

VOLUME 18

THE BIBLE SERIES

A METAPHYSICAL  
AND SYMBOLICAL  
INTERPRETATION OF

*The Bible*

by

Mildred Mann



*Thank you, and God bless  
you.*

*Mildred Mann*

A METAPHYSICAL  
AND SYMBOLICAL  
INTERPRETATION OF

**The Bible**

by  
**Mildred Mann**

— • —

## AUTHOR OF

HOW TO FIND YOUR REAL SELF (textbook)  
 THIS I BELIEVE  
 LEARN TO LIVE  
 THE FAMILY OF ADAM AND EVE  
 THE BIBLE - The Seven Days of Creation  
 BECOME WHAT YOU BELIEVE  
 WHAT IS PRAGMATIC MYSTICISM?

Published by

THE SOCIETY OF PRAGMATIC MYSTICISM  
 101 West 57th Street  
 New York 19, N.Y.

## CONTENTS

JEREMIAH . . . . .	3
LAMENTATIONS . . . . .	24
EZEKIEL, Part One . . . . .	27

Ezekiel always gives me the impression that he was a vibrant, lusty man, filled with a powerful sense of the "joy of life". He is the antithesis, personality-wise, of Jeremiah. Not even the approach of danger could really dampen his spirit. He took everything in his stride, viewing it as a tremendous adventure. His zest for life was magnificent. He was healthy - spiritually as well as physically.

It is not only his prophecies which are instructive to us. Even more so, I think, is his approach to life. He illustrates the statement I quoted in the lecture booklets, which states, "It is not important what happens to me. The really important thing is how I react to it."

And this is just as true for all of us today.

M. M.

## Seven Steps in Demonstration

**Desire:** Get a strong enthusiasm for that which you want in your life, a real longing for something which is not there now.

**Decision:** Know definitely what it is that you want, what it is that you want to do, or have, and be willing to pay in spiritual values.

**Ask:** [ When sure and enthusiastic ] ask for it in simple, concise language...

**Believe:** in the accomplishment with strong faith, consciously and subconsciously].

**Work at it** ... a few minutes daily in seeing yourself in the finished picture. Never outline details, but rather see yourself enjoying the particular thing ...

**Feel gratitude.** Always remember to say, "Thank you God," and begin to feel the gratitude in your heart. The most powerful prayer we can ever make are those three words, provided we really feel it.

**Feel expectancy.** Train yourself to live in a state of happy expectancy ... Act it until it becomes part of you, as it must and will.

These are the seven steps. Follow them and they will bring you whatever it is that you need.

## \*FORMULA FOR DEMONSTRATION

( A demonstration is answered prayer..  
the manifestation of the Presence,  
Power and Love of God. )

" **A**sk And Ye Shall Receive,

**S**eek And Ye Shall Find,

**K**nock And It Shall Be

Opened unto you"

- *JESUS*

(\*The formula is ASK .... Mildred Mann )

## NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

as being far worse. We think of Jerusalem as a Mecca of all Good. Here, she is indicted primarily because she was the one who knew better, and even so, falls by the wayside. Ezekiel's fury is directed to the fact that they not only worship the pagan gods, but have carried it to the extent of sacrificing their children to these gods. It is a very magnificent chapter.

We will continue our discussion of the book of Ezekiel in the next volume, for there is a great deal to be learned from this man's individual approach to the prophetic message to Israel. In particular, chapter 37, containing his visions of "The Valley of Dry Bones" and "The Two Sticks," contains much important symbolism that is meaningful to us. And the final chapters dealing with the building of the temple, not in Jerusalem, but in ourselves, are particularly beautiful.

## JEREMIAH

Since this final series of books in the Old Testament relate the lives of some very great human beings, many of whom lived at the same time, it is a good idea to know a bit of their background. Although many of these prophets were contemporaries they did not know of each other because of the lack of communication facilities. On the other hand a few of them attained tremendous prominence and were extremely influential in their lifetime. We are again made aware that while our Bible is historically accurate for the most part, the sequence in which the books are presented is neither chronologically accurate nor necessarily in order of importance, due to the many hands through which the Bible has passed; each editor having his own point of view. For example, Hosea's influence is very much evident in the writings of II Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, yet in the Bible he is considered one of the minor prophets (although he was one of the great mystics) and the book of Hosea follows the books of the other three prophets. It is important for us to realize that the impact made by some of these "minor prophets" was far greater than that made by some of the "major prophets." Not because they necessarily attained so much prominence during their lives, but because, as in this example, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah studied what had been said, and included these teachings together with their own.

To get a background for Jeremiah we have to look at him in the light of what little information there is historically, rather than at the book itself. To begin with, *The Interpreter's Bible* is not even sure of the date of his birth; it might have been 640 or 626 B.C. They do not know whether he was born in 640 B.C. and got his call in 626, or was born in 626 and in 609 B.C. had the experience which made him aware that he was a prophet. Actually this part is not terribly important. It is interesting to learn of the background of these prophets because it makes them more human to us. We have a habit of looking at them as superhuman men. They were not; they were terribly human. You will find, as you meet Jeremiah, that he was as human as we found I Isaiah, David, and even Moses to be.

Jeremiah lived during a transitional period of Jewish history—in fact of Near East history, not too unlike what we are seeing in the Near East today. Judah and Israel were split into separate kingdoms. From the time of Solomon there had been in Judah, and in all of Israel, a complete lack of interest in the Mosaic Law. The Jews had encountered many false gods, and their faith largely consisted of performing an act of worship on the sabbath in the synagogue. Then, if one gave a good cow, or sheep, or, if one could not afford that, a couple of birds, one had done everything that had to be done for Jehovah, or Yahweh. This continued until 650 or 640 B.C., when Josiah became king of Israel. Josiah was a very good man, and it was during his reign that excavations were made and the original books of the Law, or Deuteronomy, were rediscovered. When these books were translated and it became obvious how far they had departed from the Law of Moses, it caused national consternation. Great reforms were made and the leaders tried to bring the people back to the original faith. They did not quite succeed. All this was taking place during Jeremiah's life, and one of the things we will discover is why he fought these reforms, because he did.

There was a country north of Israel which had been a very great power and was now declining—Assyria. The Assyrians had been routed by the Medes and a small province of Babylon, Chaldea, and Babylon had then become the great power. Babylon inherited all of the countries that Assyria had held sway over, and Judah was one of these countries. You might compare this to Hitler's Germany taking over Poland and being defeated by the Russians who then took over Poland in their turn. But in this case, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonians, was quite friendly to the Jews. Then Josiah died and his first son, Jehoahaz, attained the throne. He was not too good a man and was killed, and then another son, Jehoiakim, became the ruler. The Jews paid tribute to the Babylonians and everything went along peacefully for about ten years, during which time Jeremiah began to prophesy. However, there were some political factions in Judah who were very friendly with the Egyptians who were inciting them to revolt. They persuaded the king to stop paying tribute, which resulted in the Babylonians invading Jerusalem. The king was disposed of and another son of Josiah, Zedekiah, ruled for eleven years when the same series of events took place; friendliness with the

the Hebrew language has many different meanings for each word, there still remains the inevitable limitation of how much words themselves can convey, and we are faced with this difficulty in this chapter.

The Jewish ideology has always been based on the fact that they are people chosen by God. Actually, of course, God did not choose them: Moses made the choice by training them in the belief in the One God, and presented this in such a way that they could accept it. All of the great teachers and prophets of Israel have tried to impress on their people the idea of what we ourselves try to achieve, and that is conscious contact with God. In that conscious contact there is a feeling of intimacy and closeness which no words can describe. This is why, when a prophet is particularly stirred up, as Ezekiel is here, he will choose an intimate form of relationship to symbolize the closeness of the people with God. Three types of relationships are used to bring out and stress the intimacy and closeness of that contact; that of lovers, husband and wife, and father and child, especially father and son. These are used to convey the idea that there is nothing closer than the relationship between God and the human being. Then, in the negative sense, when the wife is unfaithful, she becomes the harlot.

He is speaking here of the city of Jerusalem, and a city symbolizes the consciousness in which we live. Jerusalem is the symbol of the soul who has found God, literally called the "city of peace." You can interpret this in one of two ways—as a rebuke to a soul who has gone astray, or as a rebuke to the physical city of Jerusalem. He compares Jerusalem's relationship to the Lord with a person having found a child, raised and cared for it, given it everything it needed and promised it everything in the world, and then having the child betray him, for this is one of the most bitter experiences in human relationships. He uses this type of relationship to emphasize the seriousness of what has happened in Jerusalem. He even brings in the other two cities which had fallen by the wayside and were considered the worst cities in the Old Testament, Sodom and Gomorrah, and his indictment of Jerusalem shows her



by Jewish women who were the sorceresses and diviners. Most of the men confined their activities to prophesying with a little magic on the side. From the description in verses 17-23 of the ancient forms of magic, it is certainly understandable that the leaders were up in arms about it, because the first Law is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and they certainly had a great number of them, of this there is no doubt.

CHAPTER 14. This section brings to mind the time when Abraham asked the Lord to save the city of Sodom if ten good men were found there. And for the first time in the Old Testament we see the beginning of a change in the pattern of thought. No longer is it the sins of the father being visited upon the children, for here the righteous will be saved, although they are not strong enough in their righteousness to save anyone else. As we continue we will see that this becomes an even wider concept which begins to overthrow the "sins of the father" dictum so long held. It is fascinating to see that even though it is so clear here, it has still not been accepted by most Jews today. They continue to believe in punishment being passed down from generation to generation, although the real meaning behind this concept is that if you or I break a law and bring something into being which we do not like, we will continue to bring negative events into our lives until we change the cause. This is the third and fourth generation, and it has nothing to do with the sins of our parents, or our sins being visited upon our children.

In CHAPTER 15, Jerusalem is compared to a vine tree which has become so worthless that it should be cast into the fire. And the prediction is once more that Jerusalem will be burned and utterly destroyed, which of course occurred not once, but several times. There are few cities which have been sacked as often as Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 16. Here we have a complete change of imagery to a form which we have not encountered too often. The book that approximates it most closely, although from the opposite end of the emotional scale, is the Song of Songs. The type of symbolism which is used here is interesting for various reasons. Even though

Egyptians and invasion by the Babylonians, and this time a governor was put in control of Judah. The governor came from a very fine Jewish family, and once again peace reigned for about five years until he was assassinated by a member of the royal family. Once more the Babylonians moved in and took the Jews into captivity. At this point a group of people who were afraid of the Babylonians practically kidnapped poor Jeremiah and fled to Egypt. This, briefly, is the historical background.

Jeremiah, himself, is an interesting man. He is of special interest to us not only because of our study of the Bible as a text book, but also because our main focus is on mysticism and the various types of mystics that emerge from its pages. Jeremiah was a mystic. In a sense, his type was similar to that of St. Francis of Assisi. He believed that he must live the life of a martyr which might well have been the reason behind his being stoned to death by his fellow Jews in Egypt. He was always certain, from his early childhood, that he was going to become a prophet, and in one sense he martyred himself for the prophetic cause.

At this juncture we might ask, what is a prophet and in what way does he differ from a priest? In many ways their lives are similar, with one major exception. A prophet does not adhere to any specific form of ritual or theological ideas. A true prophet is one who feels completely close to God, and since he feels he is a vehicle through whom God expresses Himself, he must live the kind of life he feels would be acceptable to God. He acts as God's emissary on earth. In fact, Jeremiah was born of a priestly family but he did not become a rabbi. It is recorded that he had a number of fights with members of his family because of difference in beliefs. He believed in a personal religion. He believed in the right of the individual to develop his own individuality and personality. In many ways you may find him very reminiscent of Job. He has absolutely no hesitation in arguing with God, and when he thinks God is wrong he tells Him so. But the great difference between him and Job is that he had the inner humility which enabled him to open his mind and see that God was right. Job did not achieve that for a long, long time. Too, Jeremiah was an extremely sensitive, reticent and introspective person, despite the fact that his role as a prophet was to arouse the people and was traditionally expected to be a man of blood and thunder. He

had what we, in our terminology, call a basic conflict within himself. And we find this conflict comes to the fore again and again. He also had the idea that a man of God should not marry, and so he lived alone. This also tended to make him a bit neurotic, since it was not actually his choice, but his conscious belief of what he *must* do.

At this point we might ask the question, "How could he be a mystic and be neurotic?" I would like to emphasize again something that we should always realize, that no one is ever equally developed in all areas of his being. What do I mean by that? For instance, one mystic may have a tremendous ability to heal and be incapable of controlling his own temper: another may have a marvelous power of oratory and be incapable of healing himself. The reason for this is that, until we reach the final stages of development, none of us develops in complete harmony and uniformity.

Now, in the case of Jeremiah, he was extremely sensitive and introverted emotionally, and yet his greatest desire was to carry the word of God to his people as he understood it. He did not want the public eye; and so it became a question of deep conflict. We might say it was a conflict between the subconscious and Superconscious minds. The subconscious was saying "I don't want to do this," and the Superconscious was saying "I must do this." Again, it is very similar to the argument described in the story of the Burning Bush, where God tells Moses to get the Jews out of Egypt, and Moses does not want to do it. Moses asks, "How will they believe me? Who shall I say has sent me?" And when the answer came it was also his call, "Thou shalt say I Am."

There is another fascinating point in the life of this introverted man, a man who wanted only to be alone. He fought the reforms caused by the rediscovery of the Deuteronomic Laws. On the surface this is really rather amazing, since it was obvious that the Jews had strayed a long way from the original teaching, and it would seem that if they learned to obey the laws it would bring them, so to speak, back into the fold. But Jeremiah objected to this.

What actually happened was that the reforms brought about a ritualistic observance of the laws with one central place of worship and sacrifice, for the priests felt that if there were one place in the city where everyone could bring their

difference here is a question of development and evolution. Very often this kind of false prophet is at the stage, which you and I are passing through, of learning to distinguish between "I and me." You see, the subconscious will always provide us with answers. Ask yourself anything you care to at this moment and you will receive an answer from the subconscious almost immediately. But the chances are it is certainly not an answer from the Presence of God in you for that does not come as quickly, until one has become an initiate. The false prophets must learn, as well as we ourselves, to distinguish between the subconscious and the Superconscious. Let us credit them with the fact that they meant well; it does nothing to alter the fact that they encouraged the people to continue in their old ways by saying Ezekiel and Jeremiah were wrong. They said there would be no siege and no captivity; there would be peace. And, as we know how people are, once they heard this, which is what they of course wished to hear, they did nothing to change. So, much of the blame for the captivity itself and what occurred during that period is laid at the door of the false prophets who consciously or unconsciously were to some degree responsible for the actions of the people. Although they were probably as honest as they knew how to be, in the book of Proverbs it says ignorance is no excuse of the Law. It is a hard law which we find very difficult to accept in our own lives, but it is nevertheless true. On a personal level I would say about 90% of our resentments would be completely non-existent if we really knew what we were doing when we created our problems.

Let us look a bit at the magic that is described here. Ezekiel speaks of "pillows." These were magic bands used in Babylonian worship. Certain figures would be wrapped in these bands and then worshipped because they were bound in supposedly sanctified clothes. Then, too, birds were believed to be the souls of discarnate entities. These bands would be used to hold a bird still while it was presented to a person as the soul of someone who had passed on. Then, according to the number of feathers, they would say whether the answer to a question was "yes" or "no." These acts were performed

the "One Who is altogether lovely." Can you imagine trying to describe a different kind of I Am to a people; a God of Wrath Who is going to kill them if they do not make the right offerings, or obey every law He gives them? I think it would be extremely difficult for anyone to do, but the prophets did it. However, it does get a bit repetitious, and I think if we look for the deeper symbolism, we will find something of more interest than what appears on the surface.

CHAPTER 13. This is a chapter on magic, psychics, sorcerers, and false prophets. It is difficult to realize to what an extent, mostly due to the influence of the Babylonians, the Israelites had become interested in all forms of psychism, particularly as it is so definitely against the Law. If you recall, Moses told them in no uncertain terms (Deut. 18:9-14) that people who pursue astrology, necromancy and the rest are an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, their God. It certainly was just as great an abomination in the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both prophets raised their voices against this practice, which was also part of the false worship adopted from the Babylonians, and was called the pollution of Jerusalem, the city of God.

In this chapter Ezekiel deals with another problem he had to contend with which Moses also decries in Deuteronomy 18; the false prophets who give the opposite message from what is given by the prophets of the Lord. Of course the question was, How is one to know that a man is a real or false prophet? Something will happen that proves the prophet to be right, such as the death of Pelatiah in the preceding chapter. Then, too, as I have mentioned, it is perfectly true that many have posed as prophets through the ages because they felt it was an easy way to make a living. They need only a little astuteness in reading people, for most people who are seeking help will pour the whole story forth most willingly in their desperate need for help. There are those who take advantage of this, and gain the reputation of being great psychics. However, there are others who believe, just as firmly as Jeremiah or Ezekiel did, that they are called by God. They do not adulterate their visions by trying to get people to give them big sums of money, but they too are false prophets. The

various animals, birds and money it would make it much easier for all of them. Jeremiah objected strongly to this and said, in effect, that they should realize that God was not interested in their sacrifices, but in their thoughts and words and actions. It was senseless and wrong to revert to this ritualism. He was a man well ahead of his time and as he fought this his unpopularity increased.

Jeremiah did have faith in his God, but certainly not perfection of character. There are times when Jeremiah calls down curses on his enemies, their wives and children; and in one section he even calls God a "filthy stream of water." On the other hand he calls Him a beautiful living stream of water—but when he was angry...! But he does have faith, and it was his faith that enabled him to stick to what he believed and carry it through. He was persecuted, put in the stocks and in prison and finally stoned to death in Egypt, but nothing could make his faith swerve from the course he believed. He is quite a figure.

My mind tends towards visual impressions and I imagine him as a short, thin, dark man filled with burning zeal who when his emotional moods took over became completely withdrawn, but when the Word of God was with him, he was someone to be reckoned with. Yet, in spite of his vacillation, he was able to bring the Jews through their toughest period, and what he accomplished was one of the great achievements in the Old Testament.

This conflict in his character is one of the reasons why we have the most complete personal record of a man that we have of anyone in the Old Testament: whenever he felt anything, or whatever his mood, he wrote it down. So we have in black and white his reactions to everything and whatever he thought or felt—which is one reason it is such a long book. In case he missed anything he had a disciple and scribe, Baruch, to take care of it. What Jeremiah forgot, Baruch wrote down. We have a complete record because he wanted everyone to know what he went through. And the reason for this—it seems almost sacriligious to say of a man with his magnificent ability—is there were times when he felt quite sorry for himself. And, as we know, one thing no mystic has any right to have is any form of self pity.

Jeremiah had another interesting side to his abilities. Although, unhappily, we do see a little of it in our day, men

of religion, as a rule, do not have too much to do with politics. But in those days many of the prophets participated in government, in functions similar to our Prime Ministers. You remember First Isaiah was not only a prophet, a minister, a mystic and initiate, he was also politically prominent and had a great voice in the government under the rule of several kings. There were a number of other prophets who worked very closely with their kings. Jeremiah was interested in politics and social reform. He fought for his people whether they wanted him to or not. This was the source of yet another conflict stemming from his desire for the good will and friendship of people. Actually he often was the object of their hatred, since he frequently advocated those steps they did not want to take. This gives us a general picture of the man and his times, with one important exception: his theology.

Jeremiah's concept of God is doubly interesting to us. Firstly, because of the ideas themselves, and secondly because they were highly unusual for a man of his time. To most early Jews, Yahweh was a figure of terror. He was deliberately portrayed in that manner by Moses in order to keep the unruly children of Israel in line. From that time on the conception of Deity as a God of Wrath continued to be held and taught with the exception of Second Isaiah and Jeremiah. Jeremiah believed that Yahweh was a God of Majesty and Love. He believed God was both Transcendent and Immanent: in His Majesty and Power He was Transcendent, and in His Love and Justice, in His Mercy and Truth He was Immanent—He was in each of us. He believed this. This is amazing enough for a man of that period, and additionally so since these are concepts which we ourselves are still trying to accept. But this was the basis of his theology.

He believed that God was a God of Mercy: that God had supplied us with everything we needed, and all we ever had to do was live in accordance with His Law. He believed that God did not rule over His earth and creation like a Tzar, but that each individual was a child of God with his own right in the universe. And it was for this reason that there was no servility in Jeremiah's attitude towards God, which is unusual for any period of time. He would argue with Him when he did not agree with a point, but his faith held fast. He felt that God spoke through him. He never

Divine Mind. So you have three choices, and if you have heard nothing unkind or dangerous in two months and have not received some bit of illumination in three months, you will know which one it must be." This is symbolism.

Returning to the symbol used in this chapter, while it could tie in with the captivity—the acceptance of outside influences, idols and worship—it is a very definite censure of their abuse of the pure worship of Israel. As you know, Babylon means the sensualism of the subconscious mind, and the Chaldeans symbolize treachery. As we read this and study the Bible, we should not feel that the symbol pertains solely to the physical incident taking place at that particular time, in the same way as some people feel that the Garden of Eden was an actual place at a particular time in history, when, as we know, it is a symbolic state. Here, particularly because of his visionary ability, the symbols are not always directed at the physical happenings, but more often to the inner happenings. These are differences of which we should become more and more aware. Digging through a wall may also signify the need to dig into the subconscious and stimulate it in order to get out of a situation.

Another thing that I find fascinating and at the same time, this may sound blasphemous, boring is the constant chastisement of Israel. Not that it was not warranted, but from the book of Judges on, they are continually told that they will be punished and Yahweh is going to desert them. Then, they will be restored. Another reason for this lies in the difference between their picture of Yahweh, and, say, our concept of the Presence of God. In realizing this you must also reconsider the fact that in many instances the prophet's own understanding was miles ahead of the people whom he tried to guide. He had to present a concept of God which would be intelligible to the people, and since they only knew a rule of fear, that was how Yahweh was portrayed. I think it must have been difficult for some of the prophets to draw this picture for the Israelites, knowing their own experience with I Am. For instance, you and I believe in the Presence Who lives within us as

Lord" without the sanction of the Presence within, and inevitably are proven false in their prophecies.

However there is disclosed here one of the earmarks of the psychic as opposed to the mystic's development, and one of the main reasons why I so often say, stay away from psychism. Following the very beautiful passage describing the "word of the Lord," Ezekiel says he has the feeling that he is in Chaldea. This can never occur to the mystic; Ezekiel has reached the stage where trance is involuntary. I cannot think of anything more uncomfortable than not being able to control your own consciousness, here or on any other plane. It is certainly true that Ezekiel was protected by the Presence within him, but we are not all in the position of an Ezekiel. Once again we have evidence that the Bible shows each phase of development at every stage of individual growth.

CHAPTER 12. Symbolic interpretation is an extremely fascinating study. It is based on universal archetypal symbols, as, for instance, the "figure of authority" which is the archetypal symbol of God in the human mind, and water symbolizing the soul, emotions. According to *The Interpreter's Bible*, the symbol of digging through the wall (in the first part of this chapter) represents the exile. I think their reasons for thinking so are fairly obvious, since the Jews were captives looking forward to the time when they would be free. On the other hand, practically every other chapter in the books of Jeremiah and the other prophets, as well as Ezekiel, have dealt very openly and directly with the captivity, so why the need for veiling the subject at this point? I am inclined to believe it signified something other than the exile, and I would like to illustrate this with an example of various ways in which symbolism can be interpreted.

A number of years ago a student came to me regarding a dream which concerned her. She knew a bit of Freudian analysis, and the dream was about snakes, of which she had always been in terror. In the dream she was walking through a garden when she was attacked by a snake. She reached out and caught it under its hood, squeezing it until its venom shot out and it fell dead. I said, "There are a couple of meanings other than the one you know. One is that the snake could represent someone who is trying to do you some harm, which you will learn of in time to prevent. Then too, a serpent is the symbol for the Eternal Wisdom, and it could be that you are going to wrest some great bit of illumination from

felt that Yahweh was outside, even though in his visions Yahweh is often pictured exteriorly, and he prophesied by means of his visions.

At this point we should touch very briefly on the subject of visions, since it is one of the many subjects which people either disbelieve entirely, or feel is an indication of mental illness, or is supernatural. There is nothing unbalanced or supernatural about it. Nor is it at all strange, as millions of people have experienced visions and millions will begin to have that experience in, I hope, a very short time. It is an ability that can be developed through psychical exercises, which is definitely not advisable, or comes as a result of your own growth and development through metaphysics. There comes a certain point in our own evolution when we begin to penetrate our inner world. It sometimes begins with visions. Visions of this nature never occur through trance, but only in complete consciousness; as you are meditating, or shortly afterwards, you may suddenly see a picture, which is always completely symbolic.

Carl Jung has done a very fascinating and invaluable work in this field. He, too, discovered that the subconscious has its own peculiar language of symbolism. Until you and I have some degree of understanding of this language, we can never be quite sure what is being said to us. But we learn through the Bible and psychology that we all speak the same tongue subconsciously. It is the language of symbolism, and appears in both dreams and visions. Since psychology deals with the interpretation of dreams, it might be wise to point out the difference between a vision from God and subconscious communication through dreams. First of all a vision will come during or shortly after meditation and, of course, in complete consciousness, whereas the dream occurs during sleep. Also the form of a dream is usually slightly irrational: a vision is never irrational.

And so we find Jeremiah was a mystic who had visions, and he had a great number of them, some of which were very beautiful and some rather terrible. Since he was a prophet not for his own sake, but for his people, he always told them what he understood: unless they mended their ways, such and such a thing was going to take place.

A few years after he began to prophesy, he had a vision which he wrongly interpreted, and he proclaimed it loud and

long. This error caused him great public and personal discomfort, but certainly did not stop him. He knew it was very possible for a human being to misinterpret a symbol, so he continued to prophesy. Most of his visions and oracles came true. He had visions, almost from the beginning to the end of his life. Moreover, he interpreted them, something some of the other prophets did not do, which is why many of the symbols that are familiar to us are to be found in Jeremiah's visions.

The impression of Jeremiah I have from all this is that he is outwardly the "blood and thunder" type of prophet who seemed to be carrying a mountain of responsibility around on his shoulders, and is filled with woe and lamentation, even though he does have a sense of humor. The reason I am stressing his personality is that I feel the point that is most interesting for us is that Jeremiah represents a type of mystic we have not as yet encountered. We are apt to think of mystics as being big and powerful people with extremely vibrant personalities. And Jeremiah very distinctly gives the feeling of being a small, puny even sickly man, who is personally completely torn between his knowledge of the importance of his mission in life and his disappointment at the reception accorded him. He is intensely sensitive to criticism of others, which he almost constantly received.

Before we begin to discuss the book itself there are a few other points that bear mentioning. The first presents a serious difficulty: the texts are not arranged in chronological order. Two parts of the same chapter may belong to entirely different periods of time. No one seems to know why this is so, but it seems probable that it was done either by his disciple, Baruch, or by the editors of the Deuteronomic Law, parts of which are included in the book and ascribed to Jeremiah. But we are not going to attempt an historical jig-saw problem, so we will deal with the book as it is given.

We have mentioned that it was strange that Jeremiah, who by this time had developed into a powerful figure, was actually against Josiah's reform. One of the reasons for this was the Jews had been very influenced by their neighbors, the Babylonians and Chaldeans, who were idol worshippers, and had adopted a number of their rites. Jeremiah was afraid that they would be unable to see the difference between the ritual of Moses and the ritual of an Ishtar, for instance. But a

speaks of the jealousy of God it is not his own conception to which he refers; it is the old concept of "I am a jealous God," which he employs in order to get his ideas across, to drive the people into compliance with the Law through fear. This idea of the seven main aspects of God is not found in any of the other prophets. When we think of God we think of Him in terms of the seven main aspects. We know one of these aspects is Principle, which controls the Law, and we in turn live under that Law. Our concept is not that of the overwhelming figure that we sense in this chapter, but our feeling is of the Presence, the Spirit, the Son of God Who lives within us. We are constantly told by all the prophets that Israel has sinned, will be punished and restored, but Ezekiel's approach is unique because he is a psychic. He provides an individual beginning of a real and very deep mystical symbolism, much of which is from the archetypal patterns which have been repeated throughout all religions in history. But here they are given a freshness and an outspoken approach to their meaning which is really quite lovely.

CHAPTER 10. Remember that we are dealing with the same era as Jeremiah's, around 590 B.C. The siege of Jerusalem is imminent and many Jews are already in captivity in Babylon. The last chapter spoke of the slaughter of the guilty in terms of a symbolic vision of six guards and a man in linen, which also conveys Ezekiel's belief that there are angels who guard us, and that these angels will weed out the good from the bad. In chapter 10, however, we have a different subject, which is very similar to the vision of the universe and man in the first chapter. Here we have a representation of Yahweh's glory, the glory of God, and of the universe. The meaning of the chapter is that this glory was withdrawn from Israel because of their sins, indiscretions and their refusal to obey. Ezekiel was very much a voice crying in the wilderness because, even though he could restrain them for a few days or so, they returned to the old pattern and the cycle began all over again.

CHAPTER 11. It is interesting to see that with Pelatiah, as in the case of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Hananiah, we find another instance of the immediate fulfillment of a prophecy. This probably helped to strengthen the prophet's own confidence, as well as to impress the people with the eventual fulfillment of those prophecies, plus the fact that he was a man of God. This was probably especially necessary because of the false prophets, whom we will meet once again, who speak of the "words of the

the idea it symbolizes certainly has no meaning: the books of Judgment are closed. Who is keeping judgment on us? If you see these concepts and begin to realize what they mean and trace them to their origins, it is really fantastic.

The Jewish and Catholic religions still believe very much in fertility as it applies to the propagation of children: the pagan fertility rites were to ensure propagation for crops, animals and children. However, during and after the captivity they enacted the ritual and as there have always been people with strange ideas, it finally deteriorated and degenerated into Black Magic.

In CHAPTER 9 we are told that the guilty will be slain and those who are sorrowful for the abominations will have a mark set upon them and will be saved. Another ancient symbolism is described when he speaks of the six guards and one clothed in linen, who represent the seven main aspects of God. Linen symbolizes cleanness, purity and goodness, and the man dressed in linen is a scribe. Here we have a reference to an ancient Egyptian god called Thoth who represented the power of thought and memory. The description given of him is almost identical with the one given in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. I am certain that Ezekiel had no conscious knowledge of the more ancient Egyptian religion, yet this description is identical with the Egyptian. It is the symbolism of the subconscious which was particularly clear in Ezekiel as he was a psychic. These symbols begin to emerge as, what Dr. Carl Jung has called, the archetypal symbols of the subconscious, which we all have in common. For example, people will often dream of a figure of authority, sometimes seen as a father, a general, or a minister, who subconsciously stands for God. This is a universal archetypal image which will express itself in dreams, particularly in the case of insecurity.

Ezekiel describes the scribe, or the recording angel—the power of memory and of thought—in Egyptian terms. The interpretation is that the Jews have completely neglected the seven main aspects of God, and consequently they will be slain. Another interesting point about this chapter is to see how Ezekiel conceives of God. The God he portrays is certainly not an anthropomorphic concept, but an Infinite God. He believes, as did Jeremiah and Isaiah, that the Babylonians and Assyrians are instruments used by Yahweh to punish Israel for her transgressions. And when he

more important reason for his position was his concern that they would become too centered in the ritual itself and he constantly berates them: Do not bring your sacrifices; bring your heart. Do not talk to me of the uncircumcised; circumcise your heart. He was a realist in many ways, and for this reason he fought against the laws of ritual and the laws of Leviticus, which are legion. He believed that the only way to worship God was by your actions, words and deeds. What you thought in your heart was much more important than bringing a cow to the temple.

Another result of Josiah's reform which Jeremiah fought against was that the temple in Jerusalem became the only place where sacrifices were made. If people could not get to that particular temple to offer their sacrifice they were said to have committed a sin. Actually travel was quite difficult and many people could not do this, and so they were called sinners and sometimes were punished, which Jeremiah felt was terribly wrong. He felt that wherever you were, God was; wherever you stood was holy ground. And he fought for this principle. In fact, in the section we are now going to discuss, he asks what a man must do to be protected and the priests answer him, "Sacrifice in the temple." He tells them they are wrong; the only way was to live a good moral and ethical life. The priests would not admit this. This man really fought a whole nation single-handed. His name itself gives a good indication of his character. Jeremiah means, "Yahweh hurls; Jehovah hurls or shoots."

In CHAPTER 1, Jeremiah expresses, in the very beautiful Biblical manner, his belief that he was ordained to be a prophet before he was born. You also see that he must have been very young when either the realization, or the desire to be a prophet came to him, for he says, "...I am a child." It is true, although it occurs infrequently, that there are instances when a child, sometime after the age of seven, knows that a particular type of life is going to be his. Then, after Jeremiah's realization, there is an intervening period of quiet, followed by a vision of an almond rod. A rod is the symbol for power, and the almond, fertility, power and growth. In other words, it tells him that he will have the power of the Lord to do certain things. This is his knighting, so to speak. In verse 12 we are told, "Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten

my word to perform it." And, of course, this is what begins to happen.

You also begin to see here that Jeremiah's descriptions do not have the beauty of language found in some of the other books; they are very down to earth statements. In verse 13 we come to the vision of the seething pot which Jeremiah misinterpreted, as we mentioned before. Actually a prophet's task is two-fold; to interpret the vision itself, and to foretell—to correctly apply its meaning. Jeremiah's error in this instance acted as a terrible scourge to him. He did not interpret it symbolically at all. He made the mistake of saying the Scythians were going to attack them from the north; instead it was the Babylonians. Woe betide that prophet who makes a prediction and changes it by one word. Since he was not popular at the offset, and in this, one of his first public predictions, he was right in what he said, but wrong in the name of the nation, it proved to be quite a setback for him.

CHAPTER 2 is a collection of oracles covering different periods of time but, again, editorially combined into one section. It is a series of remonstrances which seem to be typical of every prophet. I do not believe there is one prophet who says, You have obeyed and loved your God. We usually find a complete recital of all of the wrongs Israel has committed, and quite repeatedly since the Israelites did not learn easily or well. Once more we find recriminations and the accusation that they have left the way of their God and are chasing after other deities. He makes a sarcastic pun in the 27th verse, which says, "Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth." He is ridiculing the influence of Babylonian rites where the stock, or post, was a phallic symbol of the male principle, and the stone represented the female principle. Their deities were carved from posts and stones, and he takes these two ideas and flings them at the Israelites with as much sarcasm as he is capable of.

As we have seen, Jeremiah had the distinct impression that he should not marry and therefore lived a celibate life. From the point of view of psychology it is interesting to see that his denunciation in CHAPTER 3 is voiced in sexual terms. It is true that Israel is often spoken of as "the bride of the Lord," and that a certain amount of sexual symbolism is found

Another thing which is fascinating about him is that he is practically identical with Hosea, II Isaiah and Jeremiah in his understanding and discernment of the One God. Whereas many of the other prophets said in effect, "Well, let well enough alone, they will grow," he is completely dedicated to the concept of the One God and any deviation from the God of Israel and the Law of Moses—not the ritualistic law—is not to be tolerated. We found Isaiah and Jeremiah said, Do not bring offerings, bring a clean heart, and Ezekiel is seeking to impress the same idea upon the people. His concern is not with the ritual as such, but with the infiltration of pagan worship in that ritual, and this chapter deals completely with this and with what would happen to those who indulged in a perverted form of worship.

Here, and on other occasions, Ezekiel lapses into a form of symbolism in his visions which is based on Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian symbology, and upon occasion he uses the imagery of Yahweh as the bridegroom and Israel as the bride. The cause of his fury in this vision is the Jews' worship of the Chaldean god, Tammuz, who supposedly lives six months above the earth and six months below it, during which time his loved one, Ishtar, the mother-goddess, searches for him and brings him back once more to the upper world. This is the basis for the Greek myth of Demeter searching for her daughter Persephone and both formed the basis, in turn, for their particular fertility rites. The Jews, in turn, appropriated the worship and phallic rites, which amounted to orgies, and performed these not only in Israel, but in Jerusalem itself, in the name of Tammuz, or of Ishtar and even in the name of Yahweh. Also, the Jewish priesthood acted in these rites as well; an additional reason for the role of the prophet being so dangerous that many of them died violent deaths.

However, if you want to have a fascinating time for yourself, read Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which traces the origins and development of these myths to our own time. Some rituals are very beautiful if you know the meaning behind them. For example, the Catholic service at Easter is remarkably lovely, but I doubt if one half of one percent of the people there know what it actually signifies. I think the moment when the shofar (the ram's horn) is blown in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement is very thrilling, but



clean people, the chosen people of God, could defile themselves so.

CHAPTER 5. This is obviously a continuation of chapter 4, differing only in the symbolic action, for here Ezekiel is told to shave his head and beard. Hair symbolizes strength and power, and in orthodox Judaism shaving signifies sorrow and lamentation. He is being told that there will be a time of tremendous difficulty and sorrow because of the future happenings in Jerusalem. In verses 5-17 he is given the interpretation of the symbolic action and told what specifically will happen, which, we will see, takes place exactly as he saw and foretold it.

CHAPTER 6. Here Ezekiel is told to prophesy against the mountains, the symbol for the uplifted consciousness, because of the desecration which has been perpetrated upon them. Altars were built in the groves of the mountains and the most orgiastic sacrificial rites were practiced there by the Jews, not only in worship of idols and foreign gods, but of Yahweh Himself.

In referring to the original meaning of some of the Hebrew terms, *The Interpreter's Bible* points out that, the word "hammanim", which is translated in verse 4 as images, actually referred to incense altars which had horn-like projections at each corner. These horns were not used for their original purpose of burning incense, but as phallic symbols. In verses 4-7 a belief of the Hebrews is used against them. They believed that a dead body defiled the place where it lay. On the other hand, they had also adopted the practice of human sacrifice which was used in the pagan religions in the worship of their god of fertility. And here Yahweh says that the Israelites will be slain by sword, famine and pestilence, and their bodies will fall "round about their altars... where they did offer sweet savor to all their idols."

CHAPTER 7 is self-explanatory. Ezekiel warns them that they are invoking God's Law against themselves, and tells them what will be the result.

CHAPTER 8. This chapter, too, is fairly clear. Again, for it is frequent in Ezekiel, we are given a picture of what happens to a person going into trance. As he describes it, he feels as though the hand of the Lord God falls upon him and he is lifted up to heaven, and he thereafter relates what he sees.

in all religions. However, Jeremiah uses it time and time again. This is also true of many of the medieval mystics who lived celibate lives. I find it particularly interesting because it shows the subconscious is the same in any century.

CHAPTER 4. As you see, the blame continues. Certainly quite rightly, because this period was really unbelievable for a people who had witnessed so many marvelous demonstrations in their earlier history. Jeremiah's vision is of a cosmic disaster, a real catastrophe, so he warns them of this and again they refuse to listen. Personally he is torn between trying to warn them and bring them back to God, and the feeling that he is not being successful. I do not imagine there is anything more frustrating to people who are sincere in what they do, than to have the feeling they are getting nowhere with it, no matter how hard they try. On the other hand, if Jeremiah's personality had been a bit more attractive and he had not berated them so continuously, it might have been easier for them to accept.

Jeremiah had a two-fold struggle; with the people of Israel and with his God. He knew what the people should do and be, and what was going to happen if they broke the Law, and he felt God was overmastering him by making him prophesy. He is completely torn apart by this very real conflict. In this next section Jeremiah makes two very tragic outcries to God. They are quite similar to those made by Job, and certainly with far more cause. He was completely despised, put in the stocks, and beaten and still God kept saying "Go on, go on." And there was no reward. I wonder how many of us in a similar situation would keep on. But then you must ask yourself "If I did not keep on, what would I do?" On the other hand, my feeling in reading this is that this is another form of his feeling of self-pity, plus his fury at the people of Israel and his enemies, and his own embarrassment at finding that some of his prophecies have not come true. That most of them did in a different band of time had nothing to do with his feelings at this point.

CHAPTER 5 is a very simple one dealing with Israel's utter sinfulness and Jeremiah's vain search for an upright man. That search did not originate here certainly, but has gone on through the centuries, and few there be that find one. Then he predicts the coming of a foe, recounts Yahweh's denial of the people and condemns the wickedness of the wealthy, the

prophets and the priests. The chapter ends with the words of Yahweh: "My people love to have it so," which is a very tragic and unfortunately fairly true commentary.

CHAPTER 6. In this chapter Jeremiah says Jerusalem is threatened with a siege and the people are totally corrupt. He continues his search for an honest man. He has a conversation with Yahweh about the arrogance of the people and their rejection of the covenant path, and then speaks about the invasion of the foe from the north.

CHAPTER 7. *The Interpreter's Bible* refers to this section as the "vanity of the cultus," and says that it is from the Deuteronomic editor and not from Jeremiah. It is called a "temple sermon," and they go on to say that some verses were known to have been spoken by Jeremiah on the steps of a temple, but it is questionable whether these were part of them.

However it is known that Jeremiah was arrested for speaking on the steps of the temple, and this brings up another interesting sidelight about the personality of the man as it reflected his concept of God. In the first place he had tremendous opposition, and one of his most difficult problems, as well as being personally most important, was in having the courage to stand up against the priests and sages, and the other prophets. He was not the only prophet at that time. That was a position held by many people who felt, not that they were dedicated to God, but that God had dedicated them, and there is a great difference. Consequently anyone who felt that it was a good way to "make an easy living" (and unfortunately this is equally true today), became a prophet. Naturally these men had very different ideas of what they thought God was telling them to do. But Jeremiah believed in his concept of God enough to sacrifice his life for it. Despite his own personal struggle towards a concept of God as Love, he has not fully realized this for himself, so his concept also contains a God of Wrath and Power.

It is fascinating to see that the aspect of God which is most emphasized by each of the prophets is the one that is most characteristic of their personalities. Look at Moses, First and Second Isaiah, Nathan, Samuel, and Jeremiah, for instance, and determine for yourself "How did he see God?" You will inevitably find that the answer will be that aspect which is predominant in their expression of themselves.

I have often asked "What kind of a God do you have?",

a man with such a remarkable gift of prophecy.

CHAPTER 4. I am sure we realize that it would be a bit impossible for anyone to lie on his side with his arm strapped and still eat food and drink water, and do this for 390 days, which shows us that this is a symbolic vision. The chapter is composed of five dramatic actions, three of which deal with the siege and fall of Jerusalem, and two with Judah. Actually, it is a little difficult to reconcile the years of captivity with the 390 days which is supposed to represent them, for Judah was in exile about forty years. It is possible that 390 was used Cabalistically, except that the food described is what they actually had while in captivity. I am personally convinced that this prophecy not only pertained to his own time, but also to our century, and this becomes more evident as we go on. If we interpret Jerusalem as the symbol for peace of mind, and Judah, for courage, this section is not as specifically applicable to his era as it is to the twentieth century. For example, he speaks later on of the restoration of Israel, saying that everyone who is alive and has paid their debt of responsibility, will be called back to their own land. His description of the events is a rather phenomenal picture, far more pertinent to the twentieth century than it was to the fourth century B.C. There are also a number of prophecies which are amazingly fulfilled in his own era, but this one becomes so clear as we look at it in the light of our own times, that you would think he lived now and was speaking to the Jews before the last World War.

He is dealing with the same problems found in Isaiah and Jeremiah: that the Hebrews had departed from the original teaching and were following after pagan gods. While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments, Aaron was making the Golden Calf because the Israelites had cried for something to worship. Here they perform their temple rites every week because they believe this is necessary and are afraid not to do so. We find in later chapters they also participated in the Babylonian religion, performing those phallic rites perhaps, in the beginning, because they felt it might be politic, but mainly because they began to enjoy them. It actually went so far that this form of ritual became one of the originating points of the Black Mass. All of the prophets were up in arms against this: that Israel, the

teacher, a prophet, or a student, is M.Y.O.B., Mind Your Own Business. If you are asked for advice, as we all frequently are, the best thing to say is, Treat for guidance and I will do the same for you. Do not get involved. But Ezekiel is a prophet with a special type of development, and he is told that he must repeat exactly what he hears.

This is true for anyone whose intuition is developed to the degree where he hears, or knows, or feels that clearly. It is impossible to describe that clarity or degree of sureness in words. You suddenly *know*. One may be a bit unsure of it at first, for although the knowing is accompanied by terrific certainty, there is a bit of the personal fear of risking your neck if it should prove wrong. But, as you watch and you grow, and it grows with you, you find it is never wrong. Sometimes it will give advice that seems completely contrary to everything which we call common sense, or logic, but if we do not follow it we end in hot water; if we do follow it, it always produces the right results.

Here Ezekiel is told very clearly that it is his responsibility to repeat to the people exactly what he is told to tell them and, further, if the individual does not listen to him, he has done his duty, and the individual alone will pay. If he neglects to tell the individual who gets into difficulty as a result, it is Ezekiel's fault and he will pay. It is the old story of the greater your development, the more you know, the greater your responsibility. Certainly Ezekiel was a man of integrity whose word was his bond, but it was impressed upon him that it was absolutely imperative that he repeat everything God said to him, and under no conditions change a word. And this he agreed to do.

Prophecy is a gift from the Presence of God in you, and if you are not a proper custodian of this gift, you are not going to be able to prophesy. A prophet is one who has a general view of, and a vital concern for the welfare of the world: a psychic has concern for the individual. Although Ezekiel was a psychic, he was so close to initiation that his expression is somewhere between the two, the individual and the universal. He is also told here, symbolically, that he is going into exile (vss. 22-27); his tongue will be dumb and they will put bands upon him, in other words he is going into captivity. He knows this much of his own personal fate, but he is told little else, which is another point of interest in

because we all have different concepts of Him. My concept of Him is expressed by what I believe He is which I express in my life—not by what I say. The same is true of you. Each of us limits God in some way or other. Until we reach the point, and no one with the exception of Jesus has reached it yet, where the seven main aspects by which we know God are in complete harmony or equalization within us, we are not completely integrated. Those people who believe that God is Love, if they do not have the concept of Wisdom, often tend to become the “sticky sentimentalists” who cry “my poor brother the ant.” Those who feel that God is Life are usually artists in an area where a vibrant, creative enthusiasm dominates. Others believe that God is Law and, if it is not tempered with Love, sometimes become power-mad.

When you meditate, ask yourself what you feel is the strongest aspect for you. What aspect appeals to you most: Love, Life, Truth, Wisdom, Spirit, Soul or Principle? You will find that one of these predominates. Very few of us have done too much about Soul, and those who do begin to recreate their lives. Find your own concept of God. Here, Jeremiah's concept is a God of Power; First Isaiah, a God of Truth—look at these aspects and the other prophets and place them where they belong.

And, I might add, it is important, after you have found the aspect which is your strongest point, to bestow a little attention on the other aspects. None of us is completely balanced in our development. For example, we talk a great deal about Principle. To you it may mean saying a particular statement of Truth with faith; that is the Law as the Word in action. But there is much more to be learned about Law and it would be a good idea for us to meditate on it every so often. We could come up with some amazing information. This is equally true of the other aspects. Unfortunately the aspect that is most neglected is Intelligence because we have the idea we are so intelligent we do not need any more, but the truth is there is not one of us that could not use more. It is interesting that among people who are religiously inclined the favorite gospel is John's, almost unanimously. John was the apostle of Love. The concept of God as Love is the reason why people are so tremendously drawn to the writings of John, Isaiah and the Psalms. We all limit God in some way, but where you do not limit Him, is where you find the

God you really believe in, the aspect you really express. Great will be the day when we all reach some degree of uniformity of development in the aspects.

Jeremiah was martyred for the same reason as the early Christians were martyred. They believed that to follow Jesus meant to die a martyr's death. They felt this proved their love for and belief in Jesus. This was their conscious misunderstanding; on the other hand, it stemmed from a very deep-seated subconscious desire to suffer. Jeremiah has this same desire to suffer and he is very frank about his resulting grief. He does not appear to be the type that enticed people to feel the "call of the Lord" through the beauty of that call: he seems more often to have scared them to death. If they were sufficiently frightened they became followers, or obedient Israelites, but certainly not because of love of the beauty of life. He made it far from attractive in his own person, which was doubly pathetic because he believed so sincerely in what he was doing.

To return to CHAPTER 7, the main reason for his fury here is that the Israelites were indulging in orgies, which they had learned from the Babylonians, in the Valley of Hinnon on the outskirts of Jerusalem. He quite properly resented this but had neither the authority nor the power to stop it. He could only tell them what he thought and that God would punish them. And this is really a chapter of complete diatribe.

CHAPTERS 8-10. This section is a grouping of miscellaneous materials. He again laments the backsliding Israelites, and castigates the priests, although he expresses a certain sympathy for those people who tried to live according to the Law. CHAPTER 9 begins with a lament over the prophets' treachery. He predicts the destruction of Judah, which certainly came. He goes on to call for the punishment of the uncircumcised, since there was much intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews which was against the very heart of the Israelite's belief in the purity of its strain. CHAPTER 10 deals with more of the same and also presents a contrast between the idols and Yahweh. Then Jeremiah cites the coming destruction of the temple, the exile of the Jews and the revenge to be taken upon their enemies—all of which took place. We may note that Jeremiah has often asked God to take care of his enemies, because he feels they are unjust and because he has not been listened to. But the idea of stopping his personal

My own speculation is due to having met so many people who insist on taking a very great humanness away from the people of the Old and New Testament. If Bible interpretation and study is to have any meaning for us, we cannot look at these people from whom we get so much, outstanding though they were, as being set on a pedestal. We must realize that they were as human as you and I, with some good points and some bad points, with certain weaknesses and certain strengths, but in their dedicated fields they were geniuses. It is true that sometimes in their efforts to preserve their particular gift as an interpreter of the voice of God they very often became fanatic about it.

There is also another point which we cannot completely conceive of: what it means to live in a community, large or small, where there are no means of communication unless you walk or ride a camel. We are so deluged with communication—the by-word of this century—with television, telephone and radio, that we can contact anyone on the face of the globe within a few minutes. Ezekiel, for example, had to walk about sixty days to give the message of God to the captives in exile. Imagine for a moment that you had a wonderful inspiration which you wanted to convey to your dearest friend in California, and you had to go by foot or in a covered wagon—possibly a nine month journey—meanwhile carrying this burning message. We just do not realize these things. But we should give them some thought in order to get a living picture of these people.

CHAPTER 3 is a very beautiful chapter, and it is a continuation of chapter 2. The later editors did not do a very good job, as many chapters are separated which should be joined.

However, after eating the scroll, Ezekiel is told the responsibility of the prophet. This is to speak the truth exactly as he hears it. And if he does not, the responsibility for whatever happens to the other person is laid upon his own door. It is an important point because it is another reference in the Bible to the Law of Karma. For example, it is quite true that no one has a right to insist that you do their bidding. Should you do so they share your responsibility for the decision. This does not eliminate your own responsibility, but if their advice is not in accord with Truth, they pay for it as well as you. This is one reason why I say so often that the first law of the universe whether you are a

all go forward, which manifests the power of God: He does what He wills; He is all powerful. The hands described in verse 8 represent doing or action.

CHAPTER 2. This is the first part of his commission. He is warned that it will not be easy, but, nevertheless, he is expected to do it, which of course he does. Again he is addressed as the son of Man, as he is throughout the book, which, as we have seen, is a clue that he has not had the mystic experience.

The scroll is written on both sides with lamentations and woe. He is told to eat it, in other words, to digest it so that it can become part of his experience—to absorb the command. He is going to share and absorb the experiences the Jews are going to have. It will be a difficult experience, yet he has no choice but to follow, for he has dedicated his life to God.

While Ezekiel definitely was not an initiate, he was so close to it that he very frequently and often unconsciously uses the symbolism of the initiate. Another interesting point is that there are a number of amazingly accurate and similar details found in Ezekiel's prophecies and those of the other prophets, particularly Jeremiah, and yet they had no personal contact. Too, there is not only the lack of a sense of companionship, but of a sense of rivalry, which is a point worth giving some thought to.

The idea of this lack of contact and companionship brings up a number of questions. As we have seen, I Isaiah was highly born, wealthy and an extremely important person in his nation, and he led a very normal life. But he was a rather imposing figure who told everybody what to do and how to do it. It seems unlikely that many people would want to invite him to dinner, or to be a guest in their homes, if they had heard him say in the morning: "You are a miserable sinner, and you are going to burn in hell." It is worthwhile to question this a bit because it makes you wonder what kind of people these men were. Certainly they were men of genius: they were God-geniuses, lovers of God. But in their almost fanatical drives they reached the point where, for one reason or another, they were afraid to, or unable to, contact their fellowman. On the other hand a great deal of love is expressed in the book of Ezekiel. We can only speculate about these things.

suffering never occurs to him.

CHAPTER 11 recounts the events of his life, and speaks of the necessity for keeping the covenant. Then verses 11-17 deal with the inadequacy of sacrifice, and end with the description of a plot against Jeremiah's life by the men of Anathoth. *The Interpreter's Bible* says that it is possible for the final section, dealing with the plot, to be connected with the beginning of chapter 12.

In CHAPTER 12 Jeremiah asks "Why do the wicked prosper?" He does not really believe in the retribution of God, but he is human enough to say, I want to see them suffer, they made me suffer. How often have you seen people who do all the wrong things, and yet flourish like a green bay tree, and have yourself asked, How do they get away with it? Where is God that he will let them get away with it? The answer is found in the old saying rephrased by Longfellow, "...the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small." Jeremiah again laments over Israel and speaks of her exile as well as Yahweh's compassion on her neighbors. The latter point brings out another interesting attitude of Jeremiah's. He did not look on the Babylonians as enemies of the Jews. He thought of them, and in particular of Nebuchadnezzar, as being the instruments of the Law of God in action against the Jews because they had sinned. (This is Karma, as we saw in studying Isaiah.) In other words, this was the result of the Law they invoked by their actions.

In CHAPTER 13 there are more parables which are not overly important, as well as more warnings. He gives a warning against pride in particular, and then he laments the royal family.

CHAPTERS 15-18. Jeremiah describes the drought and complains to Yahweh about the Jews. In CHAPTER 15 Yahweh's reply is given, and it is detailed in later chapters. Also in chapter 15 we find that Jeremiah openly confesses his bitterness and the misery of his life. Yahweh's answer is significantly interesting; that this is a method of self-purification or, what the mystics call the "Way of Purgation." CHAPTERS 16 and 17 comprise mostly threats and promises. In CHAPTER 18 he gives the parable of the Potter in which he tries to make the Israelites realize that God is the Potter and everything is fashioned on His wheel. They should accept this and live with this belief. Then too, we are

told of a plot against him by the priests and sages which did not succeed.

CHAPTER 19 describes Jeremiah's symbolic act of breaking a potter's earthen flask to signify the destruction of Jerusalem because of the people's sins in the valley of Hinnon. Topheth was also a place where the Jews practiced very crude and obscene rituals which they had learned from neighboring tribes. To Jeremiah, and others like him, this was completely unforgivable, and he was even more furious because his efforts against this scandal proved so ineffective.

CHAPTER 20. Jeremiah is imprisoned because of his prophecy, and he bitterly cries to God that he is neglected and being made a sacrifice. Verses 7-18 are really tragic in expressing his feeling of being completely overwhelmed by both his own misery and his compulsion to continue. He does continue, as he completely believed in his mission, no matter what anguish and disappointment it personally caused him.

In CHAPTER 21 we find oracles concerning the king of Judah. In CHAPTER 22, Jeremiah rages about the horrors of the royal palace and the city itself, and includes the son of Josiah.

In CHAPTER 23 he takes the rulers to task for leading their people astray. Then he promises the return of Israel to its own land with good rulers, from the line of David, "a righteous Branch." He berates the prophets and indicts them for just about everything from adultery to lying. It is true that many of them took their "calling" from the desire for material recompense, and as long as they told the people what they wanted to hear, they had a large following and were supported. Although the priests were supported by the temple, the prophets lived on what the people gave them, unless they had money of their own. Jeremiah with his passion for independence, was very poor. He then continues with a discussion on the phrase "the burden of the Lord." It is interesting that in this section the word burden is used in various ways, mainly to signify a heavy weight to be borne, and also a message or oracle.

This again brings to mind the thing that continually fascinates me about this man; there is such a sense of being burdened by this job which he knew he had to do, that he lived in a state of complete misery and depression. Time and again he breaks down and says "Why, oh why," and then picks

service and inspiration, and since there are two on either side it refers to the combination of the masculine and feminine aspects contained in all things. This vision was his call to the service of God. The rainbow signifies the promise of peace after its fulfillment. As for the colors which are spoken of; beryl is green and designates the psychic and creative, and amber designates spirit. The sea of crystal represents, as does the sea of glass in Revelation, the obliteration of fear, or the stilled emotions. His description of this cosmic vision is quite lovely and ends with his personal realization of the Superconscious which comes to life for him at that moment.

Ezekiel was dedicated to the work of God and, although his own development was a tremendous one in many ways, it did not reach that of the mystic for he still did not have the first hand experience of the Presence of God. We can realize many things about the Presence, but the complete experience is an altogether different thing. You will notice that most of the time when he quotes what Yahweh says it is not preceded by, "And the Lord said unto me," as it was in Isaiah, but is rather, "Son of Man, tell them," which is another indication of this difference. The phrase "son of man" refers to the mortal; when Jesus referred to himself as the son of man he was trying to tell us that he was still human. Ezekiel had been a very religious man—we have reason to believe he was a priest of Zadok as was his father before him—and then suddenly this experience occurs; he receives his call. In the following chapters he receives his commissions which he, of course, accepts.

In verse 7 the feet portray the fact that this is a vision of the microcosm and the macrocosm, of man and the universe: it not only concerns the immediate future but also the universe and man's place in it. Or, in other words, he will serve both God and man. The calf (young ox) expresses the idea that the man's feet are here on earth, and that his understanding is young. There are four of everything which tells us that we are dealing completely with the four planes of creation in the macrocosm and the microcosm, the universal and the particular. Ezekiel learns, in this vision, the meaning of the old Egyptian axiom "As above, so below; as within, so without," for in verses 19 through 21 it states wherever the wheel goes, the spirit goes. They

The contents of the book fall into four major divisions: chapters 1-24 are the oracles of judgment on Judah and Jerusalem, chapters 25-32 are oracles against foreign nations, chapters 33-39 deal with the coming restoration of Israel and chapters 40-48 speak of the vision of the restored New Age. His vision of the New Age is concerned not only with the immediate era ahead, but one that is to come, and you will find that even though it pertained to an Israel reunited about the first or second century B.C., it could also pertain to an Israel in the twentieth century, and you are left to wonder; just how far ahead could this man really see? It is a magnificently beautiful description of what the New Age will be like.

I am sure you will agree that CHAPTER 1 is quite beautiful, and that Ezekiel certainly had a flow of words. We are immediately introduced to his symbolism; the four faces represent the four qualities of man, or, the four planes of being: the ox represents the body or earth, man represents the mental aspect or air, the eagle represents the spiritual aspect or fire, and the lion represents the emotional aspect, or water. There has been a continual argument among occultists about which is the original element; fire, water or air—earth never enters into it. After hearing many discussions of this kind, I finally came to the conclusion that the choice was dependent on what Zodiacal sign the interpreter was born in: Manly Hall was born in the sign of Leo and he insisted the first element was fire; I was born in Cancer and believe it to be water. Actually, it is not important other than as a point of interest. However, God's first decree in Genesis is, "Let there be light" which does not necessarily mean fire. Light is usually occultly interpreted to be vibration. Before any form appears, the waters are drawn back from the firmament, and all things come forth from the water. The subconscious side of God is water, or the emotions. Too, fire is not necessarily creative; it is purifying, and equally true, you can never do anything creatively unless you have a subconscious to create with.

The wheel symbolizes the universe, and astrologically the Zodiac is often referred to as the "wheel" as is the chart itself, with its spokes dividing the placement of the various signs. Here, the form indicates that Ezekiel was seeing a cosmic vision—this is a diagram of the universe—and the eyes on the rim of the wheel represent wisdom. In verse 23, wings symbolize

himself up and trudges on. There is nothing of beauty—just heaviness here, which is one of the reasons the book is so difficult to read. Yet the Bible tells us "All the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), but there is no joy in this man. There was joy even beneath the imposing dignity of First Isaiah, and even in the unprepossessing figure of Samuel, but Jeremiah is completely joyless. It is rather startling to see this man, who was really touched by the hand of the Lord, so lacking in the joy of the Lord.

CHAPTER 24 is specifically of interest in its use of symbolism. The fig symbolizes creative fertility, and creation, hence the fig leaf in the story of the Garden of Eden. And creativity, as is the case with all qualities, can be either positive or negative. So here the good figs designate the captive Jews who constitute the remnant that will be saved, and the bad figs, those Jews who will be left and will die. This description emphasizes once more Jeremiah's concept that Nebuchadnezzar is the arm of Yahweh in action, for although the exile is a form of punishment there will be those who are purged and allowed to return. It is certain that this concept did not add to his popularity.

CHAPTER 25, briefly, is a warning to Judah. If you will compare it with the earlier prophecies you will see from the language that this is most probably not written by Jeremiah but by what we term the Deuteronomic editor, who writes with a much smoother and more melodic style.

CHAPTERS 26-29 deal with his conflicts with the religious leaders, and are said to be based on Baruch's memoirs. Once again we see the rather remarkable courage of this man. Many of the other prophets fled to Egypt in time of danger, but not Jeremiah. We think of prophets as men of wisdom and illumination; however it is true that they do not always have courage. But Jeremiah tells everyone exactly what he thinks, which frequently placed him in danger. However—call it divine protection—something always happened to protect him. Here he berates the priests and princes and kings, and says "If you are going to kill me, do so but it will be on your head because I'm doing my job." And he is saved.

CHAPTER 27 deals with the yoke of Babylon under the reign of Zedekiah. Then Jeremiah gives a message to the foreign kings, and exhorts them to remember that God is the only Presence and the only Power and they should obey His

Law which, of course, they do not. In CHAPTER 28 Jeremiah has a conflict with a man who posed as a prophet, Hananiah; a man who prophesied peace, while Jeremiah spoke of continued bondage. It is really remarkable that Jeremiah, for all his conflicts and pugnaciousness, is quite a phenomenal prophet, and most of his prophecies came true, as in this instance. At the end of their debate, he prophesies Hananiah's death and, the Bible tells us, in the seventh month of the same year, he died.

In CHAPTER 29 we have his denunciation of the many prophets who have arisen in the exile. In CHAPTERS 30 and 31 there is quite a change of literary pace as well as difference in tone. It is referred to as a "book of comfort" because it speaks of the restoration of Israel and Judah. In 31:33 is found a text that is used in practically all Bible teachings—the new covenant that is made with the house of Israel: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

CHAPTER 32 again illustrates Jeremiah's courage and belief. It also provides us with food for thought. He buys a field in the town of Anathoth, where he was born. The town was under siege at that time. But to emphasize his prophecy he gives his own pledge to purchase this land at the direction of God. He tells them they will be conquered, but they will later be restored; they will be taken into exile, but they will return. Then he gives us the very beautiful words of the Lord, words which are the basic text in metaphysics, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (vs. 27).

CHAPTER 33 continues the theme of restoration. CHAPTER 34 is a warning to Zedekiah in which he is told he will die an honorable death if he heeds the words of God. In actuality he was captured by the Babylonians, blinded and put in prison, where he died. This is one of the few prophecies of Jeremiah which did not take place and the question arises as to whether it was incorrect on Jeremiah's part or if the result was because Zedekiah flaunted Jeremiah's suggestion.

In CHAPTER 35 Jeremiah makes an example of a group of people known as the Rechabites. These people were a rather fanatic group who had taken vows not to drink wine. They did this not because it was taboo, but because wine had been introduced to the Hebrews while they were in Canaan and symboli-

would set him on the wrong path. To this day the first chapter is not read in the synagogue, which is really difficult to understand. On the other hand, Spinoza was perfectly sure that even greater writings by Ezekiel would be discovered, and he believed that the symbolism of this book was the most magnificent he had ever encountered.

Ezekiel was exiled in 597 B.C., at the time of Jeremiah, and during this period his prophecies and oracles spoke of doom and predicted the fall of Jerusalem and Palestine and the exile. Later his oracles spoke of promise and restoration. His call to the service of God came in the form of a vision which took place while he was in Jerusalem, and is described in the first chapter. He had visions continually, and interestingly enough, was apparently an extremely healthy and normal individual who took them in his stride, acting purely as the emissary of God. In that way he preserved his own mental and emotional health.

His oracles are extremely ethical in character. He stresses that not only is the nation responsible for its sins and deviations, but the individual as well. It is hard to avoid the comparison with our time when we say that not every German was a Nazi, which is certainly true; nevertheless those who did nothing to deter the Nazis also must partake of the blame. In the same way, not every Russian is a Communist, but a degree of responsibility still falls on them in allowing this rule to continue. He clearly points out here that, while the Jews sinned as a nation, the sin was as much individual as it was national. It is a point we all like to forget, but it is none the less true.

The original book of Ezekiel has not been discovered. The account in our Bible is a version which is believed to have been edited by Ezekiel himself in the later part of his life. He lived to a very ripe old age, and it seems that he then compiled what he himself had written, together with notes of his other oracles taken by his disciples. The locale for most of his activities was in Palestine and Babylonia, and, particularly in maturity, he divided his time between these two countries. He went into exile when Nebuchadrezzar besieged Jerusalem, and remained in Babylonia with the Jews until 591 B.C. when he returned to Jerusalem, apparently with permission to do so. The major historical background is of course similar to that given in the introduction to Jeremiah.



I have mentioned before, when mystics have visions they always occur in complete consciousness. The psychic's visions are always highly symbolic and dramatic and usually take place in trance. In the second chapter Ezekiel says he is taken in spirit and dropped down at Lake Chebar, and "taken in spirit" is a phrase used to denote a state of trance.

The history behind his interpretations of his visions is also rather interesting. The Hebrew writers of the Old Testament (and throughout the centuries) believed that the first five books of Moses were the Law, the Torah, and anything not given in those books was not so important. Ezekiel is in conflict with this belief on many points. In spite of the fact that he did not have the mystic's fuller knowledge and understanding, he taught two concepts which are not included in the Torah, one of them being the individual's responsibility. The other is the need of a "new heart," or, in other words, a doctrine of grace, which is quite amazing for his period of time. As you recall, in the Old Testament Yahweh is not conceived of as a God of Grace, but as a God of Wrath, and when He is in a good mood He becomes a God of Love according to the individual writer's interpretation. Ezekiel's conception diverges greatly from any held up to this point.

The symbolism of the visions has confused interpreters throughout the ages, actually because there has been very little knowledge and interest in this area of experience. For example, in the first chapter we are given the picture of cherubim and wheels and Yahweh on the throne, and the feeling of tremendous power, which is extremely reminiscent of the Bhagavad Gita. There Krishna reveals himself to Arjuna as Power, and Arjuna is so overwhelmed that he says "I cannot look; keep me from seeing it." The resemblance is so clear that one wonders how theologians, who are supposed to know so much about all religions, could possibly consider this to be a unique theme. Any comparative study of ancient religions would reveal this and other similarities. Again, his symbols for the four creatures are the same as those used to designate the four gospels and the four planes of creation. It is really very basic symbolism, yet, as a result of the fact that no real effort was made to interpret it until the second or third century A.D., no Jew under thirty was allowed to read the beginning or end of Ezekiel in the belief that it

zed to them the evil which had corrupted their religion. The Rechabites adhered to their vows, so Jeremiah brings them to the temple as an example to the people of Israel who said one thing and did another. The chapter ends with Yahweh's blessing on the house of Rechab, that they "Shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

CHAPTER 36 is of particular interest because it concerns two scrolls of Jeremiah's prophecies. It was the first time his words had been read. The scroll was first read by Baruch in front of the temple on the day of the fast; then it was read in the high court, then in the scribe's chambers in the king's house, and finally to the king himself, who contemptuously burned it. Again we have an example of Jeremiah's tenacity and courage, for he lived in constant danger. It is probable that one reason for his not prophesying himself at this time was because of prior attacks, and now, without fearing the king's wrath, he prepares another copy, and adds more to it! He really was quite a remarkable figure. He knew what he was doing, and was determined that nothing and no one could stand in his way, including his own safety.

In CHAPTER 37 the Chaldeans lay siege to Jerusalem and Jeremiah is imprisoned. And we are told that Zedekiah secretly asks him for word from the Lord. In CHAPTER 38 he advises the people to surrender, and because of this the princes of the country seek to kill him. Now Jeremiah certainly did not advise surrender in order to help the Babylonians, but he felt that the captivity was the arm of the Lord in action punishing them for forsaking His ways. He also felt that the sooner they surrendered, the sooner that punishment would be over. In fact, he put into different terms what was said so beautifully many years later, "Resist not evil." But he is thrown into a pit of mud by the princes and left to drown. It is interesting to note that an Ethiopian eunuch comes to his rescue; his protection is from the outside rather than from his own people. Again he has a talk with Zedekiah who listens, agrees and then does quite the opposite. In view of his own personal courage, it is worth noting that he lied for the king. He knew so well the weakness of the king, who lived in fear. Jeremiah decided the only thing to do was to agree to protect him.

In CHAPTER 39 Jerusalem is captured by the Babylonians. There is also a prophecy concerning the Ethiopian eunuch who

saved Jeremiah, and *The Interpreter's Bible* says that although Jeremiah undoubtedly felt grateful to him and believed he deserved special reward from Yahweh it is written in a phraseology peculiar to the Deuteronomic editor, which casts some doubt on its authenticity. In CHAPTER 40 Jeremiah is released and it is one of the few historically and chronologically accurate accounts in the book.

As we near the end of the book of Jeremiah, the thought might well arise as to just why this book is included in our Bible. It is, with the exception of a few chapters, not an historical account. It is true he was a man of God, a prophet of doom who lived in an uncertain and hectic era, but other prophets lived in that time as well. Certainly there are two major points which come out in the book: first, that he did not look upon the enemies of Judah as enemies, per se, but as the hand of God in action against the Jews for their violation of His Laws. Or, metaphysically, that nothing ever happens to you good or bad that you have not consciously or unconsciously caused yourself. The second point is one we have dealt with before; that he is a rather unusual mystic in the sense that he is a joyless one, and in this he represents a type of mystic rarely seen.

It is evident that Jeremiah embodies Law. He cannot help himself. He predicts what is to be. He embodies the Law to the point where he forgives the enemies of Judah without resentment. He knows too that they will be punished in turn for their violation of this Law. First Isaiah was very much on Judah's side, and Second Isaiah was Love incarnate. But Jeremiah—it is neither Love, nor compassion: it is Law, Law, Law. As we reach the end of the book you will realize that he had absolutely no personal animosity, that he is interpreting the Law and showing it in action: if they did not listen to him this is what will happen. Unfortunately they did not listen, and it did take place.

In CHAPTER 41 we are told that Gedaliah is assassinated by Ishmael; seventy pilgrims are murdered; Ishmael then takes the people of Mizpah as captives, and they are rescued by Johanan. In CHAPTER 42 the people remaining from the city of Mizpah ask Jeremiah for Yahweh's instruction and when it is given they refuse to accept it. However, the Jews flee to Egypt, and in CHAPTER 43 Jeremiah performs an act to symbolize that they will not be safe from Nebuchadrezzar even there, for

## EZEKIEL

### PART ONE

The best source of information on the historical background for the book of Ezekiel is, again, *The Interpreter's Bible*, and they confess they are a bit puzzled. They are not sure whether he lived in 700, 500 or 400 B.C. They feel some of his symbolism may have come from the Babylonians and Assyrians, although it definitely is rooted in the Hebraic tradition. They give opinions of various theologians and then say, use your own discretion; it is up to the individual to relate the writing to its historical period and to what he believes Ezekiel is trying to convey. Of one thing we can be sure: he was contemporary with Jeremiah. The point is raised which we discussed in the introduction to Jeremiah, that it is somewhat amazing that although they were contemporaries they do not mention each other, apparently because each was exclusively involved in his own particular work.

In this fascinating and beautiful book we will find a form of symbolism different from anything we have yet encountered. Ezekiel himself differs from any person we have met so far, and he certainly differs totally from Jeremiah. In Ezekiel we find a vibrant healthy personality, and a man who was a poet and, above all, a seer, and one whose development was that of the psychic rather than mystic. The main difference between the psychic and the mystic is that the mystic's development is on a higher level. However, there are varying degrees of psychism as well. There are psychics who give you messages from a platform, and those who, while you sit and hold hands at a seance, speak for some guide who tells you things that you are reprimanded for not knowing, which is the most common and the lowest form of psychism. There is also the type of psychism of which Ezekiel was a representative, which is not confined to, or especially interested in, the personal factor. Ezekiel's visions were on a large, almost universal scale. He was a seer. He could see what was going to take place and made his predictions based on what he saw. The type of visions he had give a very simple indication that they were of psychic, not mystic origin, for, as

To my way of thinking, the outstanding lesson we learn from Jeremiah is found in the old saying, "God and I are a majority".

In spite of his unprepossessing personality, in spite of his blindness and threats, in spite of the attacks made on him, both physical and verbal, — he accomplished what he had been born to do. Nothing could stop him, because he knew God was with him — and if God was with him, who could stand against him?

If we have half the faith of Jeremiah, we too would find that nothing can stand against us.

M. M.

he will come into Egypt and rule there. In CHAPTER 44 he rebukes the Jews, although *The Interpreter's Bible* believes that this too is the work of the Deuteronomic editor. CHAPTER 45 is considered to be authentically the lamentations of Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary who was responsible for his writings being preserved. In CHAPTER 46 we have oracles against foreign nations including Egypt; and we are told that Nebuchadrezzar is coming, and that Israel will be saved. In CHAPTER 47 we have the oracles against the Philistines in which he mentions Tyre and Sidon, which were not Philistine cities but were Phoenician, and Capthor, the island of Crete. These are small discrepancies that no one can account for, but of which we should be aware. While CHAPTER 48, an oracle against Moab, may be authentic, *The Interpreter's Bible* points out that there are "extensive borrowings, especially from Isaiah 15-16."

CHAPTER 49 is an oracle against the Ammonites, and it is strange to see that at times it is almost sympathetic to the Ammonites. It also includes an oracle against some nomad tribes of Arabs, Kedar and Hazor, ending with an oracle against Elam. In CHAPTER 50 the oracle against Babylon is so strong that it is not considered to be the work of Jeremiah. However it stresses two important themes. The first, the fall of Babylon, is probably one of the most important themes in the Old Testament, and, symbolically, is powerfully described in the book of Revelation. The second is the return of the Jews from exile. CHAPTER 51 continues the oracles against the Babylonians and the Chaldeans (in Hebrew "the heart of those which rise up against me.") It also concludes the actual writings of Jeremiah. CHAPTER 52 is an historical appendix which is practically identical with II Kings 24 and 25. It gives a summary of Zedekiah's reign, and a summary as well of the three captivities of the Jews, which brings out an interesting point. The first captivity was from 598-597 B.C. and 3,023 Jews were captured; in 587-586 B.C., 832, and in 582-581 B.C. 745 Jews were taken captive, which brings the total to 4,600. If you consider that Jerusalem was a fairly well populated country, and in 16 years only 4,600 people were exiled, then you may wonder at the seriousness of their mistreatment, when you compare it with the thousands and thousands who were moved from one place to another in our own time. The chapter and book itself ends by saying that Jehoiachin was

released from prison, and lived quietly and peacefully in the sight of Nebuchadrezzar for the rest of his life.

## LAMENTATIONS

The book of Lamentations is composed of five chapters, each of which is a poem in itself. *The Interpreter's Bible* says that originally there was no title for the book, and so for many generations it was called "How," since "How" is the opening word of each chapter, until the rabbis changed it to the "Dirges," or "Lamentations" as it is now known. Authorities are still disputing whether it was written by Jeremiah. However, when it was translated into the Syrian and Greek languages, it became known as the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Before this time it was used as a funeral spell to keep the dead in their place and to protect the living from them. And some people believe that they were written by professional women writers as an expression of grief on the loss of a loved one. On the other hand, others believe that Jeremiah wrote them in commemoration of the death of Josiah. But if you compare them to Jeremiah's writings, they certainly seem to have little or no connection.

Their religious significance is interesting because, while man appeals to God, man also puts God on trial, which is the tenor of all the poems. I might also add here that four of the poems are in the form of a Cabalistic acrostic with each of the twenty-two verses headed by a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3, a personal poem, is composed of 66 verses, which is an interesting point.

Chapter 1 is quite lovely for, even though it is a lamentation, it is not as dire or doleful as some of the others we have encountered in Jeremiah. We find a form that is typical of this kind of poetry: in the beginning it is the writer who pleads, and then Jerusalem speaks for herself. Chapter 2 speaks of divine judgment on the city and a description of the suffering of the people. But Chapter 3 is a different story in many ways, and it is a personal lament. Too it is very unlike Jeremiah, particularly the last verses. Jeremiah would predict what is going to happen to the enemies, but it was never from the point of view that "God is going to punish you because...", yet this is the thought here. Also, the sequence of thought is unlike Jeremiah; first the writer

talks about the affliction, and then he resigns himself to it, followed by his repentance and finally his prayer. Chapter 4 speaks of Jerusalem in the past and in the present, and the poet believes that her fall was primarily caused by the priests and prophets who betrayed her. Again this is not one of Jeremiah's beliefs. He believed that they definitely betrayed the nation and the true teaching, but he felt that the people, if they wanted to follow a real prophet, which he was, had the opportunity to do so. And it is true then as now that the leaders are an outpicturing of what the majority of a country believe. The last chapter is a very lovely prayer. It could have been written by Jeremiah since it deals with Palestine at the time Jeremiah was there, however it is extremely beautiful, and does not sound too much like him unless he had a tremendous change of heart, and that we do not know. And this is the end of Lamentations.