the account of his offspring.

Traces of the work of the Elohist do not appear until the fifteenth chapter of Genesis where the account is given of the covenant with Abraham, but from there on it mingles more or less freely with the earlier material and sometimes slightly confuses it. When the priests revised the work to suit their purpose after the exile, they supplied the opening Chapter which contains the impressive description of the creation in six days and the advanced conception of the creator. They interposed the genealogies before and after the flood, confused the account of the flood itself with their amendments, interpolated the covenant with Noah, made circumcision the seal of the covenant with Abraham, gave the ages of most of the characters and introduced numerous modifying passages. The whole first book and part of the second are a treasure house of ancient Hebrew myth, somewhat marred by writers who strove to make them serve

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

a didactic purpose. The work of the Yahwist continues with a mixture of myth and historic legend in the account of Moses and the escape from Egypt. There is much mingling of the Elohist account in the effort to give it greater fulness, and the material is not always harmonious, but it is mostly vivid. The purpose of embodying the law of the Jews and giving it divine sanction increases in emphasis as the narrative proceeds. There was some nucleus of this in the early documents and Yahweh was represented as fulminating his commands to Moses in clouds and lightning on Mount Sinai, but this was greatly elaborated in the later time after the exile. What is known to the learned as the "priests' code," completed after the exile and later than Ezra and Nehemiah, furnished several whole chapters of the latter part of Exodus, practically all of Leviticus, and considerable passages in Numbers and Joshua.

All laws wherever promulgated, and whatever their character, were put in the form of commands of Israel's God "by the mouth of Moses." This began with the earliest brief code established in the time of the Yahwist and embodied in his narrative, was continued with that said to have been discovered in the temple under Josiah two centuries later, which was put in the form of regular discourses of Moses, and was made still more emphatic in the "priests' code" and the narratives

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

that first accompanied it, which were welded into the Pentateuch in its final form.

After "The Law," or the "Books of Moses," had been canonized and put beyond further change, another collection was consecrated and made the second great section of the epic under the name of the "prophets." This included Joshua and Judges and the so-called historical books of Samuel and Kings, as well as the oracles known as prophecies which have personal names attached to them. This also was wrought over during the exile and put in final form after the return of the priests and scribes to Jerusalem. The material of Joshua was similar to that of the Pentateuch and it contains some of the oldest and some of the latest of its elements. The basis of the Book of Judges, after the first two chapters, was the old hero stories, beginning with that of Ehud the Benjamite, who assassinated the fat king of Moab, and ending with Samson who brought the temple of Dagon down upon his own head in revenge upon the Philistines, with a later appendix on the migration of the Danites and the war of the other tribes upon Benjamin.

Here we have the very oldest of the written literature of Israel that was preserved, with the exception of some fragments referred to in the previous chapter. It has the crude simplicity and naturalism of other primitive writings and gives

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

some graphic pictures of life in the days when there was no king in Israel and every man did that which was good in his own eyes. In the subsequent editing, after the Deuteronomic law was promulgated and the theocratic doctrine of human government was developed, these tales, with slight references to intermediate rulers, were framed in a sort of pragmatism that is easily recognised and separated from the stories. Such religious character as they originally had was of the pristine kind, mythological in quality, but now they were turned to account to illustrate the doctrine that all calamities or defeats of the people were due to their sins, which consisted chiefly in neglecting the worship of Yahweh and going after other gods, or disobeying his commands, and that their deliverance must come from repentance and a return to fidelity to him and dependence upon him. The later redactors in the post-exilic time did not avoid confusing the narratives with mixed material here and there, as in the account of Gideon's conflict with the Midianites and that of the Benjamite war. One effect of the revisions was to represent these casual heroes as a succession of rulers for terms of years, which in point of fact they were not. The original stories, like the best material of the Pentateuch and Joshua, were Ephraimite, and they contain scarcely a reference to Judah. Some critics credit the basis of these tales to the Yahwist and Elohist "documents."

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The material of the book, or books, of Samuel is of various dates and is irregularly pieced together and not made to harmonise completely. The earliest and least sophisticated is that relating to David's reign in the second book, and next to that come the stories of David in his relation to Saul and his life as a freebooter in the mountains of Judah and a vassal of one of the Philistine kings. Next comes the more friendly account of Saul, and latest the stories of Samuel and Saul which show the prophet and king at enmity with each other and represent the setting up of the kingdom as reluctantly assented to by "the Lord" and his prophet. These latter originated two or three centuries after the events to which they relate and cannot be considered at all as historical. The element of theocratic pragmatism is introduced in all the late material.

The two books of Kings do not constitute a history of the kingdoms, but after the account of Solomon's reign, derived from a pre-existing "book of the Acts of Solomon," it is largely an argument in support of the theocratic doctrine. That makes it more fitting as part of the great national epic than any dry chronicle of events would be. It had purpose and colour and was compiled with a view to edification for the future rather than information of the past. The first compiler was deeply imbued with the doctrine of the Deuteronomic Code, that all worship was to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

be centralised at Jerusalem in strict observance of the law, that the unpardonable sin of Jeroboam, in which he "caused Israel to sin" and brought calamity on the nation, was the setting up of places of worship at Bethel and Dan, and that all use of shrines and images on the hilltops, or "high places," after the ancient manner, as well as wandering after other gods, was infidelity to Yahweh, which would bring punishment upon the nation. He was also imbued with the theocratic spirit of the prophets, which taught that the nation was the special care of "the Lord," Yahweh, who punished it by permitting its enemies to harry and plunder it, and would destroy it by bringing powerful foes upon it from the East if it persisted in disobedience and unfaithfulness; but who would rescue and save it whenever it repented and returned to its true allegiance. But he would in any case bring a purified remnant out of its tribulation to restore the Kingdom of David, which should abide forever and bring all the earth under its sway.

The compilation was made from material drawn from the chronicles or annals of the kingdoms, Ephraimite legends of prophets and sketches of wars with Syria, and was directed in a way to serve the dominant purpose of the compiler. It seems to have been completed in its earliest form before the "captivity," but it was extended and revised during the exile and received touches from a

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

final redactor before it was embalmed in the epic.

The oracles of the great prophets before Ezekiel and of those "minor prophets" who preceded the destruction of Jerusalem appear to have been carried to Babylon by devout exiles with considerable confusion of manuscripts, partly arranged and edited there, and completed after the return. They were put together in considerable disorder, and later oracles were added to them or interpolated in them before the second section of the epic designated as "the prophets" was canonised, sealed against further change and attached to "the Law" in the Greek version of the Scriptures. Isaiah suffered most from the rude editing. The genuine material, whether written by the prophet or recorded by faithful scribes, was ill-arranged, and both older and later oracles were interpolated between its parts or attached to its close. The last twenty-seven chapters, as they stand in modern versions, are much later than the rest, part belonging to the time of release from captivity and part to a still later day. Jeremiah was less marred in the make-up and Ezekiel scarcely at all, but there is some mixing of material of minor prophets after the exile. Notwithstanding the unskilful handling of this material, in consequence of the lack of systematic records and of the historical or critical sense, it forms the loftiest part of the great epic.

To the Scriptures as thus constituted, after the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

restoration of the temple and the establishment of the priestly commonwealth of the Jews, was added a third section before the epic was closed. This fluctuated for a time and the Christian era opened before it was finally determined by the canon of Jewish authorities what books were sacred and what were secular. It was too late to destroy literature that was not to be deemed sacred, and it was only rejected and stamped as "apocrypha." Some of this was not inferior to some that was accepted, but it was not so essential to the completeness of the work that was to illustrate the life and character of ancient Israel and carry its influence to future generations.

This third and last section to be welded into the epic was called simply "the writings," or in Greek the "sacred writings," and in modern versions of the Jewish Scriptures it is interpolated in the middle of that originally called "the prophets," between the legendary and quasi-historical books and those deemed genuine prophetic oracles. One of these "writings," however, the Book of Daniel, came to be classed among the prophets, and another, that of Lamentations, was mistakenly attached to Jeremiah, as utterances of the prophet, and though afterwards detached from the book it holds its place next to it in the arrangement. One of those always classed among the "minor prophets" is not a "prophecy," but an illustrative story in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

which one of the old prophets, Jonah, the son of Amittai, figures. Another of "the writings," the beautiful idyl of Ruth, which originated after the restoration of the temple as an appeal against the cruel edict of the priests separating the faithful from their alien wives, was attached to the Book of Judges, merely because it related back to the same heroic age; and, though again detached, it still holds its place after that book.

For the rest, this section of the epic now begins with the quasi-historical books of Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah which follow the books of Kings. Ezra and Nehemiah, once treated as a single book, relate to the return from exile, the restoration of the temple and its worship, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the promulgation of the law in the form in which it was brought back from the priestly circles at Babylon before the completion of the Levitical system. The book was compiled a century or two after the events to which it relates from material that consisted in part of veritable memoirs of Ezra, who had brought back a detachment of the exiles, and of Nehemiah, who had been commissioned by the Persian King Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls of Zion. It exhibits the lack of orderly arrangement and of literary skill characteristic of the editing of the time, but is one of the most truly historical parts of the epic. The compiler was no doubt the author of the book of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Chronicles, now divided into two books, and a priest ardently devoted to the new modes of worship at the temple. His own book is made up of genealogies from the time of Adam to David; and from the establishment of the monarchy it is a recasting of the history of Judah, with incidental reference to Israel, covering the same period as the books of Kings. It transforms this history in the spirit of the priestly system of the author's day, which he zealously attributes to David, the founder of the dynasty now considered a sacred memory and the basis of a hope of greatness yet to be realised.

The other books are not arranged on any principle; but, as each is an independent element of the epic, it has no strictly logical place. One of these was the collection of proverbs and wise sayings variously gathered together during the centuries, but commonly attributed to Solomon, who was represented as a paragon of knowledge and wisdom by the chroniclers of Judah. Several collections of psalms and sacred songs had been made and these were massed together and labeled with the revered name of David. A few of these were old, but the greater part originated after the exile and were connected with the temple service. No element of the great epic reaches a loftier height of grandeur and sublimity than the dramatic poem of Job, and nothing in human literature surpasses it in those qualities.

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Three more "books" came within the canon after much questioning and hesitation in the centuries of doubt, when others were being gradually relegated to the limbo of apocrypha. Esther, which powerfully embodies the pride and arrogance of the Jewish race, in spite of adversity and humiliation, probably owed its admission to its supposed explanation of the origin of the feast of Purim. The gloomy and sceptical philosophy of the greater part of Ecclesiastes, which was a late post-exilic production, long excluded it, and it was finally saved by association with the name of Solomon and by its "conclusion of the whole matter," appended by a later hand than that of the original author, that fear of God and keeping his commandments was the "whole duty of man," and that God would "bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's," was rescued from oblivion and stuck as a glittering jewel upon the completed work, upon an unfounded assumption that it really was Solomon's, and by an interpretation that made it symbolise the love of God for his people, which had as much ground as the later interpretation which twisted it into a symbol of "Christ's love for the Church." It is a charming idyl of purely human and earthly love, probably wrought from the wedding songs of the Judean days after the exile, and gives a glimpse of the side of life in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

those days that relieves the gloom and solemnity with which it is apt to be too closely associated in the modern mind.

Properly considered the Book of Daniel closes the epic. It relates to the desperate struggle of the Jewish nation for renewed life against the oppression of Syria, and prefigures its short-lived triumph. Though its visions of that triumph, which was to result in an "everlasting kingdom" and the subjection of all other "dominions," were doomed to sink under the eclipse of the Roman power, it was interpreted anew when the darkness fell, as foreshadowing the Messianic time, when God's Anointed would surely reign in glory, and all the nations of the earth would be brought under his sway or be destroyed. Then would all his saints be redeemed from tribulation and their enemies brought to shame and everlasting contempt, even to "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth."

Thus we have the early myths and legends of Israel, the outlines of its history for a thousand years, the development of its laws and its ethical ideas, its conceptions of deity and its religious faith, its wisdom and philosophy, its highest poetry and its exalted prophecy, wrought by the concurrent and consecutive efforts of its own genius during the latter half of that eventful millenium into one great work of literature, which has been regarded as a sacred heritage by a large

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

part of mankind ever since. It is a human work in the sense that all the history and literature of mankind are human work, and divine only as all that is wrought through man for the elevation and progress of the race may be regarded as divine. It is open to the study of man as all the work of God and man is open to his study, with the freedom of thought and reason with which man is endowed by his maker. It is only by breaking the seal of peculiar sanctity and exclusiveness which Jewish priests and rabbis imposed upon it two thousand years ago, that the interest of men at this day can be revived in its contents, and a living benefit can be again derived from its lessons. With this in mind we will now try to get a fuller and clearer view of what it contains.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

IV

THE MYTHS OF ISRAEL

To understand properly the contents of this greatest of all epics we need to divest our minds from inherited and inculcated preconceptions which would deprive the Hebrew genius of all credit for its greatest work, its only great literary work. This genius was different in kind and in degree from that of other peoples of the same era of human development, but it worked in an equally human way. At the first awakening of its powers it was occupied with memories of the past, the deeds of heroes and the struggles for national existence. Then it began to think, to imagine, to speculate upon its ancestry, upon the origin of its race, the origin of other races, of all mankind, of the earth and the heavens, and upon the powers of Nature and the one all-embracing power behind the seen and the unseen.

The Hebrews of that age had no science and little knowledge of nature or of mankind beyond their own observation. The critical and analytical faculties were little developed and had little to work upon. They had no reasoned philosophy or capacity for forming one, but they had awe in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the presence of nature, vivid imagination and uncurbed credulity. Hence their speculations on the origin of things took the form of myths, created by a poetic imagination, but accepted for truth as readily as are the results of research in these modern days.

The epic opens, as we have seen, with an account of the creation, prefixed to it at a late day and derived from Babylon in the time of the exile. It is much loftier in conception than what follows it, which is five centuries older. The old myth of the creation was of Chaldean origin and appears to have been curtailed when this prelude was prefixed to it, but enough of it remains to show that it did not represent the earth as emerging from a waste of waters, but as being itself an arid waste, waiting for the mist to rise and the rain to fall. The story of the creation of man and woman and their environment in the garden also had its germ in Chaldean lore, but it bears the true impress of Hebrew genius in its doctrine of human life as a fall from the favour of God and a struggle for the grace of an alienated and resentful deity, who had been disobeyed in the very infancy of mankind. The God of these early myths is created in the image of man, a high ideal for the time of its conception, but it is crude according to any rational estimate of modern times. He fashions man from clay and woman from his rib, and breathes life into them; he walks in the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

garden, asks questions and gives commands, and he drives the disobedient pair from paradise into a lonely world, which speedily appears nevertheless to be old and occupied, and he soon decides his first experiment to have been a failure and destroys all but one family with a flood of waters and starts anew with the human race, but with little greater success. The story of the deluge, as well as that of the Garden of Eden found its suggestion in Chaldean mythology.

Incongruity soon appears in this story of the beginning of the race on account of the diversity of material of which it is composed. The ancient fragment which gives the descent of Lamech from Cain came from an author who knew nothing of the cutting off of the race by a flood of waters, for Lamech, who in other material is made the father of Noah, begets children who are the progenitors of those who invented the arts and crafts of the writer's time. The genealogy which makes Lamech descend from Seth in seven generations, instead of from Cain in five, and makes him the father of Noah, is one of the interpolations from the post-exilic priestly writing, by which also the Yahwist's account of the flood is somewhat confused in the final redaction. It is the same priestly writer of a late day that devised the covenant with Noah of which the rainbow was to be the token. There is an ancient fragment which makes Canaan, instead of Ham, the son of Noah upon whom the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

curse of subjection is pronounced, and another that accounts for the dispersion of mankind by the confusion of tongues when the audacious attempt was made to reach heaven with a tower, instead of by the division of the family of Noah, whose descendants had the names of places and tribes known in the time of the writer who described the "generations" of the Sons of Noah. The formal genealogy of the line of Shem, like that of the line of Seth to Noah, is an interpolation from the priest's writing after the exile.

These preliminary myths, leading to the appearance of Abram, or Abraham, as the ancestor of Israel, are crude, but they are intended to exalt the Hebrew race above the rest of mankind and they serve that purpose effectively. There is more skill displayed in the series of ethnic myths embodied in the stories of the patriarchs, and they are less marred by mixture of material and the meddling of late scribes. Here the peculiar genius of the writer known as the Yahwist appears at its best.

The earliest time to which these myths can be traced was four or five centuries after the supposed deliverance from Egyptian bondage under Moses and the struggles through the deserts to the "promised land." It was nearly a century and a half after the setting up of the Kingdom of Saul, and many years after its division on the death of Solomon into two, the stronger of which ar-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

rogated to itself the ancient title of "Israel," while the other had to be content with the name of the single "tribe" of Judah, There were a number of territorial names, supposed to have originated with separate tribes or clans, and there were traditions of others that had disappeared, by which the number of twelve, sacred in Babylonian lore, was established. It was a tendency of primitive peoples to personify their country, with the name of a common ancestor, and its divisions, with the names of his offspring, and these names had usually a real or supposed significance that led to the invention of stories explaining their origin. Israel, interpreted as meaning "Warrior of God," was probably adopted in the time of conflict and struggle, when Yahweh was a "God of battles," and it is found in an Egyptian inscription of about the time of the invasion of Canaan. The poetical name for the country, "Jacob," meant "heel," or one who supplanted another by placing his heel upon him, and it probably had its origin in song when the "Children of Israel" put the tribes of Canaan under their feet and took possession of their land.

Abram, meaning "Exalted father," or Abraham, "The father of many," according to the popular etymology, appears in old inscriptions as a personal name, but its significance suggests that it had its Hebrew application in the mythical explanation of the ancestry of peoples,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and it was claimed as an ancestral name by all the Semitic tribes of the West, though Israel made it peculiarly its own. Israel's early writers took pride in deriving its ancestry from the ancient empire of Babylonia, or Chaldea, and brought their "Abram" from one of its chief capitals, Uru, or "Ur of the Chaldees," with kinsmen who became progenitors of other nations akin to Israel. Canaan had been won by bloody conquest and trampling upon its original inhabitants, but possession was to be justified and sanctified by a promise to Abram, whose name was then changed to Abraham, and to his descendants, and by a solemn covenant between him and his god, who was to be the god of all his posterity.

This posterity the deity would multiply and make his peculiar care until in it all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Intermediate between the Chaldean progenitor and the supplanter, whose sons were to be the fathers of all the twelve tribes, a link was interposed with a name of cheerful omen, "Isaac" or "laughter," associated with the ancient fane nearest to Egypt, that of Beersheba. He was sanctified as a special gift of God by being made the offspring of his parents when they were old and when the mother had been previously barren all her life. Precedence in point of time, in accordance with historic fact, was given to kindred tribes of Arabia, but they were made the offspring of an Egyptian slave in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the service of Abram and Sarai,— not yet transformed to Abraham and Sarah,— in the person of Ishmael, in whom was personified the character of a people whose hand was against all others. Other tribes of inferior rank were credited to Abraham by a second marriage.

The personality of Isaac is not clearly defined, but it is different with that of Rebekah through whom the relation of Israel to Syria and to Edom is portrayed. Nahor, the name of a place in Mesopotamia, is made the brother of Abram; and to his granddaughter, Rebekah, Isaac is married, Abraham sending a servant of Damascene origin to bring her. Haran was also the name of a place, but it was made a brother of Abram who had died in the land of the "Chaldees," but through whose son, Lot, the Ammonites and Moabites were to be accounted for.

Edom was older than Israel and closely allied in blood, and there had been rivalry between them in the early days of the kingdom, which, before the time of the Yahwist writer, had resulted in Israel gaining the upper hand in its own territory. In the myth of Isaac and Rebekah, Esau representing Edom, and Israel, under the name of Jacob, were twins. Esau was the first-born, but was supplanted by his brother. The story, as we have it, is of mixed material and has two different accounts of the manner in which Jacob secured the precedence over Esau. His name is explained by his

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

grasping his brother by the heel at birth and according to one account he craftily buys the birthright with a mess of pottage, and according to the other secures his ascendancy by the wily trick, to which his Syrian mother incites him, of obtaining the blessing of his blind father which was intended for the first-born.

Israel's supremacy by divine favour and human duplicity being thus established, the kinship with Syria is made more prominent by Jacob being sent thither to marry a daughter of Laban, his mother's brother. Syria's duplicity appears in the trick by which Laban imposes upon Jacob first the elder and less attractive daughter, whom he did not desire, and making him serve a second seven years for Rachel, the younger; but Jacob shows his superiority in craft by contriving to get into his own possession the bulk of Laban's property. The relative position of the tribes is most skilfully illustrated in the birth of Jacob's children by the two wives and their two handmaidens, and there is nothing in all literature that surpasses in compactness and vividness the manner in which national characteristics are embodied in Esau, Laban and Jacob. The traits personified in the last named by the genius of the authors of these myths persisted throughout the history of Israel and are a heritage of the Jews to this day.

The point of view of the writers to whom we owe these graphic pictures of Israel's mythical

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

origin was that of the Northern Kingdom, to which they belonged and which they magnified over Judah. This accounts for the character of the stories of the Sons of Jacob. The Judahite writer who after the destruction of Samaria blended their narratives into one, and the subsequent scribes who copied and revised the work, did not efface or seriously mar this character, which so glorified Joseph at the expense of his brethren. The name Joseph implied separation and was given to all that territory which had broken away from Judah after the death of Solomon. Its dominant domain was Ephraim, which Judahite writers were wont to use as a designation of the whole kingdom called by its own subjects "Israel," and the next in rank was Manasseh, mainly on account of its territorial extent. Those two were regarded as the sons of Joseph, whose name loomed above all others in the family of Jacob.

According to tradition the oldest of the tribes was Reuben, which settled permanently on the East side of the Jordan and in some unexplained way had committed outrage upon the family and had disappeared as a distinct territorial designation. It is referred to disparagingly in that oldest of Israel's heroic ballads, the "Song of Deborah," and there is a poetical allusion to its national offence in the so-called "Blessing of Jacob." By the same figure of speech it is embodied in a brief statement in the Yahwist narrative. Reuben is

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

made the first-born of Leah. There was another tribe that had been associated in tradition with Judah in the far south under the name of Simeon but had faded out. It was made the second son of Leah. There had been a class of wandering priests or ministers of worship in the primitive times known as Levites, and though they had no territory or inheritance of their own in the kingdom, they were exalted into a tribe as the Sons of Levi, the third son of Leah. Judah, which was a kingdom by itself, was given the place of fourth son of Jacob and Leah.

Meantime no offspring was vouchsafed to Rachel. Four of the tribes or districts of minor rank were assigned to Jacob's paternity by handmaids of his two wives, the names being explained by circumstances of their birth, or rather of their conception. First, the handmaid of Rachel gave birth to Dan and Naphtali and then that of Leah to Gad and Asher. Two other tribes were granted the maternity of Leah, Issachar and Zebulun. Leah also had a daughter, Dinah, who served the sole purpose of accounting for an apparently unprovoked attack which, according to tradition, Simeon and Levi had made upon Shechem. Shechem, as well as the Israelite clans, was personified in the story. At last the beloved Rachel was blessed with a son, that Joseph who was so glorified as the saviour of the family. After that, Jacob left Laban with his wives and children

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and the flocks and herds he had acquired in "serving" his father-in-law. In the brief account of the parting the political relation of Israel and Syria is symbolised and incidentally that of Israel with the brother nation of Edom. The craft of Jacob appears in contrast with the relative obtuseness and gullibility of Laban, and his cringing timidity compares unfavourably with the frankness and courage of Esau; but national characteristics are exhibited with unshrinking candour. Finally, on the journey through the heritage of Israel Rachel dies in giving birth to Jacob's youngest son, the little but warlike tribe of Benjamin, which furnished the first king of Israel.

This manner of accounting for the nation and the different tribes or divisions of which it had at one time or another been composed, is in the true spirit and manner of old mythologies, but it has a vivid realism peculiar to the Hebrew genius. It is followed, after a genealogy of the family of Esau, or the "generations" of Edom,— mainly a late interpolation,— by the remarkable glorification of the Northern Kingdom at the expense of Judah embodied in the story of Joseph and his brethren, which also serves to account, in a manner to cover the humiliation, for the falling into servitude in Egypt. That this should have been preserved with so little defacement by the Judean writers who blended the original material and afterwards revised and completed the narratives,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

seems strange, and still more so that they should have interposed between the account of selling Joseph into Egypt and his rise to greatness there, the old story about Judah and his children which was obviously intended to cast obloquy on the royal line of that kingdom.

In any other literature the mythical character of what we have been considering would be taken for granted. There were attempts by various peoples in ancient times both before and after the age of Israel's literary development to account for the origin of the world and the human race, and various mythical accounts of the birth and growth of nations. There were personifications of places and of tribes and nations with names of imaginary ancestors and founders, and the chief peculiarity of those of the Hebrews is their close connection with the development of a religious system of a high order, which took a hold upon mankind and maintained it for centuries, moulding human faith upon enduring lines.

The ancient poem introduced into one of the old narratives which were blended in the Book of Genesis, known as " Jacob's Blessing " of his sons, affords a striking illustration of the use of these personal names as applied to the so-called tribes of Israel. This antedates the Yahwist narrative and must have been written before the division of the kingdom on the death of Solomon. In spite of its strong personifications, its reference to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

divisions of the people rather than to individual persons is quite obvious. It is inconceivable as the utterance of a dying patriarch speaking of his living sons, and comprehensible only as a poetical description of the characteristics of the several tribes or sections, when the sceptre was held by Judah after a conflict with enemies, while Joseph was a flourishing region. The historic degradation of the oldest tribe for its obscure dereliction is referred to. The next two are condemned for violence, in apparent allusion to the attack upon Shechem, mythically figured in the story of Dinah. They were to be scattered in Israel, as Simeon and Levi had disappeared as separate tribes, and Levi was evidently not then regarded as the father of the priesthood. There is no reference to Ephraim and Manasseh, but in the narrative just preceding the poem they had received a blessing which gave Ephraim precedence, though Manasseh was the elder. Benjamin, who in the story is depicted as a beloved child, is likened in the poem to a ravening wolf, in allusion to predatory exploits of the tribe.

There is a much later poem personifying the tribes, known as the "Blessing of Moses" for the children of Israel, which was introduced into the Book of Deuteronomy. This distinctly originated in the Northern Kingdom some time after the division, when it was strongly conscious of its own pre-eminence. It has a prayer that Reuben

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

may yet survive, but it ignores the existence of Simeon. By this time Levi is recognised as the father of the priesthood and without tribal relation. Judah is referred to slightingly as the one that is separated from his people. Benjamin is the beloved of the Lord, but a lavish wealth of blessing is bestowed upon Joseph, and his division into Ephraim and Manasseh is recognised. As in the other poem the reference to the other Sons of Jacob imply tribal or territorial characteristics.

There is another significant use of these personal names for tribes or clans in a fragment of the Yahwist narrative which is included in the beginning of the Book of Judges, where "the Lord," that is, the God Yahweh, is represented as saying that Judah should go up first to fight against the Canaanites, and Judah says to Simeon his brother "Come up with me into my lot that we may fight against the Canaanites and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him." This throws an unmistakable light upon the manner of personifying the clans of Israel and the process of evolving from their names and relationship the stories of the patriarch and his ancestors and his sons.

Having thus considered the character and purpose of these ethnic myths, we are better prepared to bestow a glance upon the manner in which they are used in the composite narratives, from the ap-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

pearance of Abram, or Abraham, to the death of Jacob, whose sons were kept in Egypt. Abram is called by "the Lord"— this phrase is commonly used in our English version for the name Yahweh — out of "Ur of the Chaldees," with his brother and the son of a deceased brother, and, after sojourning for a time in Haran for the propagation of the Syrian branch of the family by his brother, he is made to traverse the land to be consecrated as the heritage of his descendants, and to go down into Egypt in a time of famine to demonstrate the care of "the Lord" over him and over his wife's chastity. Then is presented the episode of the separation from him of his nephew Lot, who was to become the progenitor of the Ammonites and Moabites, these being degraded as the offspring of drunkenness and incest. Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain of Jordan, while Abram remained in the land of Canaan, with his tent at the Oak of Mamre.

It was one of the latest revisers of those old tales who took occasion here to introduce the account of the invasion of the Jordan plain from the east, in which Abram appears as a warrior chieftain to rescue Lot from his captors and do homage to the King of Salem (peace) and priest of God Most High. There may have been some old tradition to found it upon, but it is plainly a work of the imagination, and is quite incongruous with what precedes and follows it.

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Although the description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the escape of Lot and the birth of Moab and Ammon in the mountain, might naturally be expected to come in here, it is preceded by a somewhat lurid account of the solemn promise of God to Abram, in which the hand of the Elohist writer is discerned for the first time, and which was elaborated by a late redactor. Here also appears the Yahwist version, somewhat modified by later hands, of the birth of Ishmael, child of the Egyptian handmaid Hagar, and their expulsion from the family by the jealousy of Sarai. What follows that, as a formal account of the covenant between God and Abram of which circumcision is made the token, and of the change of names to Abraham and Sarah, with the first version of the promise of the birth of Isaac, is from the pen of the post-exilic writer who made these narratives the prelude and framework of the elaborate system known as the Priests' Code.

In the story of the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of the cities and the escape of Lot, which follows after this interruption, there is an interesting view of the Yahwist's conception of deity, in harmony with that which appears in the story of the Garden of Eden. Yahweh appears in the guise of a man with two attendants, and holds familiar converse with Abraham, has a mild controversy with him, and makes the promise of the birth of a son, which causes

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the amusement that explains the name of Isaac. The whole episode, is in the alluring manner of this greatest of primitive writers and was not marred by later editing.

The Elohist writer, whose work was woven more or less closely with that of the Yahwist from here on, had an account of an experience of Abraham and Sarah with Abimelech, King of Gerar, which was a variant of the Yahwist's account of the experience of Abram and Sarai in Egypt. Notwithstanding the similarity, this is also preserved in the narrative, while, later on, a similar experience of Isaac and Rebekah with this King of Gerar is drawn from the Yahwist source, revealing the confusion caused by making from variants of the same mythical story different experiences of characters represented to be real. After the statements regarding the birth of Isaac the Elohist's version of the ejection of Hagar and Ishmael is introduced, which is not made wholly consistent with that of the earlier writer. From the same source is the account of the "Offering of Isaac," which may be taken not only as exhibiting the obedience and faith of Abraham, but as symbolising the substitution of animal for human sacrifice. The prosaic account of the death and burial of Sarah is an interpolation of the priestly writers after the exile.

The story of the wooing of Rebekah by proxy and the marriage of Isaac is a charming passage

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

from the epic genius known as the Yahwist. That of the birth of Esau and Jacob and the supplanting of the first-born by the second-born twin is somewhat confused by a mixture of material from the two sources, and imperfect efforts to blend it harmoniously. Close analysis has been made, but it is not necessary to our purpose. It was the Elohist who made Esau a red and hairy man, and the Yahwist who made the father blind. The latter never attempts to disguise the craft or duplicity of his characters. There is a similar mingling of material in the account of Jacob's migration to Syria, his relations with Laban, the birth of his children, and his encounter with his brother of Edom on his return to Canaan. Upon the mythical character and significance of these incidents there is no further occasion to enlarge. Considering the time and manner of their production, centuries after the supposed events, to argue for their reality as history is to indulge in nonsense.

The same is true of the delightful story of Joseph and his brethren, which is also somewhat marred by an imperfect blending of material. The most picturesque, pathetic and lifelike touches are always those of that unknown Homer of the Hebrews called the Yahwist or Jehovist. That writer lived at the time when the Kingdom of that part of Israel known as Joseph, or as Ephraim and Manasseh, was at its highest estate, while Judah, after the death of Solomon and before the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

time of Hezekiah, was in eclipse. The pride and sense of superiority of the northern kingdom crops out at many points in spite of the privilege which Judean writers exercised so freely of editing its literature after the kingdom was destroyed. This sense of superiority was exemplified at a much later time in the reply of King Jehoash to Amaziah of Judah when he proposed an alliance. "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon saying, 'Give thy daughter to my son to wife'; and there passed a wild beast that was in Lebanon and trod down the thistle."

The Yahwist writer appeared but two generations or so after the return of Jeroboam from his sojourn in Egypt, to become the first king of Israel and to lord it over Judah. It was in that interval that the myths arose regarding the title to the land of Canaan, the origin of the tribes of Israel in the Sons of Jacob, and the reasons for going down to Egypt to fall into galling servitude. What companions Jeroboam had in Egypt, what lore he may have brought from there, we do not know, but there is evidence, even in the unfriendly record, that he was a man of great ability and was treated with consideration by the reigning Pharaoh. It is probable that out of that sojourn grew the first accounts of the deliverance and suggestions for the story of Joseph's glory and greatness and the humiliation of his brethren. It is certain that there could be nothing historical in the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

accounts of what preceded the servitude, and even those of the escape, so long before they appeared, could be nothing else than legendary, with mythical elaboration. When for ages there are no written records, tradition may carry through memory from generation to generation the main outline of events and the chief features of great characters, but only imagination can supply details and furnish thought and language to the departed actors; and whatever is above the range of common human experience comes necessarily from invention.

The account of the exodus from Egypt is hardly less mythical than that of the origin of the tribes and their title to the land which they wrested by barbarous warfare from the Canaanites. How could it be otherwise after the lapse of nearly five centuries between the event and the earliest written material of the narratives which were afterwards woven together and elaborated to form the framework of the latest development of the law, in the time of the priests who restored the worship at Jerusalem after the exile? During that eventful period there had been a change of language and the adoption of writing from Phœnicia, and no inscriptions or authentic memorials reaching back of the kings have ever been discovered. Considering that the name Moses virtually meant deliverer, or one that draws out, even the personality for which it stands recedes into the realm of myth, though there must have been a potent and resolute

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

leader to take the "mixed multitude" from the borders of Egypt through the perils and trials of the wilderness to the Jordan Valley, an achievement which according to tradition had occupied forty years. If there was such a period, the actual incidents of the prolonged experience are unrecorded and the character of the condensed story marks it as in the main fictitious.

This is necessarily so of such happenings as the birth of Moses, his meeting with the God Yahweh at Mount Horeb, when the deity was revealed in fire in a bush that was not consumed, and his personal converse with that divinity, who had discovered the oppression of his people in Egypt and determined to bring them out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, of the miraculous but cruel afflictions visited upon the Egyptians, to humiliate their stubborn ruler and demonstrate the might and implacable vengeance of Israel's God, of the crossing of the Red Sea and the fulmination of divine commands from Mount Sinai, the later name for Horeb, and of the incidents of the long journey with their supernatural accompaniments. To argue for the reality of these things is to renounce the benefit of all modern knowledge and discard the function of reason which men have been training in these later centuries.

It is sufficient to consider the reality of the deity as conceived of by the earliest writers of Israel, when it came to a struggle or a conflict

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

with the enemies of their people. This God, who had promised to his own peculiar people a land occupied by others, to be seized by the ruthless extermination of its inhabitants, was pictured as lying in wait in his mountain fastness until the cry of his oppressed people reached him, and then rescuing them by an exhibition of terror and cruelty which would be universally denounced as barbarous if it came within the compass of any human despot and was exercised by him to accomplish his purpose. To say nothing of the other plagues, the slaughter of the first-born of all the families of Egypt is a horror compared with which the equally mythical massacre by Herod of the children of Bethlehem sinks into insignificance. Was it a real deity who counselled the spoiling of the Egyptians, who broke out in fiery wrath when his people complained and had to be remonstrated with by his servant to prevent him from killing them, who did kill thousands of them by sending fiery serpents and famine and pestilence among them as a penalty for disobedience, and who descended upon a mountain top in clouds and darkness and revealed his presence in lightning and thunder, declaring that he would break through all bounds and destroy the people if they attempted to "gaze upon the Lord?"

Was it not rather the conception of a rude age and the creation of a vivid imagination, to impress the people with awe and give a tremendous sanc-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tion to the rules of conduct and the worship demanded of them by their leaders and teachers? It does not follow that there was deliberate or conscious invention or intent to deceive, any more than in the case of the mythology of Egypt or Chaldea, of Greece and Rome or of Mediæval Europe. The writers may have thought their imagination to be the inspiration of their God and believed what they wrote or said to be true, for they did not distinguish thought from knowledge where real knowledge was unattainable. There may have been traces of tradition upon which to string the narratives that run through the books of Exodus and of Numbers but in the main they are mythical, the imagining of poetic genius. Their vivid realism and the insistent claim of a divine origin have long imposed upon a credulous world.

These narratives are of a composite character throughout. Passages have been identified by the learned as from the Yahwist document, others from the Elohist and more from the blend produced from these by later writers. There are interpolations by the priestly writers of the exile and after, including most of the elaboration of the law in the later chapters of Exodus, practically all of Leviticus and a considerable part of Numbers. Deuteronomy is to be considered as a separate production. The mythical element runs into the account of the conquest in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the Book of Joshua, and the legends that follow are not wholly free from it. The Book of Exodus, as far as the lurid description of Mount Sinai and the fulmination of the law, is for the most part from the composite production of the so-called Yahwist and Elohist as combined or blended at a later time and finally edited after the exile. The scraps of genealogy and the instructions for the observance of the passover are interpolations from the late priestly writings, and the account of the feeding upon manna before the mountain is reached is elaborated from the same source. The triumphal song after crossing the Red Sea is generally believed by scholars to have been included in one of the ancient documents; but some, in view of the reference immediately afterwards to the Song of Miriam, of which only a fragment is preserved, regard it as a later interpolation. The battle with Amalek at the end of chapter xvii, the wise counsel of Moses's father-in-law in chapter xxviii, and the description of the scene on Mount Sinai in chapter xix, are ascribed to the Elohist. The version of the passage generally known as the Ten Commandments, introduced immediately after the description, is probably a late recension. The real purpose of the scene was apparently to introduce what is designated as the "Book of the Covenant," beginning at xx, 22, and extending to xxiii, 19. This was incorporated in one of the older documents, but was sub-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

sequently modified to some extent. The narrative is resumed after that, where it contains the statement that Moses went up on the mountain with Aaron and Abihu and came down to tell the people "all the words of the Lord" and to write them down. This is interrupted by a diverse and much later account of Moses going up with Joshua and waiting six days for an interview with "the Lord" and remaining on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

The next six chapters, containing the directions for constructing the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, &c., are unquestionably post-exilic, belonging to what the scholars call the "Priests' Code," as are the subsequent chapters telling how the instructions were executed. The absurdity of supposing that anything like this was actually done in the Wilderness of Sinai is sufficiently obvious, but the purpose was to give an ancient and divine sanction to the ceremonial devices of the second temple. Between these two descriptions of the trappings of the temple prototype there is another composite passage of peculiar interest. It begins with the account of the making of the golden calf, which was intended at the time of its production by the Elohist writer as a lesson and a warning to those of the Northern Kingdom who were enticed to heathenism by the symbols set up by Jeroboam I for the worship at Bethel and Dan. It had been previously represented in the narrative that "the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Lord" promised to give Moses two tables of stone upon which he had written "the law and the commandment." Now it is said that Moses after dissuading "the Lord" from destroying the people in the heat of passion came down with the two tables of stone written on both sides by God himself, broke all the commandments in anger at what met his view by throwing them down, and burnt and ground to powder an image made of gold, or perhaps of gilded wood. After the wrath of "the Lord" has been appeased by the slaughter of about three thousand men and he had renewed his promise and his threat, Moses was directed to hew two new tables of stone and take them up the mountain for the Lord to write upon. This he did, and, after a parley with the Lord, certain distinct covenants were uttered and Moses was directed to write them down; and after again being with the Lord forty days and forty nights he "wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments," manifestly meaning the words that had then been given him. This is what the ancient writers meant by the ten commandments, and what we call the decalogue was a later production, of which there was more than one version. The description of Moses coming down from the mountain with a shining face and having to put on a veil when speaking to the "congregation" is from the late material of the post-exilic priests.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

From the same source is all the elaboration of the law, the commands, the observances of sacrifice and worship that follow in Leviticus and Numbers. The more or less mythical narratives of the irregular march through "the wilderness," that is, the deserts of Arabia, are resumed near the end of chapter x of the latter book, and we get the mixture of ancient material again, with here and there intimations of still older poetic sources. Here is the original account of the feeding on manna and the miraculous supply of quails with which the people were sickened of their complaining by being smitten with a "very great plague." Here also we find the story of Miriam stricken with leprosy because she and Aaron remonstrated with Moses for marrying a Cushite woman. There is the same conception of deity as a jealous being, quickly provoked to wrath, fierce in anger, vengeful toward those who disobeyed him and toward the enemies of his people, but easily mollified by evidences of repentance and submission,— surely not a real divinity according to any rational conception now possible, but the product of the imagination in a primitive time, like other ancient gods.

The descriptions of the experience on that memorable but unremembered journey must in all reason and conscience be regarded as mythical or as fictitious. There are evidences here and there of inventions for a specific purpose, as in the latest

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

material of the mixed account of the insurrection against the authority of Moses and Aaron under the leadership of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Tradition of some such incident appears in the older narrative, but it was turned to account by the latest revisers to establish the authority of the priesthood in the family of Aaron and consecrate the distinction between priests and Levites, which never existed before the exile. In connection with this also there is an exhibition of that ruthless wrath which characterised the God Yahweh in those troublous times.

There is relief in the more truly mythical episodes, like that of the attempt of the King of Moab to repel the horde that was invading his kingdom by getting the prophet Balaam to curse it. There are two accounts of this, one from the Yahwist and the other from the Elohist, which are imperfectly harmonised by the compiler who adopted both. The turning of the intended curse to a blessing seems in the two accounts to be a variation of poetic material from a common source, much older than either of them. The picture of Israel that it presents could hardly have been drawn after the division of the first kingdom and could not be earlier than the triumph of David and the preparation for the glory of Solomon.

The enumeration of the people, the establishment of the law of inheritance and the various ordinances regarding sacrifices and offerings, to-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

gether with the allotment of tribes in the promised land and the review of the various stages of the journey, in short, practically all of the Book of Numbers after the Balaam episode came from the late material of the priestly writers. The main substance of the Book of Deuteronomy is a version of the law discovered in the time of Josiah of Judah, with introductory discourses of later origin attributed to Moses, and some additions and variations. Near to its close is the poetical production known as the "Song of Moses" which probably had its origin in the time of the exile, and the so-called "Blessing of Moses," which is much older and has been already sufficiently considered. The book ends with the account of the death of Moses before the invasion of Canaan. This is a comparatively late addition to the older narratives. The leadership passed to Joshua with the necessary divine sanction, and his name was connected with the book which gives an account of the conquest, as that of Moses was associated with all that preceded it, when the mass of Epic literature was finally compacted.

The mythical element strongly asserts itself in the material of Joshua derived from the Yahwist and the Elohist sources, as a considerable part of it was. This appears as clearly in the story of crossing the Jordan as in that of crossing the Red Sea, and is plain enough in that of the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

siege and capture of Jericho. It is unmistakable in the account of Joshua's battles, the first failure at Ai on account of the sin of Achan, and the triumph after the offender had been stoned to death; the wily proceeding of the emissaries of Gibeon whereby certain cities were saved from destruction, and, according to later revisers of the material, the subjection of Canaanites to menial service was justified; the league of the five kings of the Amorites and their fate, and the subjection of King Jabin of Hazor and his allies.

The systematic account of the extermination of the inhabitants and devastation of the towns of various sections of the land, and the allotment to the different tribes of Israel, is of later production and fictitious rather than mythical. It was intended to prefigure the restoration of the inheritance after the return from exile. Most of this material was derived from the framework of the "Priests' Code" in post-exilic days. The account of Joshua's farewell address in chapter xxiii is, however, older, and his rehearsing of past events before the tribes gathered at Shechem, and his urgent warning against idolatry, is ascribed by the learned to the Elohist writer, who lived and wrote in the anxious days of Jeroboam II, when the warning was most needed. The last trace of these distinctly mythological productions is found at the beginning of the Book of Judges.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

V

HEROIC AND HISTORIC LEGENDS

ONE of the most interesting portions of the Hebrew epic is that which covers the legendary period between the conquest of Canaan and the establishment of the monarchy. Much that is legendary is mingled with the mythical and with a later fictitious element, in the account of the conquest itself, and the character of Joshua is hardly more real than that of Moses or Aaron. But traditions of the time when there was no King in Israel and heroes arose to lead the people to battle when beset by enemies, came nearer to the light of history, and the original form of the stories of these champions and their exploits were probably written down earlier than any of the other narratives or perhaps anything in the whole composite work, except a few ancient fragments. The pristine flavour was preserved through all the processes of compilation, revision and redaction.

But the period was a long one, of two centuries or more, and one of obscure transition, with scattered and unorganised tribes slowly gaining their ascendancy and imperfectly coalescing. Few were the events preserved in memory to furnish mate-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

rial for the first writers, more than a century after the latest of these events were passed. It was an age of relative barbarism, of low conceptions of deity and humanity and of the relations of men to each other and to their gods. The champions who arose in time of trouble became rulers only locally and temporarily, when they became such at all, and the title by which they were known is imperfectly rendered in English by the word "Judges." In what is called the Book of Judges we must distinguish that which covers these legends of heroes, contained in the chapters from the third to the sixteenth, and the later appendix of five chapters relating to the migration of the Danites and to the war upon Benjamin.

These legends first appeared in written form sometime after the division into two kingdoms and in that known as Israel, or Ephraim, which held that of Judah almost in contempt, notwithstanding the achievements of David and Solomon. When they were afterwards compiled into a continuous narrative there was an attempt to fill the gaps with the names of other "judges" than the heroes of these tales, but there were scarcely any exploits remembered with which to credit them. We are told of a Shamgar who saved Israel by smiting six hundred Philistines with an ox goad, and of others who had thirty sons that rode on asses' colts or thirty sons and thirty daughters, these apparently being symbolical expressions

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

for the domain they ruled. Still later, when this literature passed into the possession of Judah, after the destruction of Samaria, and when the theocratic doctrine was developed, which attributed all trouble or calamity to the anger of "the Lord" when his people sinned or provoked his jealousy by wandering after other gods, and credited every deliverance or triumph to his favour after the people repented or had been duly chastised, there was a revision which introduced this doctrine as an explanation of the events. In this process there was some mutilation of the narratives, and in some cases there is evidence of interpolation or the blending of more than one version of the same episode.

In the final redaction of the "book" after the exile a summary account of the conquest was prefixed to it, which is believed to have come from the Yahwist document, of which so much use had been made in the preceding books, and the occupation of the land of Canaan was made to follow the death of Joshua instead of being achieved by him, and to be an imperfect conquest instead of a complete one. This prefix with the exception of the opening clause, which places the conquest after the death of Joshua had evidently been adopted by the theocratic compiler, for the latter part of it is interlarded with his general explanation of how the Lord delivered the people into the hands of spoilers when they went "lusting" after other

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

gods, and raised up "judges" to rescue them when his compassion was excited by their groaning under oppression. He also explains that the other tribes, or "nations," were left among them for the purpose of testing, or "proving," them and finding out whether they could be made to obey the commandments of the Lord, "which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses." It is he who gives the first example of oppression by the King of Mesopotamia and of the rescue by Othniel, and preludes the story of Ehud and the fat King of Moab with his customary explanation of the occasion for it; but it is a late editor, or redactor, who supplies the chronological scheme of forty year or twenty year or eighty year periods. This was based upon an artificial manner of reckoning by generations and making twelve generations from the exodus to the completion of the temple.

It is with Ehud that the genuine legends begin. His barbaric act of duplicity and assassination is related with a certain gusto, and the summoning of the men of Ephraim to take the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites sums up in a few words the whole conflict. The statement of the slaughter of ten thousand and the subduing of Moab so that Israel had rest for eighty years is one of the characteristic additions of the later editors. Brief and graphic also is the account of the conflict of the northern tribes with Sisera, under

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the clarion call of Deborah the prophetess and with the aid of Jael, the wife of the peaceful Kenite. The preservation of the antique and mutilated song of victory suggests the source of the prose narrative. There is a glimpse of the terror of those early days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, and of the awe excited by the coming of storms which were the war chariot of the God of Israel as he swept over the mountains of Seir to the rescue of his people. "And the land had rest forty years."

The mythical element is conspicuous in the story of the choosing of Gideon of the clan of Abiezer in Manasseh to repel an invasion of Midianites, who were eating up the land like a swarm of locusts. Back of it are the relics of a tale of blood-avenging in which Gideon's clan alone was concerned, on account of the killing of his brothers by two Midianite Chiefs, whom he captured and slew with his three hundred men; but these relics are overlaid with an account of a general slaughter of a multitude of Midianites, with the forces summoned from all Manasseh and the neighbouring tribes, reduced to these three hundred chosen warriors of Abiezer. The appearance of the God Yahweh in the guise of his "messenger," or "the angel of the Lord," is in the manner of similar appearances to Abram at the oaks of Mamre and to other "patriarchs of the infant world." The incidents attending this apparition,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the mode of reducing the fighting force to three hundred and the manner of the battle with the Midianite horde which threw it into panic and self-slaughter by a demonstration of torches and broken pitchers, are distinctly mythical in character. Like the fall of the walls of Jericho at the blowing of rams' horns, they are intended to enforce the idea that when Israel triumphs it is the act of his God and not of his men. Still, there is no reason to doubt that there was behind the elaborate story a genuine tradition of a Midianite invasion and the rising of Gideon to lead the battle against it.

It was a natural impulse of the people to desire to make a permanent ruler of Gideon, who had not only repelled their enemies but destroyed the altar of Baal and set up the worship of Yahweh-Shalom at Ophrah, with such an image as was later forbidden in "the law." It was a late editor of the account that made this a "snare" to him and his house. The original writer saw no offence in it. The pristine account of the manner in which the son of Gideon and a concubine undertook to set up a kingdom for himself at Shechem and was brought to grief, is but slightly marred by subsequent editing and is a vivid picture of the time.

The tale of Jephthah, the outlaw of Gilead, who was called upon to repel the Ammonites on the other side of the Jordan has a prelude from a

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

later hand than that of the original writer, and is broken by the interpolation of a long message from Jephthah to the King of Ammon, resenting the claim of that potentate to the land which he had invaded, and defining the jurisdiction of Yahweh and Chemosh. It need not be said that no such message could have been conveyed and preserved for several centuries, but it could easily be injected into the story of a later time, as it undoubtedly was. In the touching episode of Jephthah's daughter there is a reminder of days when a vow to Yahweh might mean a human sacrifice.

The compiler who put Shamger after Ehud and Tola and Jair after Abimelech as "judges" of Israel, interposed three successive rulers of whom nothing seems to have been known except the number of their sons and daughters or grandsons, between Jephthah and Samson. There is myth again in the account of the birth of the Danite hero, similar to that in the story of the birth of Isaac, and later of that of Samuel, and there is myth in his exploits, derived rather from Phœnician or Philistine than Hebrew sources, for it is related to Hercules and to sun worship, however remotely. But it is told in such a simple matter-of-fact and diverting way that it seems like an impertinence to subject it to critical analysis. It is neither matter of fact nor matter of history, but what actuality may have been back of it we can never find out. We may be sure, however,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

that this picture book giant of the border of Philistia and Judah did not "judge Israel twenty years," and the author of the picturesque tale never said that he did. That was the assumption of a redactor. The minor and barely mentioned judges seem to have been interposed to make up the number twelve.

It was a later writer who told how the Danites marched in a body from the borders of Philistia to the North, smote a "quiet and serene" and unsuspecting people with the edge of the sword, burnt their town and took possession of their land, stealing a priest of Yahweh and the trappings of his worship on the way, wherewith to set up the sanctuary that subsequently existed at Dan. This is chiefly interesting for the glimpse it gives of the Yahweh worship of the time and the spirit which accompanied it.

The gruesome tale of the Levite of Bethlehem-Judah and his concubine, the outrage upon whom at Gibeah led to the fratricidal war that nearly destroyed Benjamin, exhibits a state of manners in the midst of Israel such as was imputed to Sodom in another tale which originated at about the same time. Perhaps the Sodom and Gomorrah story was intended as a warning against such things as were tolerated at Gibeah and at a later time were disclosed even at Jerusalem. Other evidence of this Benjamite war does not exist, and the explanation of its cause may be

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

mythical, but the accounts reflect a time which history could not depict with the same truthful colouring. Two accounts of the actual battles at Gibeah are so blended as to confuse the effect at some points, and two explanations of the manner of providing the surviving sons of Benjamin with Israelite wives are imperfectly reconciled; but this is of little moment compared with the calm assumption that the ruthless slaughter of women and children in such contests was an accepted thing.

Legendary episodes in the life of Israel are not confined to the period of the so-called judges nor is the story of them limited to the book that bears that title. The Book of Samuel, divided into two in the Greek version and in all modern versions, was compiled from a variety of material and more than once revised before its character was fixed beyond further change. Some of the learned critics find in this and in the stories of the Judges traces of both of those old documents, the Yahwist and Elohist narratives, as an underlying stratum; but in the main that to which the name of Samuel is attached was made up from separate accounts of the "seer," or prophet, and his relation to the first king, of Saul in his relation to David, and of the exploits of David before he became a king. The varied material underwent several processes of compilation and recension, and the story of the birth and childhood of Samuel

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

which forms a prelude to the book was one of its latest parts. Much older is the account which follows it of a calamitous conflict with the Philistines in which "the ark of God" was captured. This represents Israel as being at that time subject to the Philistines and as fighting against its subjection, and the compiler of the book interjects the statement on the death of Eli that he had "judged Israel forty years," implying that he had been the ruler of the people at Shiloh, as other "judges" had been at other places. The probability is that he had only been looked up to and consulted as a priest, exercising such rule as existed in that region at the time.

There is something hardly short of grotesque in the account of the use of the "ark of the covenant of the Lord" as a help in battle and an object of terror to the enemy, its capture by the Philistines, its malignity in afflicting its captors, their relief by sending it back to Israel with placatory offerings, and its deadly spite when some of its own devotees ventured to look into it. It need not be said that such accounts, wherever found, are not history but myth or perverted legend, intended to convey a lesson. Doubtless this story was introduced here by the compiler as an explanation of the end of the rule of the priests of Shiloh and an introduction to the part taken by Samuel in setting up the first king; and it was to lead up to it that the later matter was prefixed, relating

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to the birth of Samuel, the sins of the sons of Eli and the doom of his house, and the revealing of "the word of the Lord" to Samuel at Shiloh, after which he was "established to be a prophet of the Lord."

It was the theocratic compiler of these legends in the latter days of the kingdom, probably the same who had put together those of the "Judges," who introduced the warning of Samuel to the people gathered at Mizpah against the enticements of alien gods, and made offerings to "the Lord" for them, which resulted in their deliverance from the Philistines. Though this writer says that the latter were "subdued" and "came no more within the border of Israel," and that Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life, this interlude is followed by a series of narratives drawn from different sources and inconsistent with each other, which represent Samuel's function as quite other than that of a "Judge of Israel" all his life, and the Philistines as persistent and troublesome enemies of Israel all through the reign of Saul and into that of David.

The main purpose of the first Book of Samuel was to give an account of the setting up of the kingdom under Saul of Benjamin and its "establishment" under David of Judah. In its compilation three main sources were used and imperfectly blended, with fragments here and there from others and interjections by the compilers and

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

later editors in the effort to harmonise the incongruous material and to impress the lesson of Yahweh's supremacy in the rule of Israel. Two of these sources were relatively ancient, probably originating soon after the time of Solomon and less than a century after the time when Saul was made king, one of them devoted to an account of Saul and his exploits and the other to David and his relation to Saul while the latter was king. Some learned authorities regard these as one, but they have diversities that distinguish them, as regarding character and events from different points of view. The other main source is much later, originating in the troublous times of Jeroboam II of Israel and Azariah, or Uzziah, of Judah, and being devoted chiefly to the relations of Samuel and Saul. After such an interval of time this was almost of necessity a work of the imagination making free use of older material and adapting it to the writer's pragmatic purpose. Imagination, or the mythical element, must necessarily enter into such narratives, treating of events long past which survive only in the memory of successive generations. Sufficient evidence of this is to be found in the detailed reports of familiar talk, not only between men, but between men and the deity, which could not have been literally transmitted even if they had been real.

There are three diverse accounts of how Saul came to be made king. According to the oldest

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of these this goodly young man, the son of a mighty man of valour, Kish of Gibeah in Benjamin, was searching for stray asses what time "the Lord" had confided to Samuel,—"told Samuel in his ear" is the homely phrase of the "authorised version"— that he was sending this young man to him to be anointed as captain over his people to save them "out of the hand of the Philistines," for he had "looked upon" them because their cry was come unto him. It was the Lord who determined to set up a king for Israel out of the goodness of his heart and who picked out Saul for the place. Samuel anointed him and gave him benign instructions which caused the spirit of the Lord to come upon him and led to an episode which gave rise to the proverbial query "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Meantime the stray asses were miraculously brought home. This account is in the simple manner of primitive story.

There is another of doubtful origin and uncertain date which represents Saul as having been "raised up" after the manner of the "judges" when King Nahash of the Ammonites made an attack upon Jabesh-Gilead where Jephthah had before been the champion against the same enemies. When the men of Jabeṣh-Gilead got a respite from Nahash and sent word throughout Israel for help and the message reached Saul while he was following the oxen in Gibeah, the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him as it had come upon Jeph-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

thah and Gideon and Samson, and he became the rescuer of the people. In gratitude they insisted upon making him king at the ancient sanctuary of Gilgal.

The beginning of the third account of making Saul ruler over Israel, drawn from the latest of the sources, is placed before that in which the Lord had singled him out and sent him to Samuel to be anointed. It represents the Elders of Israel as going to Samuel at Ramah, when he was old and had made his sons "judges over Israel" and they had turned from his ways and perverted judgment, and demanded that he set a king over them that they might be ruled like other nations. This not only displeased Samuel but displeased the Lord; and, although he yielded to the importunity, he instructed the prophet to warn the people of the consequences. This account is continued after that which represents Samuel as anointing Saul at Ramah and sending him to join a band of prophets going up to Bethel. It says that Samuel called the people together at Mizpah and after rebuking them for rejecting their God, selected a king for them by a process of elimination in the old manner of consulting the Lord. Saul was expecting no such honor and when it came upon him "hid himself among the stuff." Then follows the account of the war against Nahash and Saul's appearance as a hero acclaimed by the people.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The later writers who had a hand in this composite narrative were intent upon explaining how it happened that Saul's reign was a failure and he had to be set aside in favour of David. This had necessarily to be attributed to the displeasure of the deity, and the latest of the accounts in the hands of the compiler and subsequent revisers of his work began by making the demand for a King an offence to the Lord. Further on it imputes to Saul a serious fault in failing to obey literally a command of "the Lord of hosts" utterly to exterminate the Amalekites and destroy all they had. Although there appears to have been plenty of Amalekites in the time of David, Saul is said to have utterly destroyed them with the edge of the sword, except their King Agag, whom he brought away as a captive. He also saved some of the best of the cattle as spoils of war. For his offence Samuel fiercely condemned him as rejecting the Lord, and declared that the Lord rejected him and would rend the kingdom away from him and give it to a better man. Thereupon the aged prophet in his wrath slew Agag, the last surviving Amalekite, with his own hand and went home to Ramah, while Saul "went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul."

The final editor in his effort to reconcile these accounts interpolated in the oldest a direction by Samuel to Saul to go down to Gilgal and wait seven days for him to come and offer sacrifices.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Then at the end of the Nahash episode he made Samuel lead the people down to Gilgal to "renew the Kingdom" and there they "made Saul King before the Lord," offered sacrifices and "rejoiced greatly." By still another interpolation further on he represents Saul as still waiting the seven days for Samuel at Gilgal and, when the time was up, making the sacrifices himself, thereby incurring the anger of the prophet and forfeiting the favour of "the Lord." This is made the cause of the breach between the prophet and the king and the occasion for declaring that the Lord had "sought him a man after his own heart" and "appointed him to be prince over his people" because, in the language of Samuel, "thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee," and thereupon "Samuel arose and gat him up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin."

It is evident that the effort to reconcile these accounts was not successful, and that the explanation of the loss of the kingdom by the Benjamite hero was duplicated in an inconsistent manner. But there is much disorder in the use of the material in the whole narrative. Immediately after the account of the defeat of the Ammonites there is a passage which begins with a plea of Samuel to the people that he has grown old and has given them a king, and that he has never oppressed or defrauded them. This agrees with the idea that appears once or twice elsewhere that Samuel

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

after the death of Eli had acted as a "judge" in the old manner. He recalls to them the past dealings of the Lord with his people and warns them and their king not to rebel against him. Finally he calls upon the Lord to make a demonstration of his power in thunder and rain, which immediately follows. The prophet takes leave with a promise to pray for them and instruct them in the right way, and a warning that if they did wickedly both they and their king would be consumed. Parts of this passage savour of that theocratic compiler who put together the stories of the judges in a manner to illustrate the ways of Israel's God. While the language is all put in the mouth of Samuel it refers to him in one place in the third person as among those whom the Lord in the past had sent to deliver them from their enemies "on every hand."

Following this is an account, in the manner of the oldest source of the material, broken by one of the redactor's interpolations, of a contest of Saul and his son Jonathan, who appears suddenly as a full grown warrior, against the Philistines. It is followed by a summary statement of his victories over these and other enemies, in which he "did valiantly." Among other he "smote the Amalekites and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them." After a slight genealogical statement it is said that there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul, and when he

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

saw any mighty man he took him. This would seem like a winding up of his career, but it is immediately after that the late story of the loss of the kingdom by failing to destroy the last of the Amalekites and all they had is interposed. After that David makes his first appearance on the scene, but Saul does not leave the stage. A new source of the original material appears here, that which is mainly devoted to David's relation to Saul and Jonathan, but the other continues to mingle with it.

By way of introducing the series of events in which Saul and David both appear, the later writer who strove to get the narratives into a continuous and consistent form, gives his own account of the first anointing of David at his father's home in Bethlehem by Samuel, who has two or three times already appeared to be vanishing. It was then considered necessary to have the prophet anoint the future king and founder of a great dynasty, under the direction of the Lord. With the new material we are told of the evil spirit that came upon Saul when the spirit of the Lord had departed from him, and of the coming of David to soothe him by playing upon the harp. The shepherd lad is here spoken of as already a mighty man of valour and a man of war, as well as cunning in playing the harp, prudent in speech and comely in person.

But the account of the war with the Philistines in which Goliath of Gath appears as a champion

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and is slain by David with a sling is mostly from the later source. It is marred and confused in the editing and a number of verses, as it is divided in English versions, are not in the Greek text. It is purely legendary matter. It may be noted that, notwithstanding the previous statement that David was brought to Saul as a skilful player of the harp and was made his armour-bearer, this Goliath story is made the occasion of his first meeting with the king. Even in that an inconsistency appears, for he is called to Saul and has a colloquy with him before entering upon his exploit with the sling, and yet after it is over the king inquires who he is and has him brought to him as a stranger. In spite of its defects of composition the story is one of the classic episodes of the great epic.

In the account of Saul's growing jealousy of David, the affectionate relation of the latter with the king's son, the peril of the youth of Bethlehem, his fleeing to Samuel at Ramah and being harboured by the priests of Nob, there is a perplexing mixture of material and occasional inconsistencies of detail, but this does not prevent its having a sustained interest, while the stories of David's adventures as an outlaw in the mountains of Judah are vivid and picturesque. These are partly from that older source which deals chiefly with the relation of David and Saul and partly from the later one that treats of the relation of Saul and Samuel.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

There is an instructive duplication which well illustrates the form in which different versions of the same incident appear and are treated as if relating to separate events. It was the later source that told of David's taking refuge in the cave of Adullam and drawing lawless men to him. It was the older that told of his going with his men to the rescue of Keilah from the Philistines and of the betrayal to Saul of his subsequent whereabouts by the Ziphites. According to this latter, while Saul is hunting him in the mountains he has the king's life in his hands but spares it out of magnanimity or regard for "the Lord's Anointed." He lets the king know of this, remonstrates with him and gets his avowal of repentance and promise of immunity in return for assurance that when David becomes king he will spare the house of Saul from destruction. From the same source is the picturesque and diverting account of marauding in the South, with the death of the foolish Nabal and the captivating of his wife, and then from the later source is the duplicate version of the incident of sparing the king's life in the wilderness of Ziph. The details as related are quite different but the event is the same.

Finally David, still distrusting the purpose of Saul toward him, boldly takes refuge with the chief enemies of his country, the Philistines, and makes friends with one of their five princes, Achish of Gath, who allowed him the city of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Ziklag for his own. This, which was no doubt a historic fact, led to a previous reference to his having fled alone to the same potentate and, not being kindly received, playing the madman to escape harm. There is no reason for accepting that as authentic. From here on to the death of Saul and Jonathan the material is practically all from the earlier source and may be taken as substantially historical, at least so far as concerns the battle with the Philistines and its result. It is not unlikely that David set out, with the favour of Achish, to accompany the Philistine prince to the battle and was turned back by the objection of the others, taking the opportunity for freebooting raids in the opposite direction. But the details of what passed, including the visit of the king to the woman of Endor who had a familiar spirit, are necessarily of a legendary character as there could have been no record or exact memory of them.

The woman of Endor story is out of its proper place and should come after the account of the gathering of the Philistines at Aphek and David's revenge upon the Amalekites for burning his town of Ziklag in his absence, and just before that of the disastrous battle on Mount Gilboa. It is interesting as a picture of the superstition of the time when "the Lord" was supposed to reveal his will by dreams or by Urim or by inspiration of prophets, and wizards and "familiar spirits" were believed in. It also gives a glimpse of the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

notion that the dead dwelt in a state of inanition in the underworld, from which they might be aroused by the summons of wandering spirits.

The last intrusion of the late writer of what is sometimes called the "Saul and Samuel source" appears in connection with David's receiving the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan in the battle with the Philistines, when the men of Jabesh-Gilead remembered their gratitude for the deliverance from Nahash, King of the Ammonites. The older writer had said that when Saul's armour-bearer refused to kill him to save him from the dishonour of death by the uncircumcised, he had fallen upon his own sword. The later writer makes an Amalekite fleeing from the field of battle report to David that he had slain the king and brought his crown and bracelet to "my Lord," whereupon the Lord's anointed caused one of his young men to kill the messenger of evil. It may be noted here that at a later time, after David had been made King of Judah at Hebron and two officers of Ish-bosheth, the Son of Saul, thought to win his favour by bringing him the head of the heir of the former King of Israel, he is represented as saying, "when one told me saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him and slew him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his tidings." Whereupon he administered the same reward to them.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

That the lament of David at the death of Saul and Jonathan, one of the finest specimens of antique poesy, is a genuine production, there is no sufficient reason to doubt, though it is doubted by some critics, but when it was written or where it was written we have no means of knowing. We are told that " he bade them " to teach it to the children of Judah, but that it was written in the Book of Jasher, which was probably compiled late in the reign of Solomon.

The material of these narratives which relates especially to David and Saul often represents David as " inquiring of the Lord " in the old manner of using the ephod and urim and thummim, a rude mechanism for obtaining aleatory answers to direct questions. By this means he is said now to have obtained sanction for his purpose of going up to Hebron, where the " men of Judah " came and " anointed him King over the house of Judah." The narrator knew nothing of the mythical anointing by Samuel at Bethlehem long before. His account is older than that story and nearer to historical truth.

One needs only to read the accounts of the reign of Saul and the adventures of David before he becomes king, with care and with freedom from prepossessions, to see that they are largely legendary and partly mythical, which thorough investigation proves them to be, but they may nevertheless represent with substantial truth the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

main historical facts. In days of little writing and of reading confined to those who possessed the sparse copies of manuscript scrolls, oral tradition was carried through successive generations and words were remembered and repeated in a way which would seem marvellous in modern times. Yet it was even then far easier to imagine details than to remember them, and there was no scruple in setting down as fact what was assumed but not known to be so. In legendary and mythical history the incredible is no more to be accepted as fact in the language of the Hebrews and the literature that they deemed sacred than in that of other ancient peoples. Still, the mythical and the legendary in their great epic picture their life and character in the early days in vivid colours more truthful perhaps than colourless history.

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VI

DAVID AND SOLOMON

WHILE Saul was nominally the first king of all Israel, it is evident from the disordered and unsystematic, but picturesque, accounts of his reign that he had no organised government, and his rule differed little from that of the old sofetim, or "judges," except in its continuity, which may have been due to an almost continuous conflict with surrounding enemies. He had no palace or capital, but seems to have dwelt at his old home in Gibeah when not engaged in the field of war. He is represented in one of the later accounts,— when he charged his son with being in league with the Son of Jesse to depose him, and accused his followers of conspiring against him, and when he passed sentence of death upon the priests of Nob for harbouring David,— as "sitting in Gibeah under a tamarisk tree in Ramah with his spear in his hand," while all his servants were standing about him. This appears to have been his royal state when he had occasion to hold council or pass judgment. Heroic as he may have been, his rule came in a time of great difficulty, when it is doubtful if any man could have succeeded in establishing

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the kingdom on a firm basis. He was beset with enemies, suspicious of his surroundings, "perplexed in the extreme," and he proved unequal to the task set for him. Writers of a later time were bound to explain his failure on the ground that he had offended the God of Israel and disobeyed his commands. Otherwise, in their view, he could not have failed.

Saul established no dynasty, and dying on the battle field with his heroic son, the beloved friend of David, left but a feeble heir in Ish-bosheth, or Is-baal, who had little loyal support. The way was prepared for David, and he had the qualities necessary to take full advantage of the situation and make his way to triumph. The writers who could see nothing but divine disappointment and anger in the failure of Saul attributed the success of David to divine favour. He had been taken from the sheepcote by Yahweh himself to be a prince over his people Israel, and a prophet had been specially sent to anoint him at the home of his father, the shepherd of Bethlehem, before he was known as a warrior and a mighty man of valour, which he afterwards became. The passage in the seventh chapter of Second Samuel, which contains the promise by the mouth of Nathan, the prophet, that the throne of his kingdom should be established forever, was from the pen of that compiler of the ancient material who was imbued with the theocratic doctrine of the prophets, and

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of the law as promulgated in the days of Josiah, when the perpetuity of the house of David was an article of faith in the divine rule at Jerusalem. The invocation to the "Lord God" when David "went in and sat before him" is from the same source.

David, like many another in human history, was the man for the time, fitted by natural endowment and training for his task, and he established a nation, and with his son and successor organised a government that endured for several centuries, until overwhelmed by the irresistible empire of the East. His dynasty continued unbroken throughout the history of the Kingdom of Judah, and was regarded as so divine that it must surely be revived and restored, bring all the scattered tribes of Israel together again, destroy their enemies and establish an everlasting reign of righteousness and peace on Mount Zion. This belief was the root of the doctrine of the Messiah, or anointed one of the house of David, which played such a part in human history at a later day.

But what we have to do with now is not the actual history of David or his dynasty, but the story of his reign as it appears in the great epic of his people. Largely legendary as the accounts of his previous life may be, it is plain that he had gone through a training that was essential to his task. He had experience as a warrior in Saul's battles with the Philistines more disciplinary

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

than killing giants with pebble stones and with divine aid. The jealousy of the king, which his success and popularity inflamed into wrath and a determination to compass his death, the shifts to which he was put to save himself and win support from his tribe, his adventures as an outlaw in the fastnesses of the mountains of Judah, his winning the favour and protection of a Philistine prince, even his ruthless exploits in raiding the traditional enemies of Israel in the South while pretending to prey upon his own people, were part of his preparation for the kingdom. When he distributed the spoils of his brigandage among the elders of Judah from Bethel to Ramoth of the South, he was paving the way to the throne at Hebron, which was the stepping stone to the stronghold of the Jebusites on Mount Zion, where the monarchy of all Israel was established seven years later.

That David had the qualities of a great leader his success sufficiently demonstrates, and the qualities were those necessary for the leadership of his people in that day and generation. He was clearly a man of unusual personal attraction, that subtle influence known as magnetism in men, of craft and duplicity, even ruthless cruelty when occasion required, and yet capable of lofty sentiment and deep emotion. Religious after the manner of his time, devout in his belief in Israel's God, he was subject to the moral weakness of an ardent

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

nature and capable of meanness in the satisfaction of his desires, as exemplified in the dastardly treatment of his heroic and faithful Hittite officer, Uriah, and ready to sacrifice the interests of his kingdom to his yearning love for his reprobate son Absalom, from which he was saved only by the brutal fidelity of that harsh and cruel but shrewd and far-seeing soldier, Joab, who, according to the genealogies of the Book of Chronicles, was the son of his father's sister Zeruiah.

The account of David's reign, like those which precede it, is of a composite character, but a long section of it is from a source nearer to the time and more harmonious and truly historical than those relating to his earlier exploits. The narrative of the conflict with the house of Saul and the winning of the other tribes to the throne of Judah, of which the craft and valour of Joab were the chief instrument, is derived, with some late interpolations and amendments, from the same source that dealt mainly with David's previous adventures in his relations with Saul. This is interrupted where it is said that all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and reminded him that the Lord had said in the time of Saul that he was to be "prince over Israel." The earlier and more historical source first appears in the statement, immediately following, that "all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron and King David made a covenant with them in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David King over Israel." The late reviser and editor of the narratives interposed here the statement that David was thirty years old when he began to reign and that he reigned seven years and six months over Judah at Hebron and thirty years over all Israel and Judah at Jerusalem; but the other continues with the capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and the building of David's stronghold there with the aid of Hiram of Tyre.

For several chapters of the second book of Samuel, from the beginning of the sixth to the twenty-second verse of the twentieth, omitting the seventh and eighth, the story of the reign is continuous and little marred by subsequent revision or editing. The seventh chapter is that which contains the promise of the perpetuity of the Kingdom of David, by the word of the Lord that came to Nathan in the night, and the King's invocation of gratitude, as conceived by the theocratic writer more than three centuries after the time. The eighth is an interpolated recapitulation of victories over hostile nations on all sides, when the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went, and a summary statement of his government and his chief officers.

Leaving out these, we have first in chapter vi the account of the transporting of the "ark of God" from the house of Aminadab in the hill to a tabernacle, or tent, at Jerusalem, which is much

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

in the same spirit as that of its capture and return by the Philistines in the days of Eli the priest of Shiloh. This depository of divinity exhibits the same malignant spite as before in slaying the well-meaning Uzziah for presuming to touch it when it appeared to be in danger of falling from the cart as the oxen stumbled. This so frightened David that he left it to bless the house of Obed-Edom, a Philistine, for three months before completing the journey with a form of rejoicing that disgusted that wife of his who was a daughter of Saul. For her derision she was made childless the rest of her days. There was doubtless a historical incident behind this strange tale, but in form and substance it must be regarded as mythical.

The passage that begins with chapter ix has every appearance of historical truth, at least in substance, and is marvellous in its graphic simplicity and absolute candour of portrayal. It reveals a barbaric time and in many ways a barbarous spirit, and shows David to be a rare embodiment of the spirit of his time. There is no concealment or glossing over or extenuation of his faults, but in spite of them he was beloved of God and man and was the glory of his time and race, so potent is success due to personal qualities and favouring circumstances to exalt a human being in the esteem of his fellow men. He showed his magnanimity in care for the crippled son of Jonathan. He

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

sought to show kindness to the young King of Ammon and when his overtures were rebuffed with insult he waged relentless war upon the Ammonites and upon the Syrians allied with them. The doughty Joab was the real commander in these wars of David, though ever ready to yield the glory of victory to his King.

It was during this conflict on the other side of the Jordan that the outrage upon the faithful Hittite officer Uriah was perpetrated, and the prophet Nathan with his parable of the little ewe lamb brought the King to a "realising sense" of his sin, the fruit of which was a child doomed to death. This gave occasion for one of those graphic touches for which the Hebrew genius was so remarkable. The peril of the sick child was made a bitter punishment for the offending monarch, but, when it was dead, he comforted himself: "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, who knoweth whether the Lord will not be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me," and so he proceeded to comfort Bath-Sheba and became the father of Solomon, and "the Lord loved him."

This episode over, we have the conclusion of the war upon Ammon under David's own command, but it is to be hoped that the statement that he put the people of its cities "under saws

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron and made them pass through the brick kiln" is not to be taken literally. The more pleasing interpretation is that he put them to labour and service with these instruments.

There is a series of vivid pictures of the royal life and the manners of the time in David's promiscuous family. He is said to have had six sons by as many wives at Hebron when he was King of Judah only. When he made his compact with Abner for bringing under his sway the other tribes which had made the son of Saul their King, he made it a prime condition that his first wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul, should be torn from her weeping husband and children and restored to him. When he became king of all Israel at Jerusalem he is said to have taken more concubines and wives there, and "there were yet sons and daughters born to David." It was not a harmonious royal family. The evil passion of the son Amnon for Tamar, a sister of Absalom, brought as many woes as the fated iniquities of a Greek tragedy. Though David was very "wroth," he left the penalty to the blood-avenging Absalom, who was thus estranged, and who afterwards led a revolt most humiliating to the king, whose life and throne were probably saved by the stern and ruthless Joab.

What David and his kingdom owed to this unsparing warrior, who commanded his motley

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

army of mercenaries, was requited by his violent death clinging to the horns of the altar when Solomon became king. It was he and his two brothers that led the forces against the adherents of the house of Saul to win the kingdom of all Israel. Though David lamented the death of Abner when he was killed by Joab, out of revenge for his own brother's death, and condemned the sons of Zeruiah as "too hard for him," Joab distrusted Abner and probably saved the king as well as himself from serious trouble. It was Joab that reconciled the king with the son for whom he visibly yearned, but when Absalom won the hearts of the people by his wiles and headed the revolt of Israel at Hebron, the grizzled warrior faithfully followed the king in his mournful retreat to the refuge across the Jordan Valley and was chief of the three who led the forces that faced the host of rebels under Amasa. He outraged the heart of the king by killing Absalom, but he regarded it as a stern necessity, and when the king gave way to grief and mourning he boldly rebuked his weakness and forced him to a royal attitude before the people. He was chiefly instrumental in restoring the kingdom and quenching the new revolt that would again have stripped the other tribes from Judah. The killing of Amasa, who had led the rebellious host of Absalom and been chosen by David to take Joab's place in confronting the new revolt, may have had a motive of jealousy and

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

selfishness, but it was a stroke of policy in behalf of the king as well. David feared and hated Joab, but he owed him much and dared not dispense with him.

It was a barbarous time and these pristine narratives show little of the religious spirit which the later material sought to reflect back upon it. Recognition of the mighty God of Israel is not wholly lacking, but there is not that familiarity with him so common in later narratives. After the suppression of the revolts which followed the conquest of external enemies not much remains to the reign of David. We are thrown back by some disjointed material relating to different episodes. There appears to have been a drought, described as a famine, during some part of the reign, and a relatively late writer considered it necessary to account for this. It is said to have lasted "three years, year after year," and David asked the Lord about it and was told that it was due to Saul having "put to death the Gibeonites," with whom Israel had a sworn covenant from the time of Joshua, and atonement must be made for that. So the Gibeonites were permitted to hang in Gibeah the two sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine, and five sons of Michal born to her and another husband after David's flight from Saul. After that the bones of Saul and Jonathan were gathered from Jabesh-Gilead and buried in the sepulchre of Kish in Benjamin. Thus was God

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"entreated for the land." This is not in any modern view a satisfactory way of accounting for famine and recovery therefrom.

Another fragment follows this relating to the gigantic warriors of the Philistines, which serves to introduce what is called David's song of victory or of thanksgiving, when he was delivered out of the hands of all his enemies. This composition is not of his time and is a repetition of the eighteenth psalm. The verses called the "last words" of David are certainly not authentic and are framed in imitation of the utterances attributed to Balaam. Another disconnected passage, giving an account of the "mighty men whom David had," is believed to have been taken from that source of material relating to David's exploits which, so far as it was preserved, treated mainly of his relation with Saul and Jonathan before he came to the throne.

An event which one of the later writers felt bound to account for was the choice of the site of the future temple. Perhaps, also, there had been an epidemic which must be attributed to the "Anger of the Lord." At all events, it was said that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and we are not told why. He moved David to have a census of the people taken, against the remonstrance of Joab, and when it was done the king suddenly concluded that he had committed a great sin. It appears for the first time that he

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

selfishness, but it was a stroke
of the king as well. David
Joab, but he owed him much
pense with him.

It was a barbarous time and
ratives show little of the reli
the later material sought to re
Recognition of the mighty Go
wholly lacking, but there is n
with him so common in later
the suppression of the revolts
conquest of external enemies
to the reign of David. We a
some disjointed material relati
sodes. There appears to hav
described as a famine, during
reign, and a relatively late w
necessary to account for this.
lasted " three years, year after
asked the Lord about it and w
due to Saul having " put to de
with whom Israel had a swor
time of Joshua, and atonemer
that. So the Gibeonites wer
in Gibeah the two sons of
bine, and five sons of Mic
another husband after Dav
After that the bones of Sa
gathered from Jabesh-Gil
sepulchre of Kish in Ben

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ces," a law which was not
centuries after the time of
also evident traces of the
ho put the finishing touches
r the exile. The contrast
nd style of the account of
of his son is as striking as
haracters and that between
eigns.

widely the borders of his
ernal enemies and quelled
nal revolt, for which the
n and the fierce community
ays so ready. The great
d South were quiescent and
been a long period of peace
w king to organise an ef-
and enter upon great en-
glory and that of the God
by making "affinity" with
s one of his wives a daughter
raoh. He sought the co-op-
of Tyre, who had been on
with his father, to secure for
als and workmanship and the
mercial skill for which Phœnicia
in the ancient world. His first
g was that of building at Jeru-
s temple to "the Lord," which his
sed to have promised, and an im-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

had a "seer" named Gad, and through him the Lord proposed as a penalty a choice of three evils, seven years of famine, discomfiture by his enemies for three months, or a three days' pestilence in the land. He chose the last, and seventy thousand men had to die to appease the wrath of the Lord because the people were numbered at his own instigation; but on David's plea the hand of the destroying angel was stayed at Jerusalem, and where he stood on the threshing floor of Araunah an altar was built and offerings were made. "So the Lord was entreated for the land and the plague was stayed from Israel." This account is no doubt just as historical as that of the pestilence inflicted upon the camp of the Greeks at Troy in answer to the prayer of the priest Chryses, and the angel that "stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it," was just as real as the avenging god to whom the priest appealed as "Smintheus."

The conclusion of that most authentic account of David's reign which was interrupted with these interpolations by the late compilers is to be found included in the first two chapters of the first Book of Kings. The division of what are now four books, effected in the early versions, was quite arbitrary. In the first Greek version Samuel was one and Kings was one and later there were four books of Kings. The original compilation before the exile and its recension afterwards, though

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

sufficiently disconnected at many points, was continuous and devoid of titles. A proper point of division is between the reign of David and that of Solomon.

Probably it is historically true that, when David was "old and stricken in years" and his blood had to be cherished into warmth by the fair damsel of Shunam, his son Adonijah set out, with the concurrence of Joab, Abiathar the priest, and of his brothers with the exception of Solomon, to take possession of the throne on his father's death, and that he got up a most unseemly feast with that end in view. It is doubtless equally true that Bath-Sheba at the instigation, or with the connivance, of Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest, determined to thwart that scheme by placing Solomon on the throne, with the old king's sanction, even before he was dead. The account of this in the first chapter of the first Book of Kings is most dramatic, but in its language it is necessarily a work of the imagination. It was written at least a generation after the events and the words of the actors in the little drama could hardly have been preserved, if they had ever been known. But in no drama or epic passage are the actual words of the characters supposed to be recorded. The Hebrew writer had the same liberty as the Greek writer to imagine the language of his kings and priests and heroes.

It was the late compiler of the theocratic his-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tory of Israel who conceived the dying charge of David to his royal son in the spirit of the Deuteronomic law, and made him counsel the doom of Joab and that Benjamite who railed at the king when he was fleeing from Absalom; but the original narrative is reverted to in the account of the execution of the supposed dying injunction. Solomon had his own motive and manner for getting rid of the brother who sought to forestall him and of the grim warrior who had abetted the attempt, though David may indeed have enjoined upon him the vengeful duty of disposing of Joab and Shimei, the Benjamite. It was sufficient to seclude the offending priest Abiathar at Anathoth, which at a later day was to furnish Jerusalem with the prophet Jeremiah. Solomon evidently had no compunction about clearing his court of those whom he feared or distrusted, even to violating his word to his mother and having Joab slain as he clung to the sacred altar, and he had a ready instrument in Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, whom he placed in command of the "host."

The account of the reign of Solomon is, like the rest of the Books of Kings, of composite material, but it was probably derived largely from the source referred to at its close as the "Book of the Acts of Solomon," though it is liberally interlarded with passages from the hand of the compiler who was imbued with the theocratic doctrine and familiar with the law that condemned all wor-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ship in the "high places," a law which was not promulgated until three centuries after the time of Solomon. There are also evident traces of the hand of the redactor who put the finishing touches to these narratives after the exile. The contrast between the manner and style of the account of David's reign and that of his son is as striking as that between the two characters and that between the events of the two reigns.

David had extended widely the borders of his realm, subdued its external enemies and quelled the tendency to internal revolt, for which the proud tribe of Ephraim and the fierce community of Benjamin were always so ready. The great empires of the East and South were quiescent and there appears to have been a long period of peace which enabled the new king to organise an effective administration and enter upon great enterprises for his own glory and that of the God of Israel. He began by making "affinity" with Egypt and securing as one of his wives a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh. He sought the co-operation of Hiram of Tyre, who had been on friendly relations with his father, to secure for his use the materials and workmanship and the industrial and commercial skill for which Phœnicia was pre-eminent in the ancient world. His first great undertaking was that of building at Jerusalem a gorgeous temple to "the Lord," which his father is supposed to have promised, and an im-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

posing palace for himself and his retinue. It was his ambition to shine among the potentates of the earth, and to bring wealth and power to the support of his kingdom, with the help of an alliance with the greatest commercial nation of the time. With Hiram he is said to have devised and carried out expeditions for bringing gold and silver, precious stones and other riches from distant lands, apparently out of the dark continent of Africa. We are vouchsafed no information as to the means by which these were obtained, but they may have been similar to those used by Spain to enrich herself from newly discovered countries in later centuries.

The material success achieved by Solomon led the panegyrists of his reign to magnify and glorify his knowledge and wisdom, which was to be accounted for after the manner of his time. It was said that the Lord appeared to him in a dream, when he went to Gibeon to sacrifice, and offered him whatever he should ask for, and was so gratified that he asked for "an understanding heart" to enable him to "judge this thy great people," that he promised to add to this "both riches and honour," insomuch that there should not be any among kings like unto him. His kingdom was neither extensive nor populous, but, in the hyperbole characteristic of the writers, the people are referred to as beyond computation in number, "as the sand which is by the sea for multitude." The

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

latest editor of the narrative took occasion to qualify Solomon's devotion to the Lord with the statement that he sacrificed and offered incense in the high places, and to make the Lord warn him in his dream that he must walk in his ways and keep his statutes and commandments as his father David had done, if he would lengthen his days.

After this dream and the promise of wisdom and greatness, the story of the two harlots who quarrelled over the possession of the surviving child was introduced as an example of wonderful wisdom. Then to illustrate the monarch's wealth and power there is a statement regarding his chief officers and the means by which the royal household was provided with subsistence, which must have been a heavy charge upon the country. The glory and greatness, the wealth and security of the kingdom and the marvellous knowledge and wisdom of the king being duly magnified by statements which cannot be verified and can only be refuted by the rules of probability or credibility, such as would be applied elsewhere, much space is given to the building and equipping of the temple, the details of which are hardly more interesting than Homer's catalogue of the Greek ships before Troy. The account of the dedication of the temple, with the King's blessing of the "congregation of Israel" and his prolonged invocation to the "Lord, the God of Israel," is demonstrably of late production and is pervaded with the spirit

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of the Deuteronomic law. It contains unmistakable allusions to the later experience of the nation, and, in the latter part of the invocation, to the "captivity" and promise of restoration through repentance and supplication. There is the same tone of retrospect in the second appearance of the Lord to Solomon in a dream, "as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon," for a repetition of warning and promise.

After all this edification we are permitted to resort to the primitive story of material greatness, and the expedition to Ophir is made the prelude to the visit of the Queen of Sheba, which is so like a tale out of the Thousand and One Nights. The statistics of wealth with which this is garnished are doubtless as exact as those that tell of the innumerable population and the multitude of the enemies of Israel who were wont to fall in battle when the wrath of the Lord was aroused.

But it was necessary to account for the fact that Solomon's Kingdom was doomed to fall from its greatness at his death, notwithstanding all the prestige of his wisdom and wealth as a ruler and the glories of David as a warlike monarch, and in spite of the peculiar affection of "the Lord" for these two successful kings. The fact is that the nation was weakened and the hegemony of Judah was undermined by the prosperity and luxury of Solomon's reign, while his son and heir, Rehoboam, was a vain and arrogant weakling.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Had it not been for the stronghold of Mount Zion and the establishment there of a great centre of worship with a splended temple and palace, it is probable that the revolt of the "ten tribes" under Jeroboam would have resulted in the complete subjugation if not the obliteration of Judah. As it was, the ancient name of Israel was assumed as the undisputed title of the new Kingdom of the North, which for a long time flaunted its superiority over that from which it had been torn away by successful insurrection, and raised the name of Joseph to a glory that was finally accepted as the common heritage.

But the "theocratic pragmatism" demanded a different explanation. Not only had Solomon married an Egyptian wife at the start and sacrificed in the high places before the temple was built, but he "loved many strange women," which means simply foreign women, and took wives and concubines from the neighbouring nations, and these are said to have "turned away his heart after other gods" when he was old. This in the eyes of the Deuteronomist compiler of this history made the Lord "angry with Solomon," and he was plainly told that inasmuch as he had gone back on his word and failed to keep his "covenant," the Lord would surely rend the kingdom away from him and give it to his servant. But for David's sake he would wait till Solomon was dead and rend it from his son; and, still for

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

David's sake and for the sake of Jerusalem, he would leave him one tribe. This was to conform with what had happened long before the writer's time. But the real fact was that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, a capable and industrious young man and a "mighty man of valour," son of an Ephraimite widow, whom Solomon had placed in charge of "the labour of the house of Joseph" in his building operations at Jerusalem, had rebelled against the king's authority and been compelled to flee to Egypt to save his life. When the king died, all Ephraim and the other Northern tribes were ready to rise and declare their independence, and Jeroboam came back to head the insurrection and was made ruler of the new kingdom, which was far more powerful than what was left of the old one.

This prosaic fact not only had to be accounted for by the recreancy of Solomon, and threatened beforehand by "the Lord" himself, but a prophet must be made instrumental in bringing it about. So, according to that same Deuteronomist writer of a later century, the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh met Jeroboam outside of Jerusalem, clad in a new garment which he tore into twelve pieces, giving ten to the rebellious Ephraimite as a token that the Lord would make him king of the ten tribes, still reserving Judah, for David's sake. This prophet repeats the words of the Lord, as prophets were wont to do, and promised Jeroboam

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

that if he would walk in the way of the Lord and obey his commands after the manner of David he would build him a "sure house," while he would "afflict the house of David, but not forever." So the way was prepared for what happened when Solomon "slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David his father, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VII

THEOCRATIC ACCOUNT OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

THE account of the two kingdoms, which begins with the Twelfth Chapter of the first book of Kings, is not a history. It was compiled in the latter days of the Kingdom of Judah, revised and added to in the exile, and retouched after the return, and its purpose was not to record facts but to inculcate a doctrine, the doctrine that events were ordered by "the Lord," that is, Yahweh, the God of Israel; that all calamities to either nation were inflicted by him as a punishment for sin in disobeying his commands, neglecting his worship and going after other gods, and that his people must depend wholly upon him for rescue from peril, success against their enemies and prosperity in the land which he had given them. If other nations attacked them, it was because he put them up to it and used them as his scourge; and if his people repented and obeyed and worshipped him in humility and faithfulness, he would turn their enemies back, and even destroy them for their presumption if they persisted. This was the teaching of the prophets and was the belief of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

those who had a hand in the final account of the vicissitudes of the kingdoms.

This account was made up from a variety of material, part of it drawn from the annals of the two kingdoms, previously brought together, much of it from legendary and mythical sources, and some of it from the imagination of the compilers, as they conceived of that which they could not know. There was no effort at accuracy of statement and little at consistency. The generally accepted date of the death of Solomon is 933 B. C., and the known date of the capture of Samaria and the destruction of the Northern Kingdom is 722, making the duration of that kingdom 211 years. According to the chronological scheme of the compiler, who adopted no fixed era but dated the reign of each king of either kingdom from the regnal year of the king of the other, and gave the length of the reign in every case, this period covered 241 years, 7 months and 7 days in Israel and 260 years in Judah, which indicates considerable inaccuracy in the reckoning.

The compiler or redactor who connected the various reigns in this loose manner and briefly characterised the different kings as he dismissed them from the scene, is usually designated by scholars as a "Deuteronomist," or a writer imbued with the doctrine of the law which taught that worship anywhere but at Jerusalem was sin and made obedience to the commands of Yahweh

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the test of all merit. This law was unknown before the reign of Josiah, a century after the fall of Samaria, but that did not prevent condemnation of Jeroboam and all his successors for departing from it, or make it other than sin for the earlier kings of Judah to tolerate worship "in the high places," which became an enticement to heathenism. That was the chief fault imputed even to Solomon, which caused the rending of most of the kingdom from the House of David.

Until the attacks came from the powerful empire of the East, in the Eighth Century B. C., the kingdom of Israel, or Ephraim, was much the stronger and more flourishing, and for a considerable part of the time Judah was in a state of vassalage to it, or to some ally as a protection against it. Its greater extent, the survival of many of the Canaanites in its territory, and its contact with Phœnicia and Syria, made its people and its rulers more prone to the enticement of other cults than that of Yahweh, or more tolerant of them, while Judah had the advantage of comparative isolation, an almost impregnable stronghold at Jerusalem, the possession of a splendid temple as a centre of worship, and a stable dynasty to which the achievements of David and Solomon gave a lasting prestige. While the direct line of David continued on the throne of Judah until the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B. C., twelve reigns covering

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the period from Solomon to the destruction of Samaria in 722, there were nine dynasties and seventeen kings in Israel, from Jeroboam to Hoshea. Seven of the kings were murdered by their successors and one burned himself in the palace after holding it only seven days. The situation of Judah in these respects and the rising of such mighty advocates of Yahweh's right and power as Isaiah and Jeremiah in times of crisis, gave the "peculiar people" their wonderful solidarity and saved their religion as a heritage to after times. It also gave to the Jews as distinguished from the Israelites the opportunity to determine the final character of the literature that was to be sanctified as the epic of the race of Jacob.

The revolt of the Northern tribes under the lead of Ephraim at the death of Solomon was easily accomplished, and the daring youth who had started the rebellion in the face of that monarch returned from Egypt to be made the first King of Israel, as a separate realm, at Shechem. As a civil ruler he was probably the ablest man that ever sat on a throne in either kingdom and the debt of the literature of both to his sojourn in Egypt cannot be estimated. His great offence in the eyes of the later Judean writers was setting up the worship of Yahweh at the two extremes of his kingdom, Bethel and Dan, and centring it there by golden images of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

calves, or bulls; but those symbols had been in common use, and it was not until long afterward that they were regarded as sinful representations of the deity. The contest against the use of images in Yahweh's worship continued even in Judah until after the promulgation of the Deuteronomic law in the reign of Josiah, and was not altogether successful even then. In Jeroboam's time it was not even condemned, though at Jerusalem the old "ark of the Lord," with its later adornment of Cherubim, took the place of the ephod and the teraphim in the central place of worship.

In the scanty account of Jeroboam's reign the hand of the theocratic compiler of the record is conspicuous, and his leading motive is to attribute all the calamities which befel the Northern Kingdom to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and the example he had set, and always to credit predictions of what happened to prophets or "men of God." Even the failure of Rehoboam to make a hopeless fight for his entire royal heritage was said to have been due to a warning from a "man of God" named Shemaiah, for had not Yahweh himself rent the realm asunder on account of the recreancy of Solomon and given the larger part to Jeroboam through the agency of the prophet Ahijah? When the king had set up his altar at Bethel, a "man of God" appears out of Judah to predict what was to happen to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

it in the days of Josiah, even the name of the latter being given centuries beforehand. Such a prophecy was not difficult after what had happened in the writer's time, and that, with the miracle of the withered hand, marks the episode as mythical, even admitting that the familiar language of men in converse with each other could have been preserved for three or four hundred years in that age of the world. Equally mythical must be the tales of the fate of that same "man of God," as the result of the duplicity of the "old prophet" of Bethel, for which there seemed to be no adequate excuse, since such a test of the fidelity of a "man of God" by absolute lying was hardly reasonable or just.

It would appear that Jeroboam had a child who died, and that the son who succeeded him was killed, after a reign of two years, by Baasha, who took possession of his throne. These were events to be explained and to have been foretold by prophets. Hence the story of sending the mother of the sick child in disguise to the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh, the prevision of the trick, and the prediction that the child would die and that the house of Jeroboam would be cut off. Even the rooting up and scattering of Israel two centuries later was duly predicted. These stories served the chief purpose of the writer, but for the real achievements of the king, "how he warred and how he reigned," we are referred to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel," which fortunately for that purpose and unfortunately for our knowledge, were not preserved.

The slight account of the reign of Rehoboam and his son Abijam in Judah indicates that matters were no better in that realm than in the other, so far as the manner of worship and religious conduct were concerned; but when the long reign of the other son, Asa, came in, there was a change for the better. There seem to have been not only idols, but Sodomites to be "removed," and even the king's mother had an "abominable image," that was burnt. But though it is said that "the heart of Asa was perfect with the Lord all his days" he had to strip "the house of the Lord" of its most precious treasures to buy an alliance with the king of Syria and save himself from Baasha, who had with Israelite vigour and ruthlessness exterminated the house of Jeroboam. There is little more said of Asa, except that he was at war with Baasha "all their days" and that in his old age he was "diseased in his feet," but as Baasha walked in the way of Jeroboam and did evil in the sight of the Lord, a prophet must needs appear to convey to him "the word of the Lord" to the effect that it was the latter who had raised him from the dust and made him prince over his people, (by assassination,) and who would sweep away his house as he had swept away that of Jeroboam, in like bloody fashion.

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

'Accordingly, after his son Elah had reigned two years one of his captains, Zimri by name, killed him while he was "drinking himself drunk" at his capital, Tirzah, and then slaughtered all his household; but it was this same Zimri that set fire to the palace and perished in it after "reigning" seven days, when he was beset by a rival "captain of the host," Omri by name.

Omri had a conspiracy to overcome at the start, but he established a dynasty that lasted for four reigns before wholesale assassination, duly predicted and prepared for, made another change; and he built a new capital on the hill of Samaria. Of course, he did evil and dealt wickedly. No king of Israel could do otherwise; but his deeds were only recorded in the lost chronicles of his kingdom. No prophet figures in his reign, but the deficiency is made up in that of his son Ahab, who, not content with walking in the sins of Jeroboam, married the Phœnician, or Sidonian, princess Jezebel, and tolerated the worship of Baal at Samaria. Thereby did he "yet more provoke the Lord (Yahweh), the God of Israel, to anger than all the Kings of Israel that were before him." It is the conflict between the worship of Yahweh and of Baal, in which the mysterious prophet Elijah figures, that chiefly made his reign interesting to the theocratic writer and makes it so to us. Doubtless this name of a "Tishbite" who was of the sojourners of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Gilead stands for a real person in those stormy days, but he is so enveloped in mists of myth and legend that the tangible facts of his career are hardly traceable.

The material relating to Elijah and that relating to his successor Elisha is taken bodily from old Ephraimite writings and has a highly picturesque and epic quality; but it has almost wholly the character of myth, with traces of historic legend, and it is nearly as ancient as that relating to the patriarchs and the ante-diluvian world. Associated with it is other material of Ephraimite origin pertaining to the conflicts between Israel and Syria, which has much of the same mythical or legendary quality. The passages made up from this material, slightly modified here and there in the compiling and editing, contain the substance of what we are told of the Northern kingdom, but it is more than we are told about Judah for the same period, and far more interesting from a literary point of view, though less didactic and edifying.

Apparently there were three years of drought culminating in famine in the time of Ahab, and Elijah the Tishbite is introduced suddenly as having predicted it in the name of "the Lord, the God of Israel," and as being then sent to a brook that was "before Jordan" and fed by ravens. With equal suddenness "the Lord" sends him back across the country to Zidon to sustain life

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

by making the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil inexhaustible, and to reward her for her care by bringing her dead child to life. According to tradition Ahab's Phœnician wife had not only introduced the worship of Baal at Samaria, but had persecuted and nearly exterminated the prophets of Yahweh. It is implied that the famine was a consequence of this, and there was to be an expiation by a sacrifice of the prophets of Baal.

So, "after many days," Elijah was sent to Ahab to bring this about. He meets the faithful Obadiah of the king's household, who claims to have saved a hundred of the prophets by hiding them in caves, and through him reaches the monarch who greets him as the "troubler of Israel." The king consents to the test at Mount Carmel as to whether Baal or Yahweh is God. The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the Asherah call in vain upon Baal to send fire to light the sacrifice on the altar while Elijah derides them, but in answer to his simple prayer to the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel, after the altar and the sacrifice have been drenched with water, "the Lord" lets fall the fire that consumes the sacrifice and the very stones of the altar. Thereupon the sole prophet of Israel slays all those of Baal at the brook Kishon, and the rain long waited for comes in floods while Ahab drives in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

haste to Jezreel in his chariot and the prophet outruns him on foot. The enraged Jezebel threatens his life and "the Lord" sends him to the wilderness beyond Beersheba in the distant part of Judah, where he is fed by an angel with food that sustains him forty days while he goes to Mount Horeb, the scene of the revelation to Moses. Here the Lord appears unto him, not in the wind that rends the rocks of the mountain, nor in the earthquake that shakes its foundations, nor yet in the fire that blasts its surface, but in a "still small voice" that commissions him to go to Damascus and anoint Hazael king over Syria and to anoint Jehu king over Israel, that there may be more slaughter of those who have slain the prophets, forsaken the covenant and overthrown the altars. Thus is prefigured the fate that overtook Benhadad of Syria and the successors of Ahab. The prophet was also to anoint Elisha as his own successor.

All this is as vivid and dramatic as anything in Homer, and we have the very words of "the Lord" and of his prophets as well as of the other characters in the varied story. It is also in all detail as mythical as the wrath of Achilles, the prayer of Chryses and the pestilence inflicted upon the Greeks by Apollo, and would be readily recognised as such in any literature but that of the Hebrews, who were no more wedded to fact or devoid of imagination than the Greeks.

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The story of Elijah is interrupted after the scene on Mount Horeb and after he has cast his mantle upon Elisha, who thenceforth follows him, in order to bring in from the other Ephraimite source the beginning of the conflict between Ahab and Benhadad of Syria, which was to result in a change of dynasty for both realms. The King of Israel met the arrogant demands and boastful threats of Benhadad with the spirited defiance: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off"; and, notwithstanding the sins imputed to him by the Judean writers of a later day, the Ephraimite tale makes him victorious by the favour of the Lord, and shows that there were still prophets in Israel besides Elijah. The Syrian king is advised that his discomfiture was due to the fact that Israel's God was a god of the hills, and in the next campaign he makes his attack in the plain. But though the "children of Israel," encamped at Aphek, were "like two little flocks of kids" and the Syrians "filled the country," the Lord demonstrated that he was a god of the valleys as well as of the hills by delivering the Syrians into the hands of his little army and enabling it to slay "a hundred thousand footmen in one day," while 27,000 more were crushed by a falling wall, surely a terrible slaughter for such a puny war. The humiliation of Benhadad and the triumph of Ahab were complete, but by one of those curious

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

subterfuges that are related of prophets and sons of prophets, "the Lord" let the King of Israel know that he had offended in showing magnanimity to the Syrian king, whom the vindictive deity wished him to destroy.

Another passage from the story of Elijah is then introduced by the compiler to set forth yet more the iniquity of Ahab and Jezebel and to account for the bloody fate that awaited them. Their sin consisted in taking the vineyard of Naboth to add to the royal domain at Jezreel, which led Elijah to convey to Ahab the threat of the Lord that the dogs should lick his blood in the place where they licked the blood of Naboth, and that the dogs should eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. This is figuratively, if not literally, what had happened long before the story was written; but the prophecy was not explicit enough for the purpose of the theocratic narrator, and he injected the threat of the Lord that the house of Ahab should be destroyed like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith he had provoked the Lord to anger. This was meant to credit more emphatically to the proper source what happened when the anointed Jehu came to his own. But the older writer lets us know that Ahab humbled himself in repentance and that was why the evil day did not befall his house in his own time, but in that

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of his son. In any modern view his offence was less than that of David in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

The story of the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, which resulted in the king's death, is drawn from the old Ephraimite source and illustrates the chronological incongruity of the disjointed compilation, in that Jehoshaphat of Judah appears as the ally of Ahab in the effort to recover that place from Syria, though he had not previously been mentioned, and his accession to the throne of Judah is spoken of farther on. According to the chronological scheme of the compiler, he had been King of Judah seventeen years when he joined Ahab in this unlucky enterprise. An interesting feature of this episode is the revelation of the manner in which the ordinary prophet of the time took part in the doings of kings. Ahab gathered four hundred prophets for a consultation, whether of Baal or of Yahweh is not stated, but their counsel was to go up to the battle against Ramoth-Gilead, "for the Lord shall deliver it unto the hand of the king." But Jehoshaphat wished to know if there was not "here beside a prophet of the Lord," which brought out Micaiah, whom Ahab hated because he only prophesied evil for him. When Zedekiah in symbolical fashion made him horns of iron and declared that the Lord said that with these the king shall "push the Syrians till they be consumed," and all the prophets bade him

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"go up and prosper," Micaiah echoed their advice in apparent derision, for, after the king had rebuked him, he "saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains as sheep that have no shepherd," and advised that every man "return to his house in peace," whereupon he was again rebuked for prophesying only evil. Then he declared that he "saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left," and sending forth a "lying spirit" to entice Ahab through the other prophets to go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead. This brought a blow from Zedekiah upon the cheek of Micaiah and the imprisoning of the latter, to be fed upon the bread of affliction and the water of affliction. Nevertheless, the battle went against the king and he was killed in his chariot and brought to Samaria to be buried; and the editor of the narrative takes pains to note that when his chariot was washed the dogs licked up the blood.

After some of the dry notes of the Judean compiler of the accession of the son of Ahab to the throne of Israel, and of the accession of Jehoshaphat to the throne of Judah, with a brief summary of the reign of the latter, and a statement of his death and burial, there is another instalment of the doings of Elijah, who always appears in an atmosphere of mystery. Ahab's son Ahaziah, who reigned only two years, fell through a lattice in his upper chamber and was "sick." Instead

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of appealing to "the Lord" on that occasion he sent messengers to Baal-zebub of Ekron to inquire whether he would get well. This offended "the Lord," and his "angel" sent Elijah to meet the messengers of the ruler of Samaria and turn them back to ask the king if there is no god in Israel that he sends to inquire of the god of Ekron. When the king learns that his messengers were turned back by a "hairy man and girt with a girdle of leather," he recognises the Tishbite, whom he probably did not know where to find before, inasmuch as he was left in the heathen darkness of his father's palace where Jezebel still survived. Learning of his coming he sends a captain with fifty men to him as he sits on the top of a hill, to bring the "man of God" to the king quickly.

It seems rather harsh that fire should be invoked from heaven to destroy two captains with their fifties before a third by humble petition prevails upon the angel of the Lord to send the prophet to tell the king that inasmuch as he had sent to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron "because there is no god in Israel to inquire of his word," he shall not "come down from his bed," but will "surely die." An awkward note is injected here by the compiler saying that Jehoram his brother began to reign in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat King of Judah, though a little further on it is said that this same Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign at Samaria in the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, who had still seven years to reign at Jerusalem before he was succeeded by his son Jehoram.

Between these two notes there is the curious tale of the manner in which Elisha succeeded to the prophetic mantle of Elijah and the latter was carried off by a whirlwind. It is made to appear as though the older prophet were trying to get away from the younger, and that the latter pursued him back and forth as the Lord sent him first to Gilgal, then to Bethel, then to Jericho, and finally across the Jordan, where they were parted by a chariot of fire and horses of fire, while Elijah disappeared in the whirlwind. Elisha's course in this pursuit and his objection to the proposal of the " sons of the prophets " to seek for the prophet who had disappeared, might almost raise the suspicion that the other had made way with his predecessor after the manner of the kings at Samaria, and that his taking-off was covered with this cloud of obvious myth.

Elisha now comes more into the light of prosaic fable with his miracles. He begins by purifying the springs of water at Jericho with a cruse of salt, after re-crossing the Jordan by smiting the river with the mantle of Elijah to make a way for himself. Then he goes up to Bethel to inflict the penalty of death upon forty-two heedless children who greeted him as bald head. This seems like a severe chastisement to teach respect for a

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

prophet of the Lord. He figures next in an expedition of the kings of Israel and Judah and of Edom against Moab, the account of which seems to have been drawn from an Ephraimite source similar to that describing the conflicts with Syria. From this it appears that the sheep raising King of Moab was a vassal of Israel, and that Jehoshaphat of Judah and the King of Edom were also subject to the commands of Jehoram. Again we have a curious illustration of the ways of prophets. Elisha appears as accompanying the expedition, and when Jehoshaphat asks if there is not a prophet of the Lord to inquire of regarding a dearth of water, he is called upon, and while scorning to comply with the request of a son of Ahab and Jezebel consents on account of the King of Judah; but it requires the playing of a minstrel to bring on the ecstasy and the vision of the prophet.

What really happened, who can tell? But the story is that the Lord bade them fill the valley with trenches, and without wind or rain these were filled over night with water rushing in from the way of Edom. It appeared like blood to the Moabites in the morning light and lured them to slaughter. When the King of Moab was discomfited and his land was devastated, he offered his son as a burnt offering upon the wall, but why should that have brought great indignation or wrath upon Israel?

After this episode of legendary history we are

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

brought back abruptly to a series of Elisha's miracles, some of which are not of a dignified order, like that of relieving a widow of one of the "sons of prophets" of debt by making her pot of oil inexhaustible, that of the antidote to "death in the pot," that of feeding a hundred men with twenty barley loaves and some ears of corn and having some "left thereof," and causing the axe that flew from its helve into the river to float to the top by casting in a stick. More dignified, but not more credible, are those of bringing to life the son of the "great woman" of Shunam and curing the Syrian Captain Naaman of leprosy by a bath in the Jordan. These are crude and primitive ways of illustrating the powers of a prophet of the Lord, but characteristic of the beliefs of the time.

There is more of epic dignity in the passage that tells of Elisha's revealing the secrets of Benhadad to the King of Israel, conjuring up a host with horses and chariots when the Syrian monarch seeks to entrap him at Dothan, getting the Lord to smite the Syrians with blindness, leading them to Samaria, opening their eyes to their peril and forcing them to submission. But why had it been an offence on a former occasion to let Benhadad go after a voluntary submission, if now his men were to be fed and sent home in peace after being taken captive with the sword and the bow? Be-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

cause consistency is not required in such poetic tales any more than credibility.

"And the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." And yet we are immediately told, albeit from a different source, of the siege of Samaria by Benhadad and all his "host," which reduced it to the extreme of famine, from which it was miraculously relieved and restored to plenty by the mysterious disappearance in the night of the besieging army. It is said that the Syrian soldiers heard "a voice of chariots and a noise of horses and the noise of a great host," and "said one to another, Lo, the King of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians," whereupon they fled in disorder leaving their supplies and their plunder behind them. If there is any historic fact back of this mysterious raising of the siege, it is probable that the Assyrian Army, which was then making forays in that region, or a rumour of its approach, had filled the Syrians with consternation and caused their precipitate flight. But historic fact is difficult to trace or to verify in such legendary writing.

It is a somewhat puerile interruption in the narrative that tells of the sending of that same Shunamite woman to the land of the Philistines at the time of a seven year famine and restoring her property on her return. But the march of events is resumed when Elisha goes to Damascus,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

that a "man of God" may be an accomplice in the subtle assassination that makes Hazael King of Syria. Why a prophet should practise duplicity in such a service to the Lord we need not inquire. It illustrates the manner of the time. Had not Elijah long ago been commissioned at Mount Horeb to anoint Hazael king of Syria and to anoint Jehu king over Israel? There was no anointing of the Syrian by a prophet of Israel but Jehu's time was now at hand.

In all this graphic material "the Lord" seems to have been on the side of Israel as against Syria, and in the meantime little attention has been given to Judah, though Jehoshaphat is dead and the eight year reign of his son Jehoram must also be over. Here the unskilful compiler, before introducing the account of Jehu's exploits, lets us know that Jehoram or Joram has reigned contemporaneously with the monarch of the same name at Samaria, that he married a daughter of Ahab of Israel and did evil in the sight of the Lord, though he was permitted to suppress a revolt at Edom, and that he was succeeded by his son Ahaziah whose reign was only for one year, and he also did evil. This new King of Judah was brother-in-law of Joram of Israel and joined him in war against the new King of Syria at the great battleground of Ramoth-Gilead. The defeat and mortal wounding of Joram is made the preliminary to the anointing under the direction of Elisha of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Jehu, the wholesale assassin who was commissioned by the Lord from the time of Elijah to avenge upon the house of Ahab the blood of the prophets. He makes thorough work of it. Jezebel is thrown to the dogs, the seventy sons of Ahab and "all his great men, all his familiar friends and his priests," are slaughtered, and there is general massacre of the prophets and worshippers of Baal. "Thus," quoth the devout Deuteronomist, "Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel," and the Lord commended him for doing unto the house of Ahab "according to all that is in mine heart," and promised him the iniquitous throne at Samaria unto the fourth generation of his sons. It just so happened that the dynasty of Jehu had lasted that long when this promise was put in the mouth of the Lord as spoken directly to the bloody instrument of his vengeance.

It is only of this slaughterous service at the beginning of his reign that we are told, though Jehu was king at Samaria twenty-eight years. Things were hardly better at Jerusalem in those days, either in matters of worship or of politics. Jehu had dispatched Ahaziah of Judah along with Joram of Israel, and his mother Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, had destroyed all the rest of the family and seized the reins of Government, showing that she had inherited the spirit of Jezebel. The sister of Ahaziah, presumably a daughter of the queen mother, had, however, stolen

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and hidden in the house of "the Lord" one from among the king's sons—how many he had at the age of twenty-three does not appear—and six years later the throne of David was transferred by assassination, but not out of his family. The priest Jehoiada and his confederates placed the child Joash on that royal seat, and made a covenant between the Lord and him and his people, that they should be the Lord's people. So the rule and worship of Baal was destroyed at Jerusalem and incidentally his priest was put to death. Joash ruled forty years under the guidance of Jehoiada and did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but those pestilent "high places" remained. Notwithstanding his virtuous reign and the fact that, in spite of his priestly "graft," he succeeded in raising money for the repair of the temple, he was forced to strip it of its treasures and its "hallowed things" to buy off the King of Syria from attacking his capital, and was himself a victim of assassination. That zealous theocratic compiler who passed judgment upon the successive kings of both realms did not eliminate from his material these facts, though they seemed to contradict his doctrine.

Events were moving toward the doom of Israel, for though it prevailed in its conflicts with Syria and with Judah, it was destined to encounter the onslaught of the irresistible empire of the East. The effort to run the accounts of the two king-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

doms on parallel lines from mixed material makes the narrative disjointed and confused, but it appears that the reign of Jehu's son was cut short by Hazael of Syria, who conquered and took several of his cities, but his grandson Jehoash, or Joash, defeated Hazael's successor and recovered the cities. Moreover, he scorned the proffered aid of Amaziah of Judah, and, when attacked by him, he broke down the walls of Jerusalem and plundered the house of the Lord and the king's house, and carried their treasures to Samaria. Nevertheless, he did evil in the sight of the Lord and Amaziah did that which was right, but Joash died in peace after his victories and left a son who had a victorious reign of forty-one years, while the King of Judah had to flee from a conspiracy at Jerusalem and was assassinated at Lachish. His son Azariah or Uzziah, was made king in his stead; and, though he reigned fifty-two years, we are told nothing about him except that he did that which was right and was smitten with leprosy.

The four generations of the sons of Jehu ended with Zechariah, who was assassinated after a reign of six months. Shallum, the assassin, held the throne one month and in his turn became the victim of Menahem, who reigned ten years and succeeded in leaving the power in the hands of a son, Pekahiah. The latter was assassinated in two years and Pekah seized the realm in the last year

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of Azariah of Judah. He held it twenty years, but was assassinated by his successor the last of the Kings of Israel. It was in the time of Menahem that Assyria first laid its hand upon Samaria. "Pul," who became King of Assyria as Tiglath-Pileser, came and made a vassal of Menahem and exacted a heavy tribute, which continued until Hoshea, the last King of Israel, revolted and sought support from Egypt, which brought the destined destruction upon Israel. In the reign of Pekah the same Assyrian king had occasion to exhibit his power in those parts, but when Hoshea attempted his revolt it was Shalmaneser that came to besiege Samaria and destroy the kingdom, on account of that original sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and the multiplied sins of his successors. It was Sargon, however, who completed the work.

There is a characteristic note of the death of Elisha in the course of the narrative, in which he is made to predict the victories of Joash of Israel over Syria, and the failure utterly to subjugate that nation, and his miraculous power is displayed even after his death by the revival, as soon as it touched his "bones," of a corpse that was thrown into his sepulchre.

But in this interval before the destruction of Samaria occurs an episode in the relation of Israel and Judah which is of special interest as the first occasion for the appearance of the greatest of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Hebrew prophets. After the death of Jotham the son of Azariah, his son Ahaz became king, while Pekah was king at Samaria. Now Ahaz is said not to have done that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, like David, but to have indulged in the abominations of the heathen. It was hardly for that reason that Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel made their attack upon Jerusalem, which was defeated only because Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser and induced him with treasures of gold and silver in the house of the Lord and in the king's house, to capture Damascus. This made Judah a vassal of Assyria, but it saved Jerusalem for the time being. We shall find this salvation credited to the Lord through a prophecy of Isaiah when we consider more fully the oracles attributed to that theocratic champion, but the Assyrian king must be made the instrument.

The destruction of Samaria and the dispersion of Israel came afterwards, in the reign of Hezekiah of Judah, and it gave occasion for the compiler of these narratives,—who wrote before Jerusalem suffered the same fate as Samaria, at the hands of the King of Babylon, and who still hoped for the salvation of Judah,—and for the final redactor, who wrote in the time of the exile and knew the fate that had overtaken Judah, as well as Israel, to descant upon the causes of this calamity in their several ways. Their reflections are interwoven and added to,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

but it is easy to distinguish those which preceded the fall of Jerusalem from those which followed it.

The fate of the northern kingdom had for a time a potent influence upon the course of the one that remained, and furnished much inspiration for the prophets whose utterances have come down to us. Hezekiah, the son of the sinful Ahaz, was submissive to the influence of Isaiah, the prophet, and he "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that David his father had done"; and again the symbols of heathen worship were broken up, not only at Jerusalem, but in the "high places." Among other things the king is said to have broken up the brazen serpent that Moses made, to which the children of Israel had burnt incense until that time. He ventured to revolt against the sovereignty of Assyria, to which his father had submitted as a means of rescue from Israel and Syria, and this brought Sennacherib, who was ravaging the neighbouring country, down upon his capital.

There are two parallel accounts, or fragments of such, from different sources, awkwardly joined together by the compiler of the narrative, of the threat which Sennacherib sent to Hezekiah when he rashly sought the aid of Egypt, the chief enemy of Assyria, in his revolt against the empire of which he was a vassal. It is in strict accordance with the manner of the writer who wrought the narrative from the material under his hand and modified

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

it to suit his purpose, that the result of this menace was foretold by a prophet of "the Lord," who happens in this case to be one of those whose productions in mutilated and disordered shape have come down to us. The emissaries of Sennacherib had defied the God of Judah and reminded his followers of the fate of other places that had relied upon their gods. They even declared in the name of their master that it was at the command of "the Lord" that he came up against this land to destroy it.

According to one of the two accounts which are blended in the composition, Hezekiah in his alarm at the menace from the King of Assyria sent to Isaiah, appealing to him to lift up his prayer "for the remnant that is left." The prophet sent back a message to the king in the name of the Lord, not to be afraid of the words, "wherewith the servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed me," saying also, "Behold I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumour and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." According to the other account Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord and lifted up a prayer on his own account, the words of which are duly set down, and the prophet being instinctively aware of this, sent to him saying, "Thus saith the Lord, whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, King of Assyria, I have heard thee." Then is introduced

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

from some source, genuine or otherwise, one of the eloquent and poetical oracles of Isaiah against the King of Assyria, and appended thereto is the promise of the Lord that he will defend and save Jerusalem for his own sake and for the sake of David his servant. "And it came to pass in the night that the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and four score and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." And it is added from a different source that Sennacherib departed and dwelt in Nineveh; and, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer smote him with the sword and his son Esar-haddon reigned in his stead.

All this, including the prophecies, was written down long after the event. The historical fact is that Sennacherib's army was not destroyed near Jerusalem, but while it was laying waste the country around and preparing to attack the city, an army of Egyptians and Ethiopians was on its trail under Tirhaka, and it was drawn away and badly cut up near the borders of Egypt. The Assyrian monarch did then return to his capital, but he afterwards suppressed the rebellion of Babylon, and it was twenty years after he was diverted from destroying Jerusalem that he was murdered by his sons, one of whom succeeded him.

It is probably a fact that Hezekiah had a serious

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

illness from which he recovered, living some years afterwards, no uncommon experience. The writer who was so zealous in attributing everything to "the Lord" and communicating the Lord's purposes through his prophets, makes Isaiah first tell the king to set his house in order for he would die and not live; and then, after the king had implored the Lord to remember how he had walked before him in truth and with a perfect heart and had done that which was good in his sight, the word of the Lord came to the prophet to assure the prince of his people that he had heard his prayer and would heal him. The king was anxious to be assured by a sign, and the shadow was made miraculously to turn back ten steps on the dial of Ahaz.

The only other incident told of Hezekiah and the prophet is the coming of messengers from "Berodach-Baladan," properly Merodach-Baladan, King of Babylon, with presents for the King of Judah, who showed them all the treasures of the temple and the palace, for which the prophet rebuked him and told him that the day would come when all that he and his fathers had laid up in store would be carried away to Babylon, and his descendants would be made captives in the palace of its king. Hezekiah was content, as it was not to come in his day. Undoubtedly this was written by the reviser of these narratives after the event had happened.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Though Hezekiah was said to have done "that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done," he had a troublous reign and remained a vassal of Assyria, while his wicked son Manasseh, who came to the throne at the age of twelve, reigned fifty-five years in peace, so far as this account tells anything about him. All that it does tell is of his iniquities and abominations, in restoring all forms of heathen worship and practice, even in the temple of the Lord as well as in the restored "high places," and shedding innocent blood until he "filled Jerusalem from one end to another." It is a dismal picture and represents a state of things on Mount Zion as dark and bloody as ever prevailed on the hill of Samaria. The final redactor, writing in the midst of the exile, makes this the occasion of a threat of the Lord, by "his servants the prophets," none of whom are named in the reign of Manasseh if any were allowed to live, that he would "bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle." He would "wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down"; and he would cast off his "inheritance," deliver them into the hands of their enemies and make them "a prey and a spoil of their enemies." No hope of restoration or a saving remnant is held out.

The dreadful state of things at Jerusalem continued for two years under Manasseh's son Amon,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

when his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his own house; but "the people" slew those who conspired against him and made his son Josiah king. He was only eight years old, but his father is said to have been only twenty-four at his death. Josiah, we are told, did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David, turning aside neither to the right nor to the left; but we are informed of nothing that he did until, in the eighteenth year of his reign, the priest Hilkiah found the book of the law in the house of the Lord when preparations were making to repair its "breaches." It was in this interval that the voice of Jeremiah was first lifted up, lamenting the recreancy, backsliding and wickedness of Judah and Jerusalem, and calling them to repentance and obedience to the Lord, as their only hope of salvation.

This discovery of the "book of the law" and the reforms in worship to which it led, were the great event of Josiah's reign, the last before the fate of Judah and Jerusalem was sealed, as that of Israel and Samaria had been sealed just a hundred years before the discovery was made. There is no doubt that this "book of the law" was that which was afterwards extended, with a prelude of discourses by Moses and additions to the commands and ordinances, to form the Book of Deuteronomy. When it was read to Josiah he was filled with alarm and sent to "inquire of the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Lord" from the prophetess Huldah, apparently the only recognised survivor of the prophets in Jerusalem. The zealous redactor of the exile, who knew what had happened, put in her mouth a direful prediction of what was then to come, with the promise that because the king's heart was tender and he had humbled himself and rent his clothes and wept, he should be gathered to his fathers in peace and should not see all the evil that the Lord would "bring upon this place." Perhaps the writer overlooked the fact that in the account under his hand Josiah was killed at Megiddo when he had the presumption to try to intercept the Egyptian army on its way to attack Assyria.

But, after the consulting of the oracle in the person of Huldah, the king is represented as making a clean sweep of the iniquitous worship and its symbols and of various "abominations" that had invaded Mount Zion in the time of his grandfather, even to the "houses of the Sodomites in the house of the Lord." It seems, according to this account, that there had even been sacrifices of children in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, which was turned into "Tophet" for the burning of idols and asherim and other refuse, and that some of the heathenish high places of Solomon had still remained before Jerusalem. A late addition was made to the story to verify the prophecy of the man of God in the time of Jeroboam, that upon the altar which he had raised at Bethel a child of·

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the house of David, Josiah by name, should sacrifice the priests of the high places and should burn men's bones. The king is also made to save the sepulchre in which the "man of God" from Judah and the old prophet of Bethel were buried together. Then such a passover was kept in Jerusalem as was never known before, but the redactor, whose mind was overwhelmed with the subsequent disasters, could not refrain from interjecting that, "notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal," but declared that he would remove Judah out of his sight as he had removed Israel, and cast off the city which he had chosen to put his name there. Neither did he omit the authentic statement that Josiah was slain by Pharaoh-Necoh on his way "up against" the King of Assyria and was carried dead in his chariot to be buried in his own sepulchre.

His son Jehoahaz did not have much time for the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, for this same "Pharaoh-Necoh" captured him within three months and sent him to Egypt to die, putting his brother Eliakim in his place, but with the name of Jehoiakim, and exacting a heavy tribute from the land. Thus Judah and Jerusalem became an unfortunate football between the great powers of the Euphrates and the Nile, which were engaged

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

in a gigantic struggle for supremacy. Babylon under Nabopolassar, with the aid of Cyaxares of Media, subjugated the kingdom of Assyria, and his son Nebuchadrezzar overwhelmingly defeated Necho at Carchemish, thus transferring the vassalage of Jehoiakim from Egypt to Babylon. Against the protests of the prophet Jeremiah this king rebelled and brought the wrath of Babylon upon Jerusalem, and Judah was devastated by the army of Nebuchadrezzar. The King of Egypt "came no more into the land" for the King of Babylon "had taken, from the brook of Egypt unto the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the King of Egypt."

Jehoiakim "slept with his fathers" and his son Jehoiachin began to reign, but the latter had also only three months in which to do evil in the sight of the Lord, for Nebuchadrezzar was now besieging Jerusalem and the hapless king with his mother and his servants "went out" to him and they were carried away to Babylon with "all the princes and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths," leaving only "the poorest sort of the people of the land." This was in the year 597 B. C., but eleven years remained yet before the final "captivity" and the destruction of Jerusalem. Nebuchadrezzar set another of Josiah's sons on the throne, Mattaniah, to whom he gave the name Zedekiah. We have passed the period of the first compiler of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the Books of Kings and what remains is from the hand of the redactor in the exile. Zedekiah was not obedient to the voice of the great prophet Jeremiah and he had the presumption to rebel against the King of Babylon, of which the immediate result was to bring back the army of Nebuchadrezzar, and there was a siege that reduced Jerusalem to sore famine and to final destruction. The king was captured in an attempt to escape to Jericho, his sons were slain, his eyes were put out, and he was carried captive to Babylon. The walls of Zion were broken down, the temple was stripped of everything of value and left in ruins, and there was another wholesale deportation after the manner of Chaldæan conquests. There was little of such colonising from the East as was made by the Assyrians in the more attractive territory of the North, but Judah and Jerusalem were left to desolation and "astonishment," with a governor who was speedily assassinated, the conspirators and their followers then fleeing to Egypt and taking the prophet Jeremiah with them by force. The result was that while the "ten tribes of Israel" were dispersed and lost, the remnant of Judah returned in half a century, when Cyrus of Persia destroyed Babylon, and in a feeble attempt to rebuild Jerusalem built up Judaism.

The purpose of this long chapter has not been to rehearse the events of the two kingdoms, but to show that this writing is not and was not in-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tended to be history, or a record of facts. In the hands of those who composed it from rude material of diverse origin, and put it in its final form, its purpose was to inculcate and impress a theory, or a doctrine, which is the burden of the whole epic as finally rounded out. In its higher development this was the doctrine that the God of Israel, originally a tribal deity with his abode in the dismal region of Mount Sinai, was the divine power over all the nations, but Israel was his own peculiar people and Judah became his special care when the other tribes broke away and formed a separate kingdom, and proved recreant to his worship and his law. It was for this that he brought calamities upon them and finally destroyed their kingdom and removed them from his sight. Whatever Judah suffered was due to disobedience and infidelity to him, and trust in him would have saved it. Syria or Egypt, Assyria or Babylon, were only instruments in his hands for punishing his people when they would not listen to his voice, as conveyed by the prophets who spoke in his name and by his inspiration.

This was the belief of the prophets themselves, and this was the belief of those who preserved their words, either in their original form or in a modified form, or wrote down what this belief induced them to think must have been said. It was the belief of all those who during the exile and after the return wrought over the mass of

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

writings that had been saved from the time of the kingdoms, first in the form of "the law," then in the "prophets," which included the legendary and theocratic records from the conquest of Canaan to the "carrying away into captivity," and finally in the addition of various "writings" deemed to be "holy." The one dominating idea at last was that there was no god but Israel's God, and he would yet save a purified remnant of his own beloved people, and bring all other nations, which he had used for their affliction and their discipline, into subjection to them, and would build up a glorified kingdom in the future with the house of David restored. This was a faith that survived the destruction of the two kingdoms and even the failure to rebuild that of Judah after the second great deliverance.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VIII

PROPHETS OF THE KINGDOMS

THE literary prophets of Israel, or those whose utterances, oral or written, have come down to us as part of the great epic of their race, may be said to have developed out of a class of diviners or soothsayers, such as all primitive nations and religions have had. In the earliest writings we have glimpses of those priests, or levis, who consulted Yahweh by means of a mechanism called the ephod, adorned with a symbolical image in the form of a calf or bull, and who received answers by urim and thummim. These implements are represented as being used not only in the days of the "Judges," but in the time of Saul and David. More directly the "word of God" was said to have been imparted by an angel of the Lord, a sort of minor deity acting as a messenger or spokesman. Later this place seems to have been taken by a human being spoken of as a "man of God," supposed to be inspired for his mission. The spirit of the Lord was also said to come upon those who were acting in his behalf, as well as those who spoke for him, even such rough agents of his will as Gideon, Jephthah and Samson.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

There were those who were consulted as oracles or seers to whom clairvoyant powers appear to have been imputed, like Deborah under her palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, and Samuel at his dwelling place in Ramah, to whom it was said that the Lord revealed the fact that Saul was coming to inquire after stray asses. A late editor of the account takes occasion to note that he that was called a prophet in his day had been beforetime called a seer. There were also said to be in the time of Samuel schools or conventicles in which the neophytes were called "sons of prophets," and the verb used for their "prophesying" signified crying out in ecstatic fashion, something like the "speaking with tongues" of a much later time. It is evident that they were wont to work themselves into a religious frenzy, which sometimes infected the bystanders. It was this that led to the proverbial query "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

"Prophet" came to mean one who spoke or acted in the name of "the Lord" (Yahweh), and Samuel in anointing and guiding the first king of Israel is the earliest who appears distinctly in that role. Writers of a time long after applied the term to Abraham and Moses, but its significance is plainly brought out where it is said that the Lord told Moses, when he pleaded that he was not eloquent, that Aaron should be to him instead of a mouth and should be his "prophet." After

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

David became king, Nathan appears as a prophet to reveal to him the purposes of the Lord and to rebuke him in the case of the wrong done to Uriah the Hittite. We hear of no prophet in the time of Solomon until the Ephraimite rebellion, which, according to the doctrine developed later, must be accounted for as a retribution for the sins of that king in setting up the worship of heathen gods in his latter days, and must have been announced beforehand in the name of God. For that purpose Ahijah appears, whose abode was said to be at the old sanctuary of Shiloh.

The symbolical action of this prophet in rending his new garment into twelve pieces and giving ten of them to Jeroboam was a kind of performance sometimes credited to later prophets, as a means of giving emphasis or illustration to their messages. These things may not have been actually done, for there was much use of figurative language and poetical imagery, not only by those who told of the words and deeds of prophets, but in what purport to be their own statements. Their symbolism like their visions, was usually assumed for effect. It may be that at the time of the disastrous expedition of Ahab and Jehoshaphat against the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead, Zedekiah made him horns of iron to show how the kings would punish the enemy until he was "consumed," but it is hardly more likely than that Micaiah saw the visions that he described. It is not to be sup-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

posed that Amos actually saw the basket of summer fruit which he said the Lord God showed him, or that he really saw the Lord standing upon the altar telling him to smite the lintel of the door that the posts may shake. When Isaiah tells how his lips were purged by a live coal taken from the altar by a seraph he is not relating a matter of fact, and it may be doubted whether he walked naked and barefoot three years "for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia." When he spoke of a young woman having a child to be named "God with us" to illustrate the time within which Judah would be relieved from the attack of Israel and Syria, or of naming a child of his own to symbolise the approaching destruction of Damascus by Assyria, he was not telling family history or prefiguring remote events.

A number of symbolical acts were imputed to Jeremiah, such as putting on a yoke to represent the coming subjugation of his people and shattering a potter's earthen vessel to illustrate how the Lord would smash Jerusalem, but it does not follow that he literally did these things. Certainly, when he said that in obedience to the word of the Lord he got a linen girdle and took it to Euphrates and hid it in a hole of the rock, and after many days went again and found it marred and "profitable for nothing," to show how the pride of Judah was to be marred and its people to be carried away captive to the Euphrates, the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY