

VOLUME 21

THE BIBLE SERIES

A METAPHYSICAL  
AND SYMBOLICAL  
INTERPRETATION OF

*The Bible*

by

Mildred Mann



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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?

OBADIAH . . . . .	3
JONAH . . . . .	5
MICAH . . . . .	11
NAHUM . . . . .	17
HABAKKUK . . . . .	19
ZEPHANIAH . . . . .	22
HAGGAI . . . . .	25
ZECHARIAH . . . . .	28
MALACHI . . . . .	40

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*Thank you, and God bless  
you.*

*Mildred Maas*

## 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

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The Old Testament is incomplete without the New Testament, and of course the New is incomplete without the Old. They are one story - the story of the progress of the human soul. Several hundred years passed between the time of Malachi and the birth of Jesus. Outwardly, civilization had become more cultured, more sophisticated - but inwardly, there was little change.

Nevertheless, it was now ready for its next great forward step in spiritual growth, - the realization that God is Love and that man always has the ability to demonstrate that Love in his own being. The life of Jesus demonstrated that God is both transcendent and immanent - and that this was the birthright of every man. It is his privilege to discover and develop himself to the point where the Presence within is allowed to transform the life not only of the individual himself, but of those with whom he comes in contact. There are three texts which I think tell the story succinctly:

"Be still, and know that I am God." Ps. 46: 10.

"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." Ps. 82: 6.

"God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 John 4: 16.

M. M.

## OBADIAH

The entire book of Obadiah is composed of one chapter which emphasizes the reason why this group of prophets is referred to as the "minor prophets." They were called minor prophets primarily because the quantity of their writings was relatively small, since the four most important and influential prophets of the Old Testament include one major prophet, Isaiah, and three minor prophets, Hosea, Amos and Micah. As far as we know, this one chapter was Obadiah's entire output, and it is included in the Bible because he stressed Israel's ethical conduct and return to God.

Very little is known about Obadiah himself other than that the period of his prophecy was after the exile, around the middle of the fifth century. He had one thing to say and he said it. *The Interpreter's Bible* says that the occasion of his writing was the expulsion of the Edomites from their country, which he sees as punishment for their sins against Israel, and which also included the very active part they played in the plunder of Judah. At that time, law and order was practically non-existent, and even the priests, if and when they wanted to, found it impossible to keep the people in check.

Edom had been raided several times before by surrounding Arab tribes. Then Edom invaded the southern kingdom of Judah. Probably there was an element of revenge, but more to the point, they were financially exhausted by these wars. Since Judah was fairly prosperous at that time they felt they could walk in and take what they needed. So they raided Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Following this (before or during Obadiah's period of prophecy), the Edomites were invaded by certain Arab tribes, their former allies, and they were driven out of their country. Incidentally, doesn't this sound very familiar to you? If you place this scene against our twentieth century background, with the exception of the change of the names of the nations involved, you will see a repetition of the same story. We realize that evolution is a very slow process when we see how little we have changed in 2000 years. The veneer of civilization in our own time is still very thin. Certainly we are growing, but I would like to see us speed

it up a bit. It seems that we only grow when we have been sufficiently hurt to realize that we have had enough: then we begin to do something about it, but until that time, we remain on the treadmill of cause and effect, with its resulting problems and unhappiness.

The prevalent idea of the time, and one which Obadiah brings out in relation to Edom, was that God's judgment on the nations of the world was executed by means of their own warfare. Yahweh was the great judge who was now bringing evil upon the Edomites for their sins. This is the story Obadiah tells, and these are the lessons he also directs at Israel.

CHAPTER 1. Although this chapter comprises the entire book, it still says a great deal. One of the great personal tragedies of humanity is exemplified by the antagonism which existed between the brother nations of Edom and Israel. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, and the Israelites of Jacob, yet their bitterness, hatred, and desire to murder and raze each other persisted throughout the centuries. This book is directed as a warning to them both that they are "tarred with the same brush": he sees what must happen as a result and tries to steer them in the right direction. While it is true that the Israelites, except on rare occasions, did not go to war unless they were attacked, they had other characteristics which were leading them into similar trouble, and so he warns them by telling them of the punishment of Edom and of their own imminent judgment.

Obadiah points out that Edom fell because the nation was vain and proud, and greedy in its rapine of Judah. Verse 4 gives a very lovely comparison between the Edomites and an eagle. The eagle, as we know, is one of the most beautiful metaphysical symbols for demonstration and the raised consciousness: the eagle flies above the storm. His words apply to us as well as to the Edomites when he says "Thence will I bring thee down saith the Lord", in the sense that this means you must have the true consciousness, for false vanity can only lead to defeat. He continues by saying that they have lost their birth-right and their vaunted wisdom has brought them to naught but the final judgment. Israel, too, has been guilty of the same thing. Israel considers itself to be the chosen people, yet they have violated their trust, their responsibility and their sonship. His final prediction is that they also will be punished, but that a remnant will be saved.

With this volume, we come to the end of the Old Testament. I have tried, and I hope I have succeeded, in bringing to light its importance in religion - both historically, symbolically and spiritually.

I am sure there were times when you wondered why some of the repetition was not edited, and now I will tell you the reason.

The Old Testament is really the foundation stone for what follows. Its bridge to Christianity we will soon understand, not as the forerunner, but as spiritual force which brought out the worship of the One God. We also realize that it also tremendously influenced Mohammed in some 500 years after Jesus. That influence is still there, in spite of the blood feud between Moslem and Jew.

But, to my mind, equally as important, it shows the slow growth of a people - a people whose Karma had called forth some of the greatest religious, ethical and illumined men the world has known, and yet, as a people, they illustrated 'en masse' the same ups and downs as we individually do today. Their lack of understanding that God is Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth shows how slowly man progresses - for orthodox Christianity today is still much more concerned with outside ritual than inner self-discipline.

M. M.



That is the conclusion of the book of Malachi and brings us back to a very clear realization. That if you adhere to the Law and worship God, all things are yours. And from that we go to the New Testament.

I do not think anyone could say that a person called to be a prophet could have anything less than a very real and sincere desire to serve, because the rewards were certainly not great. I read recently that, despite the great influence and power of I Isaiah, he was so hated that he was killed by being put into a hollow log and being sawed in half. Yet this man willingly went out and risked his neck after his call instead of revelling in the beauties of the court life of which he was a part. He was a real mystic and an initiate who said "For unto us a son is born..." He brought this word of God to the people and yet that was his reward. Although we know little of the life of Obadiah, we can see from this one chapter that he was a man who believed strongly in what he felt he must say, and said it. We can also be sure that he was not received very pleasantly; nevertheless, he, too, carried out his mission.

## JONAH

The book of Jonah is not a book of prophecy in the real sense, and it differs from all the other books in the Bible. Jonah's prophecy, if we can call it that, consists of eight words in chapter 3, verse 4. That is all he said, and what is more, he said it most unwillingly. The other prophets told the people what to do: Jonah tried to tell God what to do. The other prophets preached to Israel and occasionally to foreign nations, but this prophecy is directed solely to Nineveh with no mention of Judah and Israel.

The only reason for historicity being claimed for Jonah is a mention of a prophet by that name in II Kings 14:25, which would place him in the eighth century B.C. However, there are definite indications in the text that this is not the same man. *The Interpreter's Bible* points out that in chapter 3 Nineveh is referred to as existing in the distant past, and that the size given for the city is far greater than its actual size, a fact which would be known by a man of that time. These two points, plus the Hebrew words which are used and the ideas which are expressed, lead them to place its writing at around 300 B.C.

Needless to say, it is a parable. Whoever the real writer of the book was, he certainly had a tremendous knowledge of human nature. The book is concerned with the psychological processes of one little man—and he is a little man—and what happens to him. He is typical of human nature: we might call him Everyman. If we were to take him historically, we might spend much time in determining why this man, who so definitely does not conform to the character of a prophet, should have the gift of prophecy even to the extent of his eight words. This question still applies if we take Jonah as a literary figure whose purpose was to reveal an aspect of human nature. Jonah had the gift, but he prophesied only after going to all lengths to avoid it, which makes a delightfully amusing and revealing story.

Initially Jonah refused to prophesy because he was terrified that Yahweh would make a fool of him by relenting and saving the city of Nineveh. He did not want this to happen for two reasons. Firstly, because his ego would be hurt. He would not be an accredited prophet because his prophecy would be wrong. In this sense the book is a parable of what happens to the person who feels that he does not want to be put to shame or embarrassment by God. We have seen that each and every one of the other prophets had occasions where, no matter how great the prediction, they did not see it fulfilled in their time, as they were certain it would be when they uttered it. This did not discourage them: they still believed. Actually there is a difference in the element of time for the person who has a vision and the time of the future event he is predicting. Even on the physical plane the element of time in our consciousness is a strange thing. Take the difference between five minutes of the greatest pleasure and five minutes of having a tooth drilled: pleasure seems over in an instant, and pain will drag interminably, yet it is still the same 300 seconds. Our physical concept of time is very elastic and dependent on our own feelings.

The second reason for his fear that the prophecy would be wrong was that he did not want Nineveh to be saved. Once again, we have seen that the other prophets had, in the final analysis, one quality in common in their role as spokesmen for God, the quality of compassion. A number of them, particularly Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos, stressed that God is not going to save the Hebrews alone; He is going to save the whole world, whether they be Hebrews or not. They said this despite the fact

original Deuteronomic concept from which they had strayed a long, long way. The beautiful aspect of this chapter is the concept that no matter how evil a man may be, and in spite of the fact that God, through the voice of the prophet, has cursed him, yet if the man has a change of heart and repents, God will give him another chance. In verse 10 he states that God is the Father of all. The whole tone here is that if they will change and return to the old teaching their way will be made clear. We must not forget that they have been encouraged by the idea of the coming of the messiah who would restore all things, vanquish their enemies and create a new Jerusalem, and that this had not come to pass. This, plus their own depression and defection, brought them to a point where they felt, Why do anything? Who says there is a God, we have no proof of it? So Malachi persuades them once more that it is worthwhile; that God would care for them and they would have proof if they changed their ways. He ends with the idea that God is tired of hearing their complaints, (and I am perfectly sure He must be, even now) and it is up to them to do something about it.

CHAPTER 3 continues the discussion of God's justice. He then brings in a messianic picture of a messenger who will come and purify the temple and the priests, after which God will come to judge the people. When that time of judgment comes God will clean out all of those things that have been an abomination in His sight, from sorcery, to robbing God of His proper tithes and offerings, and then, if the people conform to His Law God will repay them. In verse 16 he speaks to the small group of sincere worshippers who are wondering why only the sinners seem to prosper. If you are familiar with the Socratic question "What is the bane of a good man? The prosperity of the wicked," you can see the similarity here. It is true that the Jews did suffer a great deal and they did not seem to have brought it upon themselves. Also, they watched their enemies prosper for a long, long time before they in turn "got what they deserved." But they are told that God is patient and will restore all that has been taken away and more, and they are given the renewed hope in the messiah who is going to make all things new.

CHAPTER 4 concludes the book with the hope of the day of judgment for Israel, when all things will be restored, and with that perfectly beautiful text "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings," which by the way, did not originate with the Hebrews, but with the Egyptians.

the form of the book itself. In its form of question and answer we see the end of the rather violent outpourings of the prophets. We have been witnessing a gradual change in the last few books from prophecy to teaching, and here we find the beginning of a new era. No longer do prophets tell the people what is going to happen and what they should do; but these men are teaching people to think and to understand the Law. Zechariah and Malachi are the beginning of the group of Scribes, as we mentioned before, and in another sense, you might say they form the beginning of the Talmudic tradition of teaching by word of mouth. The lamp burns bright.

CHAPTER 1. It is possible that these oracles were given in great gatherings where questions were asked, much like the soap box orators of Columbus Circle. Of course "the burden of the Word of the Lord" is another way of saying that the Lord is speaking through him. It also implies that it was no longer a joy as it had been, but it was a burden, even though the Hebrew word literally means "to lift up." He argues his points very simply. He says that God has proved His love for Israel in punishing Edom, and that He chose Israel because He loved her but they did not follow the Law of God and for this reason they too were punished. In verses 6-7 he turns on the priesthood who had become very corrupt and were affected by the apathy of the times. Then he turns on the people and their tithing. What he refers to is rather typical, not only then, but now as well. I think "chiseling" began before Adam and Eve and it has not changed much today when it comes to tithing. Here he castigates them for bringing sick animals for sacrifice, thinking that they were going to die anyway so they might as well sacrifice them. He sarcastically asks them if they would do the same thing to their governor that they do to God. Judaism has always taught a very high form of ethics: that they did not always live up to it is another story, but it remains one of the highest systems in any religion. Malachi berates them for not keeping their vows, and points out how they had defected from the ideals that were given by the prophets. He says that God's glory and worship is for all people and not just for a chosen few.

In CHAPTER 2 he continues to blame the priests and then, in the name of God, he curses them. He refers to the Levites, of the order of Aaron, as the true priests, which is rather interesting since it is a long time since they have been mentioned. He is evidently trying to bring them back to the

that they had lived through frightful wars, exiles, tortures, the loss of everything they owned and, in some instances, even the temporary loss of their contact with God. In spite of these things, these men had compassion on the rest of mankind.

The book of Jonah gives a fascinating picture of a person very much like ourselves. One example is the fact that he was afraid to predict for fear that God would relent and his prediction would not come true. I have known a few people who treat in this fashion. They treat and yet are afraid that it will not happen. They do not realize that if it did not happen, it would be because something better is to take place. Or there are others who want something and are afraid they won't get it because "it's too good to be true." Perhaps we don't say, "I'm not going to do this because it might come true," but we do have enough training and faith to know that if we believe a thing and want to demonstrate it, the way to do it is to persist, but we run away from that at times. Here we find that Jonah does not like the idea of prophesying at all and he does something which we do much more frequently in our own lives than we realize: he knows that this is what he is supposed to do and he tries to avoid it—to get out of it. He says, in effect, "If I run away, God won't see me and I'll be able to get away with this." Then he finds it does not happen that way.

This book typifies two characteristics which we all share in common to a greater or lesser degree: a lack of faith and a lack of self-discipline. I do not think any one of us at this time of our evolution can be a saint twenty-four hours a day, but I do know we can keep ourselves in line with what we believe. We all have a tendency to revert to old habit patterns of negation. We dilute our treatments by saying "I know God *will* heal me." Why "will", don't we believe He can do it now? Or, we speak the Word and then keep looking to see if it has happened yet. We all have the tendency to live in the future or the past and we give very little attention to living day by day. We often forget that none of us knows for certain if we are going to be here tomorrow. We refuse to pay attention to the things that will make our lives what they should be. If you live in the *NOW*, you know that if this moment is right, the next moment must be better. You don't think about next week's obligations or situations. How do you know what might happen by then? We all have to control our thinking. We very often get swallowed up in "whales of problems," but we do not have to. Jonah was told what to do, as we

are told what to do. We hear it constantly: meditate daily; keep your thoughts right and positive; overcome your resentments. When we do this all is well and life begins to BE, not just existence, but the unceasing fulfillment it is in reality.

Jonah can teach us a few things. He is an interesting figure if he did exist, and an interesting study if he did not. There is a distinct difference between the figure of Jonah and that of the Prodigal Son who went through difficulties for many years until he reached the point where he had had enough and said, "I will arise and go to my father." However, in one sense the two figures are similar: both were told what to do, had everything they needed, and both disobeyed and paid the consequences. This very similarity makes the difference between them an important one to keep in mind as we go into the story of Jonah.

One sidelight before we go into the book itself. I was very amused some time ago to hear, on a radio program given by two Fundamentalists, a very serious discussion on the subject of Jonah. One of the gentlemen asked, "If Jonah was in the whale's belly for three days and nights, how was it that the digestive processes of the whale did not affect him?" The other answered by saying that God had temporarily stopped them. Humorous though this may be, it is still the way many people look at the Bible. We speak of Jonah being swallowed by a whale in the same way as we say Eve ate an apple. There is no mention of an apple in the Garden of Eden, nor is there any mention of a whale in this story. Eve ate a forbidden fruit and in the case of Jonah we are told that it is a "great fish." We begin to see how the human mind will take a certain idea and further it for its own particular purpose and, before you know it, it is an accepted fact.

In CHAPTER 1, we are given a picture of the prophet fleeing from God. It is also interesting to note a difference between this and the other books of prophecy: most of them begin "And the word of the Lord came unto me", but this one is written in the third person throughout, as if he is disclaiming everything. The name Jonah means "dove" which is another symbol for Israel. We are told that Jonah was commissioned by God and yet desired to do anything except the word of God, and the parallel is drawn between him and Israel, the chosen of God, who also did not follow the word of God and got into continuous trouble as a result.

We are then told that he boards a ship going to Tarshish,

messenger" and is not the name of the author. We have no way of knowing at what period this book was written other than from the historical and political references in the text. (For example, that Judah was under the rule of governors.) These, plus the fact that the social and religious abuses treated by the writer are similar to those listed by Nehemiah, have caused the date of c. 450 B.C. to be generally accepted.

The background is similar to what we have discussed for the last few prophetic books. The people were embittered by the hardships of post-exilic life in Jerusalem, and they were waiting for that messianic age that would restore them to prosperity and glory. It was a time of cynicism and discouragement and doubt, and the questions which people asked about their religion were based on a lack of faith. It is these doubts which Malachi attempts to answer: the book is unified throughout by this form of question and answer.

The questions are similar to the more philosophical ones discussed in the book of Habakkuk. Here the people ask, If we are His chosen people, why doesn't God show love for us? They look at their enemies and ask, Where is justice? And the age old question, If God is good, why do those who do evil seem to prosper while those who do good, suffer? Malachi tells them that they have brought the conditions in their lives upon themselves through their neglect of the worship of God, which is a statement of the law of Retribution, or Karma. He says that the present condition of the Edomites following their persecution of Jerusalem—they had been driven from their own country—was evidence that God's justice prevailed. He assures them that the day of judgment is coming where both those who were evil and those who were good will receive their just rewards. His own personal views come out quite clearly. Among them we will see that his concept of Yahweh is distinctly a God Who is All in All. Since he believes that this is true, he also believes very strongly in man's basic unity in God. For this reason he speaks out strongly against any practice which causes harm to another person, even divorce, since at that time it was possible for a husband to divorce his wife on the slightest provocation.

A few interesting points arise from its being, as the final book in the Old Testament, the foundation of the New Testament teaching. Firstly, of course, is Malachi's belief that God is the Lord of all nations, not just of Israel. Secondly, there is the concept of the brotherhood of man. The third point is connected with

nation shall be redeemed. We have no answer as to why it should be specifically a third of the nation. We could say that only those who have had a conscious realization of God will be saved or that it was the third part of the human being, the Superconscious part of him, that finally became a conscious reality for one third of the people. I leave the answer to your imagination.

CHAPTER 14 is another apocalyptic vision dealing with the "day of the Lord" to come. It once again relates the final seige of Jerusalem which we also found in chapter 12, but it is in an entirely different mood. We are told that the city will be taken and half of the population will be exiled and then, when all seems lost, God Himself will come and save it. *The Interpreter's Bible* says, and I quite agree, that the 5th verse is extremely corrupt, and they believe the earthquake which is spoken of is the same one mentioned in Amos 1:1. The writer goes on to say that God's triumph will be followed by great changes in nature itself, and that a fountain of living water will be established in God's kingdom which, in verse 9, will be all over the earth, and Jerusalem will be rebuilt and exalted. The rather horrible description of the plagues which eat away the enemies of Jerusalem, including their animals, is followed by the idea that whoever remains from these nations will come to worship at Jerusalem. They are assured that there will no longer be drought, for there will be an abundance of water and that Egypt, who did not have the same problem with the drought as did her neighbors, will be punished by plagues. The writer ends by stressing the necessity for moral cleanliness and physical holiness, to the point that "every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah" shall be holy.

## MALACHI

As we mentioned in the introduction to the book of Zechariah, the book of Malachi is the third and final compilation of oracles whose authorship is unknown. There is a basic harmony of idea and style in this material that seems to indicate the work of one man, which is probably why it was divided from the previous material into one book. The name Malachi means "my

which, as *The Interpreter's Bible* points out, was "as far west as ships were likely to sail from Palestine." The ship was manned by people of many nationalities, which shows us that the feeling of antagonistic nationalism was not held by the author himself but was a feeling deliberately portrayed as a characteristic of Jonah. When the storm arises, Jonah knows that the cause of it is his defection from God's word. The men, who were heathen in the sense that they believed in many gods, were raised in the concept that if the gods were angry they would bring danger, and the only way to appease their wrath was to throw the offender overboard. So the men cast lots to determine who was guilty. Finally Jonah said that it was his fault. He had sufficient courage and generosity to do this, and he told them to throw him overboard. Then we are told that these men of anti-Jewish faith tried very hard to save him and to reach land, but it was impossible as the storm grew worse, so they finally tossed him over the side and he landed in the belly of a great fish.

The chapter significantly ends on the psychological turning point. We might say, symbolically, that the whale represents the emotions. And three days and nights means an indefinite period of time. If it were three 24 hour periods it would literally mean three days, but here, as in Genesis, where we are told the evening and morning was a day, it means a great period of time. In other words, for Jonah to change his mind about the idea he was rejecting took some time. He spent that time in meditation in the belly of a great fish: he spent a great deal of time debating whether he would obey the word of God or not. This parallels the history of Israel which went back and forth from repentance to sin, and the number 3 signifies the fact that there were long periods of time between each happening.

CHAPTER 2. When Jonah found himself safe from drowning and in the fish's belly, he offered a beautiful psalm of thanksgiving for having been saved. Actually, verse 2 is almost a verbatim transcript of Psalm 120:1 and Psalm 18:6, and there are other similarities throughout Jonah's psalm. It shows that the writer of this little "play" knew his Bible and his Psalms and used this knowledge to illustrate his point. Once more it parallels Israel's history of doing everything against the Mosaic Code, and then having periods of thanksgiving for being saved. Here Jonah, or Israel, is saved from a fantastic disaster and he gives thanks. Then he finally realizes, unhappily, that he must follow the Lord's command: and he is expelled by the whale

on dry land.

CHAPTER 3 begins with "Arise, go unto Nineveh," and Jonah might well have used Job's words, "that which I feared has come upon me." So he went to Nineveh, a most unwilling missionary, proclaimed his prophecy and, to his dismay, the king of Nineveh took it very seriously. He ordered complete mourning and repentance throughout the city and when God saw how sincere they were He did the very thing Jonah did not want Him to do, He relented and Nineveh was saved.

Once more taking Jonah as the prototype for Israel, do you recall how often they resented mercy being given to their enemies by the Lord? Even in the extraordinarily beautiful Psalms, David showed no great joy in the redemption of his enemies, or in having them become co-worshippers. It is truly an example of national pride: "Don't mix with me, I'm an Israelite." The book of Jonah was written at a time when it was apparently very necessary to remind Israel that mercy was extended to other nations as well.

You can read this story on the individual level, as you can read anything in the Bible, and many stories, such as this one, make specific points quite clear. In this story of the unwilling missionary, who is the missionary? One is supposed to be a servant of God. This is the story of an unwilling one who does not want to do God's will, but his own. However, this is basically a satire and, even though, if a thing is true you can apply it on every level, you would have to stretch some things a bit to interpret it symbolically on the personal level. For one thing, there is no beginning and no end to the story of this man, it is merely an episode in his life: there is no development in an overall context and, what is more, at the end he is not changed. You can apply the symbolism of the second card of the Tarot, the High Priestess who is the Universal Subconscious, and say that she is represented by the ocean, and the fish represents the individual subconscious which in time becomes transmuted into Pisces, or the fish of Jesus. It is possible to do this, but I do not think that is the important interpretation. Symbolism should not arbitrarily be applied to every instance, and you must be able to choose the interpretation which conveys the most significant meaning for you.

CHAPTER 4. As you can see, Jonah was slightly displeased and thought himself badly treated. He has an argument with God, and then we are told the beautiful story of his sitting

told of the doom of a governor who had sold his people out to the Syrians. The chapter ends with a rather horrible description of rotting away, which will be the end for those who have abused God's people.

CHAPTER 12 is an oracle and an apocalyptic vision which bears a striking similarity to sections of the New Testament. It deals with the final purging, which we have spoken of before, and which will precede the messianic kingdom. In very expressive imagery we are told in verse 2 that nothing will be able to touch or harm Jerusalem, and the phrase "in that day," in verse 3, refers to the coming battle and the final victory. It is really fantastic to see this hope that has remained since the time of David, in spite of everything they believed and still do, that the messiah will come. Always he is to come in the future. Here, where they had suffered so badly, and were struggling to get back on their feet and rebuild, they had the idea that it might not be as soon as they thought, so the writer says "in that day." And "in that day" Judah will be the one to act, according to the prophet's vision, in order to chasten Israel for her pride. Apparently, throughout the Hebrew history the Israelites felt themselves superior to the people of Judah and there was constant rivalry between them. Verse 10 is very similar to Isaiah 53 in speaking of the death of a great personage and the attendant mourning of all the houses of Israel.

CHAPTER 13 is quite symbolic and is a continuation of the preceding chapter to show the results of the battle. In verse 1 God provides Jerusalem with a fountain to wash away her uncleanness. Then we are told the Lord will cut off, not only the false gods, but the prophets. By this time, prophets were the object of universal contempt. They were considered to be liars and idlers who lived by trading on people's desires and emotions, and the Lord will "cause them to pass out of the land." The writer obviously did not think of himself as a prophet, which is a new approach to reporting in the Bible. He is actually the fore-runner of the group known as the Scribes in the New Testament.

In verses 7-9 the shepherd spoken of is not wicked, as were the ones before, but he is the real shepherd. The last purification which the shepherd goes through for his flock, which is outlined in this dramatic little episode, is purification by suffering. It is an unconscious foreshadowing of the cross to come. Here, he suffers so that the nation itself can be purified through suffering. And, as it is also stated in Revelation, a third of the

during the rule of the Ptolemies because of the reference to Egypt and Assyria in verse 10, and it predicts a victorious war against these enemies. In verse 4, the phrase "out of them" refers to the leaders of the people who will be Hebrews from their own nation, rather than the foreign rule they had been subjected to. There is quite a contrast of feeling here which is probably caused by their reaction to the hardships they had suffered. They had gone through an extremely difficult period and were preparing themselves for the messianic kingdom of Utopian bliss, and yet they had a strong feeling of resentment and revenge. In verse 8 there is a lovely phrase, which we have encountered before, "I will hiss" which means, in effect, "Come on, let's go." From verse 9 to the end of the chapter we are given a plan of the future of Israel and the return of the Jews is strongly likened, in verse 11, to the original Exodus, to emphasize that they will again find their promised land.

CHAPTER 11 is quite a change of pace. It expresses rather powerfully the conflict caused by their trying to prepare for the messianic kingdom to come while still desiring to get even with those who have oppressed them. The chapter opens with a rather sarcastic cry at the destruction of an enemy: "Woe to them, we are so sorry." It goes on to say that God will no longer pity a people who have no repentance.

We are told that the foreign rulers, the governors of the people, were very harsh and often sold the people to their captors—very much like what we would call Quislings or collaborators today—and God is going to punish them. The three shepherds who are "cut off" are the bad governors. The symbolism of the two staves, Beauty and Bands, is very lovely, and this is the only time we encounter it. They symbolize the nature of the divine shepherd, the Bands represent the unity of man, and Beauty is Love. He cuts the staff of Beauty to symbolize the fact that God was judging the people for their ingratitude. We are told that the rest of the flock who had remained faithful watched this and understood.

In verse 12 the prophet, who feels that he has done his job, asks for his salary. He is given thirty pieces of silver, which is the value of a Hebrew slave. (If you are familiar with the New Testament you will recall that we also encounter the amount of thirty pieces of silver there as well.) In verse 13 the potter symbolizes the work of God. The breaking of the second staff foretells the civil wars between Israel and Judah. We are then

by the east side of the city to see if it would be destroyed, "hoping for the worst in the best way." The east stands for spiritual consciousness. It is interesting to see the symbolism in its parallel to Israel as the story continues. Jonah is given shade through the heat of the day by a gourd which grew during the night, for which he was very grateful. In the morning of the next day the gourd withered, and Jonah was heartsick. Then God says, "You are concerned over something that grew in a day and died in a day, yet you have no mercy for a great city."

What it means, of course, is that Israel was much more concerned for its own safety and comfort during this period than it was for anyone else. Moreover, Israel is very embarrassed that its own God, Yahweh, should lift His hand to help anyone who was not of the "chosen people." This is one reason why the story ends so abruptly: you are merely told, in effect, "Which do you have more mercy for, something that has no reality, no ability to live or be sustained, or for human life? You feel great misery over the death of a gourd that lived and died in a night and no mercy for the human life that I have created."

## MICAH

Micah is an amazing figure as well as being one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. He, together with Amos, Hosea and Isaiah contributed to making the end of the eighth century B.C. the richest and most important period of Hebrew prophecy. He has quite a reputation despite the fact that there is little known about him. We do know that he was an artisan, an uneducated man of the people, yet what he said produced a tremendous effect not only in his own time but in later times as well. The exact period of his prophecy is uncertain but it is assumed to cover about fourteen years. The reference to the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz in the first verse are believed to be, once again, the work of later editors. We do know, however, that he prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah, and that he greatly influenced the king's own life and brought the king to the point where he made many religious reforms for the nation. How many

of the fourteen years were actually spent in prophesying is not known since we do know that he went into retirement on several occasions when his prophecies did not come true at the time he said they would. He nevertheless continued his work.

We know very little about the details of Micah's call to prophecy, but we do know a bit about the general contributing influences. Amos made a terrific impact on him: he was thoroughly familiar with and deeply believed in Amos' work. Micah lived in a little town called Marashah (today known as Marissa) which was a village outpost of Judah and was, in case of invasion, first in line in the direct route to Palestine. Although he had a very high social consciousness, he was not so concerned with the international problems of his day as he was with the protection of his people. He tried to arouse them to do something, not only physically, but spiritually, to prepare themselves for the results of the social evils they had perpetrated and which had weakened the nation to such a degree internally that there was little strength to withstand an invasion. This, coupled with what seemed to be an imminent crisis—the Assyrians were menacing Palestine on the west and Egypt, on the south—made him do all he could to alert the people to their danger.

*The Interpreter's Bible* brings out an interesting point about the four eighth century prophets when they note that Amos was a mountain shepherd; Hosea, a prosperous farmer from the north of Israel; First Isaiah was an aristocrat at the court in Jerusalem; and Micah was a small town carpenter. You recall the line from Romans which says that God is no respecter of persons: each of these men had something terribly important to say and each, with the exception of Isaiah, was poorly educated, yet the voice of God came through them. *The Interpreter's Bible* also says of Micah, that if he lived today he would be much more at home in a labor hall than in his church. Their reason for saying this is that he was more of a social prophet, torn by his sympathy for the poor, than he was a religious one, although he castigates the people for their departure from the Mosaic Code. We might, today, call him a self-made man, but his call to prophecy was as genuine as Isaiah's, with whom he was contemporary.

CHAPTER 1 begins with the introduction to the word of the Lord which is indicative of the seer or prophet. Then in very beautiful language he gives his message. Verses 2-4 describe the power of the Lord and the redemption of the earth by God.

assumed, because of references to the advances of great Greek armies in the text, that it was written around the time of Alexander the Great in 333 B.C., however material from other periods is interposed as well causing some confusion. Secondly, there is little of spiritual teaching here other than the fact that it stresses the ultimate establishment of God's kingdom on earth. As a matter of fact, some of the texts are so lacking in spiritual values that it is quite startling to find them included in the Bible. We will find certain texts that express a great cruelty, and also a strong nationalism, where nothing existed, really, except Israel, and an almost materialistic approach to worship. We recognize these things as being what the prophets have been castigating the people for, and perhaps, for that reason, this material has importance: it does express the ideas and thoughts of the people in Palestine at that time, and is quoted many times in the New Testament as referring to a time of low spirituality.

CHAPTER 9. To begin with, Hadrach and Hamath are both cities in Syria, located north of Damascus, and Tyre and Sidon are coastal towns. These towns cover large areas and the writer is waiting for news of their fall. All of the cities mentioned here were ancient enemies of Israel, and in verse 8 Israel is assured that God will protect her from these enemies and save His holy temple. Verse 9 is the very lovely description of the coming of the messianic king which is referred to in the New Testament. In verse 10 we find a statement of the ancient dream that Ephraim and Judah will once more become one. Verses 13-17 are a later addition to this chapter which has little or no bearing on what went before, either in subject matter or style. One of the things that fascinates me is why the editors did not delete some of this material; they changed so much with little or no reason. This section has very little bearing on anything else, and looking backwards at history it has no prophetic impact, for what is spoken of did not take place. It speaks of the return of the prisoners who were taken into captivity and of a violent battle against their enemies which ends in victory. We are told, in verse 14, that although Judah and Ephraim fight the physical battle, it is the Lord's power that brings the victory and attendant prosperity.

CHAPTER 10 was undoubtedly written in a time of drought, and they are told that only the Lord provides the rain they need, and that they should not rely upon idols and diviners whose words are "vanity." It is believed that this was written



rituals and fasts are to be observed. They are told very definitely that fasting and sacrifice is of little value: Yahweh wants them to keep the moral law. They are very startled to hear this. Then Zechariah rebuffs them by reminding them of their transgressions. He tells them that the kind of fast that is right and acceptable is not that of food, but of emotions and thoughts in the expression of kindness, understanding and compassion to their fellowman. This is the true judgment, and in following this they will be rewarded.

CHAPTER 8 shows quite a change in style, although it is the second part of his reply. There are seven sayings, each of which begins with "Thus saith the Lord of hosts" and it is a straightforward outline of what is expected of them and what will happen if they observe the law. The reason why old age is spoken of as being such a blessing, in verse 4, is because of the concept of the afterlife held by the Jews. They believed that after death one descended into Sheol, so "what profiteth God if a man die." Therefore, the longer he lived, the more he was blessed by God. In verse 6 Zechariah refers to the peoples' doubt that Zerubbabel would be able to complete the temple, but he did get it done. The chapter ends by saying that all of the nations shall come to worship, and it will be the beginning of the great day for Israel.

We now come to that section of the book, chapters 9-14, which, it is believed, is not the work of Zechariah. The next six chapters differ completely in approach and style not only from this book but from the other prophetic books. Actually the remaining material of the Old Testament is a compilation of many unknown authors. We have no way of knowing exactly how many authors are included but this material is divided into three distinct sections: first, Zechariah 9-11; second, 12-14 and the third comprises the book of Malachi. These sections are separated from each other by the phrase "The burden of the word of the Lord," which also is a striking difference from "And the Lord said," which we have read heretofore. It is interesting that the last section of this body of writings was arbitrarily separated into the book of Malachi for, as we mentioned before, that book completes the number of twelve minor prophets which is symbolically an important number. We can assume that this was a conscious selection at one time.

There are many difficulties in interpreting this material. Firstly, the authors are unknown as is the date of writing. It is

In verses 5-16 he deals with the Assyrian problem. He warns them that unless they repent, they will be completely stripped. In order to emphasize his point, he stripped himself and walked through the streets of Jerusalem, which was quite a metropolis, clad in a loin cloth, proclaiming the woe that was to come. I am sure we would be very startled to see someone walking down Fifth Avenue in a loin cloth, screaming that the end of the world had come, or saying, "If you don't repent, the Russians are going to influence the weather and the Arctic ice floes will melt and swamp New York with water. Repent!" This is what Micah did and it was not too well received—this sort of thing rarely is—but he continued. He felt that Samaria, which was close to Judah, was the breeding spot of evil, and that the Israelites had adapted Assyrian practices to their own use, which embittered him. In verses 10-16 he sounds the alarm that danger is coming. There were raiding parties that made periodic forays on the borders, and each time that happened Micah would give the alarm that Jerusalem would fall.

CHAPTER 2 deals entirely with Micah's great concern for the ethics of the Jews. It is rather strange to see that the main focus for his attack is the seizure of real estate. It seems that through all sorts of manipulations many poor people and widows were deprived of their land by various real estate "operators." He speaks directly to the men of Jerusalem, since these practices were very prevalent there, and warns them that God is going to judge them and they will lose everything and be severely punished. He tells them he knows they do not want to hear what he has to say, and he was quite right. It is certain that when things are going well for most people and they break laws, they do not want to be reminded that they are doing wrong and are going to pay for it. But in verse 8 he continues to list the sins of the people.

CHAPTER 3 is one of Micah's most powerful addresses. It is given in Jerusalem and addressed to Judah's leaders. He tells them very simply and distinctly that they all have one thing in common: they hate good and love evil. You can imagine how that increased his popularity! He compares them with wild beasts and says that there is no mercy or love in them, nothing but evil, and he advises them to pray to God. He tells them that the false prophets and the diviners who say there will be peace, will be confounded. In verses 9-11 he tells them that what they do is not for the love of God but for the love of money, and in

verse 12 he tells them what will be the result of this.

CHAPTER 4 is very beautiful, and completely different in tone. It is believed that this and chapter 5 were written several centuries after Micah and later interposed in his writings. It is a description of a future of peace among all men and the universal worship of God. It is similar to the very lovely visions of the coming days in Second Isaiah. The writer says that the God of Jacob is the One God and that the only realities that exist are His Law and His Word. He believes that a time will come when there will be no need of rulers for everyone will be under the dominion or rule of the Presence of God, and that time will bring individual peace and security and a communion of nations. He is one of the few prophets who have felt that the voice of the Lord was not confined to the Hebrews, but given to all the peoples of the earth.

He, too, points out that Israel's past pains have been a result of her deviations from the Law, and he shares the belief of the other prophets that Yahweh has used, and will use, certain nations as instruments of punishment to bring Israel to its senses. He assures them that this is the work of God in order to bring them back to a higher level of understanding, and that God will redeem them. He makes a comparison between their trouble and misery and childbirth.

In the last verses and continuing in chapter 5, contrasting with the preceding picture of beauty and peace, there is a rather violent description of the destruction of Israel's enemies. This seems to have been written in the period after the exile and the third razing of Jerusalem, which might account for the great bitterness and desire for revenge which is expressed.

CHAPTER 5 continues the war-like tone, with touches of the former beauty. The Israelites are told to gather together against the coming siege of the Assyrians. It is not clear in verse 2 whether the reference is to David or Solomon or a new leader who is to emerge. Ephrathah is a region southwest of Jerusalem in which was located the town of Bethlehem where David was born. Whether this was meant as a reference to past glory, or to inspire in them the belief that they would be taken care of as they once were, or meant to be a prophecy of the new leader he believed would come, is not known. However, the new king, symbolic or real, will be under the rule of God. When in verse 5 he speaks of the "seven shepherds and the eight principal men" he is referring to a coalition of powerful men in the city who pre-

shows that symbolism which runs through the Bible has a certain pattern. Many people believe that the symbolism in Revelation, for example, is the result of John being influenced by Ezekiel and Zechariah. Actually, the twelve disciples, with the possible exception of one or two, had very little knowledge of the Old Testament for many of them were fishermen who spent much of their time on the water and did not have time to study. Again, there are archetypal patterns which are universal and the symbolism of the soul partakes of a certain universal character. It is true that Zechariah was undoubtedly familiar with Ezekiel, but that did not mean that he copied Ezekiel's form of symbolism. If the similarity in symbolism were caused by the influence of one person upon another then, for example, a psychiatrist who spends much time listening to his patients' dreams might find himself dreaming of their symbolism. But this is not the case.

We have encountered the symbolism used in this chapter before, and we will again. The four chariots mean the four aspects of man, and here they also refer to the four points of the compass, since we are still dealing with the symbolic building of the temple; the chariots are the vehicles and forces traveling to the points of the compass. There are only three points of the compass mentioned: the east (Christ consciousness) is not mentioned here. We know that the north represents the mentality; the south, the emotions and the west is manifestation, or the outer picture, but here the north is given as the outer picture. Also the north is the only direction which is identified with a place, Babylon. What the symbolism is saying is that the mentality has been ruling and must give place to a higher rule. In the preceding chapter we had the vision of the stork and the seed, or the concept of birth, here we have the idea that this is a completely conscious mental work, with no thought behind it. In other words, he is symbolically indicting the Israelites, by telling them that they forsook the old teaching and sacrificed their beliefs, and then consciously, and willingly built in Babylon, which is why they are being purged. Babylon symbolizes evil.

In verses 6-9 we are told of the symbolic crowning of Zerubbabel, who is to represent their anticipated messiah: the crown was to be saved as a memorial to the Babylonian Jews who voluntarily gave of their gold and silver to make the crown. The branch refers to the messenger, the messiah.

In CHAPTER 7 we find the temple is rebuilt. A delegation of people from Bethel come with gifts to inquire whether the old

or whether he did it as a god in Greece, or whether he is doing it when he reaches his final point of development on earth; he will still use the same elements and the same power of thought. There is no beginning or end to the state of being symbolized by this card. She was thinking of it only in terms of a specific moment of consciousness, but man has always had this power. For many lifetimes he has lost his memory and consciousness of who he is, but the time will come when he is once again, not only the magician but the adept, still using the same ingredients.

In the same way, the symbolism of this chapter pertains to the symbolic building of the temple, but it also describes the inner building of each individual as he begins his own integration. Here he is describing the ark of the covenant, the sacred place in the temple where God was supposed to dwell. Actually in a temple there is a screened altar, and behind it is the Ark of the Covenant containing the scrolls of the Torah. Specifically, the eyes can symbolize the seven aspects of God, or the seven glands of the human body, and the plummet, the power of thought.

In CHAPTER 5 we come across a very fascinating concept. We are told that the curse was written upon the flying roll, but the roll itself also embodied the curse to the minds of that time. We think of a curse or blessing as a vocal expression of an idea. They felt and acted as though it was a real missile of some sort which they sent forth and which actually hit the other person, affecting them for good or evil as the case was. This chapter gives a very clear example of this belief, as the roll enters into the house of the thief and punishes him. Cabalistically the measurement of the roll is 20 plus 10 equals 30 which is reduced to 3 meaning ideas and manifestations. The acts of stealing and swearing refer to the Ten Commandments and represent a misuse of power. Zechariah is using this and the other symbolic descriptions to represent what had happened to the faith of the Israelites when they were taken into captivity in Babylon: they degraded their faith by allowing it to become interwoven with the beliefs of their captors. In the last part of the vision, the woman is similar to the Babylonian deity of Lilith, who supposedly slew newborn children. The references to the seeds and the stork both pertain to the idea of birth. It means that there was a complete displacement of the original concept, or conception, through the Babylonian influence. The prophet says that this was a heinous crime in the eyes of God.

CHAPTER 6 provides us with another example which

pared for the siege and saved Jerusalem. *The Interpreter's Bible* heads verses 7-15 "a world of Purity, Blessing and Benediction." The Jews are reminded of their high calling and told that they have a mission to perform and it is up to them to bring it to fulfillment. However, from verse 8 on he brings up a subject that once more shows how little history changes: he is speaking of disarmament. He tells them to disarm completely, from their horses and chariots to the military installations. In verse 12 he says they must end their use of magic and divinations—the priests also indulged in them—and he calls vengeance upon those who do not obey.

CHAPTER 6 follows the familiar pattern of calling the Israelites back to God, of warning them what will happen if they do not return, and promising redemption in the long run. Micah tells them, as have a number of the other prophets, that there is no need to sacrifice animals or things, the only thing God wanted was the sacrifice of the wrong in people's hearts. In verses 6-8 he lists some of the salient points of Judaic ritual and ends with the beautiful and familiar question, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" He points out the futility and errors in sacrifice and ritualistic worship. Does a man think he can literally get away with murder if he brings his best ram or steer to the temple? He points out that this form of worship is nothing more than a stimulation of the emotions, and a superficial one at that. Then he asks a very pertinent question, one which may have arisen as a result of his own social background. Is a poor person who cannot afford the sacrifice of the wealthy, then cut off from worship or contact with God because he is poor? Will God have no part of him? Micah, with little or no education, has an amazing perception and understanding and he expresses it very clearly and succinctly. He also gently rebukes the king, Hezekiah, because he too made very rich offerings and sacrifices to the temple. If you recall in Samuel, Hezekiah was told that he would die if he did not repent. He did, and you will recall he had a marvelous healing. Then he made gigantic offerings to the temple (and also gave a song of praise which is one of the most beautiful in the Old Testament. But here Micah reproves him for doing this and thereby setting an example for the wealthy.

Also in verse 7 he makes a point which seems incredible, and that is the practice of human sacrifice. It is very difficult for us to think of the Hebrews as ever having considered human sac-

rifice as part of the worship of God, even when considered in the light of ancient history. You will recall the influence of the Babylonians and Assyrians and their belief in human sacrifice which was adopted by the Hebrews. This was repeated time and again. The practice was far more prevalent in most of the countries of that time than we could possibly imagine. At this point the sacrificed children were usually the firstborn of the family, as Micah says in verse 7 "shall I give my firstborn for my transgression?" Of course Micah is up in arms against this, and he states it very clearly. All of the prophets knew, although they did not call it the Law of Karma or Retribution, that if you went against the way of God you were going to reap what you had sown.

The final verses deal with the prevalent corruption of that time. It is continually amazing to see this people, whose ancestors had been trained to such a high standard of morals and ethics as that given in the book of Deuteronomy—it is as magnificent in scope as Plato or Socrates—deviate to such an extent that they became total strangers to their own religion. The rest of the chapter continues with scolding the elders for not tending to their duties of holding the people in line. Finally Micah refers to another fall of Jerusalem, which may have been the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 B.C., according to *The Interpreter's Bible*.

CHAPTER 7 is well called the pessimism of despair by *The Interpreter's Bible*. It is the conclusion of Micah's prophecy, and his bitterness and cynicism about life is extremely touching. In verses 1-2 he is much like Diogenes looking for an honest man, and he says there is a web of sin over Palestine. In verse 4 he tells them what the wages of this sin will be, and in verses 5-6 he speaks despairingly of dishonor among friends and family. Verses 7-12 tell of the inevitable victory of God's truth, but it is really a psalm of despair. He thinks that only he himself has retained faith in God. Then he speaks to his enemies and tells them that they will be punished. He speaks of the future hope for the return of the Jews to their land, which will be utterly desolated but then rebuilt. If they return to God there will be a restoration of their nation and all other nations shall be ashamed and the Jews shall witness the humbling and eventual conversion of these nations. In verses 18-20 he praises Yahweh and tells Israel her punishment is over, and says that God will respect His oath to Jacob and Abraham because God never breaks His word. It is fascinating to see another instance where a proph-

the force of Good, referred to in Isaiah 14:12 "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" We are given Zechariah's picture of Satan. We are also given the figure of Joshua, who was to be high priest, and who had to be purged, (symbolized by the filthiness of his clothes) before he could minister to the Lord. Zechariah, through his visions, practically ordained the man who was from that point on known as the high priest. In verse 9 when he speaks of the seven eyes, the number seven means intuition, and the eyes symbolize wisdom.

CHAPTER 4 contains much beautiful symbolism. The gold candlestick with the bowl on the top refers to Israel and the seven main aspects of God, and gold symbolizes Spirit. (The inverted seven-branched candlestick symbolizes the second initiation, but this one is not inverted: this is another symbol for the messiah who is to come.) Seven, again, is intuitive knowledge, and the bowl symbolizes the receptacle for the fruits of Spirit. The two olive trees, one on each side of the candlestick, symbolize the union between the conscious and subconscious minds. The entire chapter really deals with the unity, peace, serenity and the coming together of all good with the coming of the messiah. It is one of the most beautiful, symbolic chapters of what happens in the messianic age. It is mainly because of the great beauty of this chapter that he is known as the prophet of unrealized hope.

This is a symbolic picture of the rebuilding of the temple given by Zechariah, but it can also pertain to the individual's fruition within himself. I would like to digress for a moment and give you an example of why I say this. A student who was very enthused about Tarot, came to see me after spending a week in study, to tell me what she had learned. She had a small segment quite right, but you cannot use Tarot on a small scale. She started with the Magician, the first card, which pictures a young man full of life standing before a table with a wand in his hand and the symbols of the four elements spread out before him. The wand represents the power of thought by which he, as the magician, creates anything he wants. She interpreted him as a man beginning his search for himself. That is right, but he is man at the time when everything was his; and he is man at the end of time: the same magician, still mixing his elements by means of his thought. Whether he is doing this at a point in time when he becomes conscious that there is such a thing as metaphysics,

they could worship once again, and once more they would be His people and He would be their God.

CHAPTER 1 begins with the idea that Yahweh's word is all powerful. The four horsemen represent the four planes of being. The red horses represent the emotional nature. They were sent to "walk to and fro through the earth." The angel of the Lord (the raised consciousness) stood among the myrtle trees (higher plane of being). Zechariah is given a picture of what the future will be. Nothing has happened as yet for the emotions are still seething. He is actually called the prophet of unrealized hope, which is rather tragic. In one sense the visions were never realized until our century, and it is still too early in the history of the new nation of Israel to determine how much will be realized.

Horns in Old Testament literature are used in the sense of the Shofar, or ram's horn; to summon, or to awaken, and they symbolize strength in the sense of arming yourself for God. Here they also symbolize the four nations which are hostile to Israel. The smiths are those who will devise the punishment to be meted out to these nations whose destruction will precede the beginning of the messianic age.

In CHAPTER 2 the angel tells Zechariah, who in turn tells the people, that the day is coming when Jerusalem will be the throne of Yahweh, and there will be no longer any need to be on guard. At that time there will be no enemies, for this will be the beginning of the day of the salvation of the Lord. He tells them that God is a protecting force: they will need no walls because they will be surrounded by a wall of the power of God. It is a very beautiful idea, especially in lieu of the Israelites' having returned to a completely sacked city and wrecked temple. The land of the north literally refers to Babylon, but it also represents the mind. While this symbolizes the vision of Zechariah, it also directly, primarily deals with the physical crisis of his people, as well as himself in this instance. He is left with the feeling that nothing remains for him, and then he suddenly has a vision which tells him to get up and go on. But, particularly as we approach the time of the New Testament, we have a stronger emphasis on the physical aspect of the story of the change leading to the teaching of Jesus.

CHAPTER 3 is a very lovely chapter and introduces the figure of Satan. Behind all of the struggles of mankind from the beginning of time, through our own time (and, I hope to God not much longer) has been the struggle between the force of Evil and

et, as do practically all of them, has the belief that there will come a time when every human being on the face of the earth, regardless of his color, creed or nationality, shall find God. It is a belief shared by every person throughout the ages who really has faith in God. When Micah refers to it, it is with the belief that the nations will be converted to Judaism, but it still means that they will turn back to the path. I think it is perfectly true, even though it is a bit on the slow side.

## NAHUM

The book of Nahum consists of three chapters comprising two poems, which are actually chants of hate. There is nothing of beauty here, other than the literary form itself, which is quite outstanding in its vivid expression of vengeance. *The Interpreter's Bible* says that it is a prophecy "written just before a coalition of Medes and Chaldeans overthrew Nineveh in 612 B.C." The book deals entirely with the subject of the capture and razing of Nineveh, and in listing the crimes of this city as the reasons it is destroyed. Nahum stresses the fact that Yahweh, the Lord God, is always in control, and it is He Who is responsible for Nineveh's overthrow. This idea forms the basis for the religious value of the book. It is also important as a denunciation of militarism.

Ethically and theologically the book of Nahum has little to offer, for he lacks warmth and consideration for any except his own people. This is interesting when we consider that anyone who receives the call of God must have a certain degree of feeling for his fellowman. He may not like what they do, but he does not want to see them eternally damned, or see their cities razed and their women and children killed. However, Nahum in his intense fury over the Assyrian attacks upon Israel, speaks of just this. He is strongly nationalistic in his defense of his people. He does not take the Israelites to task for causing their own oppression, but he does blame their enemies. The entire section neither upbraids nor comforts the Israelites, it simply gloats over the destruction of Nineveh.

As we have studied the prophets, we have been able to get a glimpse of the type of personality each one of them expressed. For example, First Isaiah was a rather impressive figure, a man of great stature and, I am sure, no one ever took liberties with him. On the other hand, Second Isaiah wrote so beautifully that I am sure that people felt warmly responsive and close to him. But in Nahum, while a number of the prophets "breathed fire and brimstone" on their enemies, we have a man who carried his hatred to the limit.

CHAPTER 1. I am sure we are all familiar with verse 15, and it is fascinating to see that this very beautiful text comes from one of the bloodiest sections in the entire Bible. In the period of history covered from 800 to 500 B.C., Israel was invaded and captured countless times. Since much of the Old Testament deals with people who lived at the same time and had similar experiences and each wrote about it from his own point of view, it is even more interesting to see what Nahum has to say. In verses 2 and 3 he says that the Lord is a God who is not to be trifled with: He is a wrathful God, slow to anger but great in power. He speaks of the fear of the Lord and the fierceness of His anger, and says that affliction by the Lord is so complete that He need not repeat it twice. *The Interpreter's Bible* says that verses 12 through the end of the chapter are "a series of marginal notes." It is probable that they were not used in the prophecy but were intended to be used at a later date and were preserved in the script.

CHAPTER 2 is a magnificent description of the attack that was to come upon Nineveh. He approaches it from the point of view that he was one of those who stood by and watched the city die and it expresses his own joy at its destruction. I will admit he had some reason for this in that the Jews had suffered greatly at the hands of the Assyrians, but it nevertheless is an attitude which is incompatible with the idea of a man of God. Evidently there had been a series of minor attacks preceding this final attack by the coalition of Medes and Babylonians which caused the fall. His description of the attack on the gates of the city is amazing and, in verse 5, he describes the attempted defense which is unsuccessful. Verse 7 describes the flight of the queen, and then the city is despoiled and destroyed in a reign of confusion and terror. Verses 7-13 list the crimes of the city. In verses 11-13 the lion is the symbol of Assyria and its army. Heretofore they had raided whenever and wherever they

where they were born, but the interpretation will vary. We might ask, who is right? Personally, I think the more cosmic we are in our interpretations the more correct we will be. You will find here, and a great deal more when we reach Revelation, that the symbols are not used from the point of individual's experiences. They are used to indicate the gigantic experiences which are universal to people who have reached a certain development. They are never confined to the experiences of the outer life.

Zechariah is one of the few prophets who mentions angels. He refers to Satan as an angelic accuser much as he was portrayed in the allegory of Job. Zechariah evidently believed in angels and it is possible that he saw them. However there are various types of people and various types of what they may call visions. I have heard of people who said that they saw angels with huge wings who visited them, and, as I have said before, real angels do not have wings. That there are higher beings who are not incarnate and that it is possible to have contact with them is, nonetheless, perfectly true. But, I do not think we would find Satan in the form of an angel: we would be more apt to find him in the guise of an utterly charming human being whom we would probably find very difficult to resist.

As we have seen, this period was one of the most difficult for the Hebrew people. They had returned to their country from exile with the dream that this was the beginning of the messianic age, and they found life more difficult than it had been before, and certainly during, their capture. Very little of the country itself remained other than Jerusalem and a few surrounding towns. They dreamed of wonderful fertile fields pouring forth abundant grain, and they found instead barrenness, rocks and stubble. They had little to eat, were depressed and had little ability to begin again. As a result, and it was understandable, a great amount of cynicism developed among the people. They were faced with a situation which seemed to show that the Lord had forsaken them. They saw little sense in making any further effort.

Men like Zechariah did everything they could to stimulate their awareness that it was not God Who was punishing them, but they were punishing themselves for their own deviations from the way of God. The prophets felt that one way in which they could re-kindle the peoples' enthusiasm and restore their faith would be to rebuild the temple. The prophets, and particularly Zechariah, expressed this plan almost like a child's fairy story: if the people provided Yahweh with a proper home, Yahweh would return and

belief, which was universal among the Jews at that time, in the coming of a Messiah. But how much of his prophecies were the result of pure inner influence, and how much were the result of his own desires to transform the outer picture to conform to his own concepts? He and Haggai both knew that the rebuilding of the temple was tremendously important to the Jews at that time and they prophesied accordingly, but at the same time they included their own words: "Keep out the Samaritans, God said so." It is a great danger point.

We are not prophets, but this is equally true for us when we treat and wait for an answer. How can you tell whether the answer is from your own subconscious or from the Presence of God? The answer is that if you are completely objective you will have a definite feeling of surety if it is the real answer. Then, if we have a problem and even if there is fear attached to it, the answer will come and the demonstration will be greater than you ever dreamed. But until we reach that point of inner surety our own desire plus our fear can blind us. This is what happens with us. This is emphasized in the book of Zechariah. The wrong interpretations will occur when you are influenced by a desire for a specific thing to happen. The main theme here is the temple, and despite the hardships, it was rebuilt.

The book of Zechariah is a small apocalyptic book and he uses symbols with which we are very familiar. This again raises the question of interpretation and origin. For example, in Revelation, John uses the symbols of horses and the number 4 repeatedly: did he adapt these symbols from the earlier prophets, or, to use Jungian terms, did he draw them from the collective unconscious in which we all live? We have dealt with these archetypal symbols before and we have seen that a particular symbol will be interpreted according to the mental climate in which the individual habitually lives. For instance, many people often dream of a cross. In the Catholic world the cross is the symbol for suffering; in the metaphysical world, of victory; and in the ancient world, for the earth, and the individual must choose what designation he will give to his dream. Or, in the case of a figure of authority, in Freudian terms it is usually interpreted as someone who is powerful; in metaphysics we would say it represents the Presence of God.

We all dream in archetypal patterns, of mountains, water in various forms, of fire, and all of these are ancient symbols. The symbols are the same for every person, no matter when or

wanted to and returned to their country in safety. Nahum thoroughly enjoys his prediction that this time it would happen to them. He says that what was left of the population would be burned and be put to the sword, which was true.

CHAPTER 3. Nineveh had always been so ruthlessly oppressive and cruel that I suspect more people than Nahum himself were happy to see its fall, and this chapter deals with the fall and judgment and says that there is no pity for her anywhere. In verse 8, No is the old name for Thebes, the capital of Egypt, which had been attacked and sacked by Nineveh earlier, so these people also rejoiced at the fall. He ends the chapter and the book with the description of the death and scattering of the people of Nineveh. *The Interpreter's Bible* made some interesting comments on this: "Oppression earns the enmity of all who have suffered the tyrant's heel. Broken promises destroy the trust which is so essential to enduring peace. Those who fail to keep faith with minorities betray an inner weakness which must inevitably be fatal."

## HABAKKUK

The book of Habakkuk deals with a situation which exists today: the way of the oppressors inevitably results in their own oppression. Almost nothing is known about the man himself, but we are able to see from the orderly presentation of his material that he had an extremely logical mind. The book is basically a speculative and meditative treatise based on the doubt in man's heart. By asking certain philosophical questions, he attempts to answer these doubts which specifically arise from seeing the outer and continuing oppression which existed in Israel.

In chapter 1 Habakkuk poses his question, in chapter 2 he answers it and in chapter 3 he assures us that God is always there. The question which he poses is one which has been asked time and again, and one that I am sure each of us has asked at some time in his life: If God governs, why does He allow violence and oppression and other wrongs to win out over righteousness? Why? If God is All in All, why are children born crippled, blind

and maimed, why do we have hideous wars? Certainly most of the people who suffered the atrocities of the recent war were by and large very good people. Why should they suffer? Of course in metaphysics we know the reason, which we call Karma, but I think for most of us it is still a rather abstract reason. Nevertheless it is a true reason, one that guides our lives, and our lack of understanding of this is based on our misconception of God, and this is a point which Habakkuk brings out by his own questions.

First of all, we must remember that Habakkuk was not a metaphysician. He was a prophet raised in Judaism where the concept of God was still that of a Power and Presence Who "lived somewhere up there"; Who existed now, always did exist and always would exist; of a God Who controlled everything that existed. According to the Hebrew concept of God, God could do anything He wanted at any time. We, on the other hand, say "With God, all things are possible," and "Love God, and do as you please." There is a wide difference between the two concepts, and that difference forms the basis for Habakkuk's question and the answer he tries to bring out.

The material in the book is divided, then, between his reasons for asking why God permits evil, if God is the Ruler of all, and his reasons for what he feels are the answers to this which, in turn, reveal a very interesting point: the great gulf between faith and fact. I think we all know how difficult it is to bridge this gulf at times. If we are in the process of making a demonstration, be it large or small, and everything in the outer world is askew, we are told that in Spirit everything is already fulfilled in perfection—but we are not able to see it. We are told to hang on to the idea of what is true in Spirit. When we do, the truth always demonstrates itself. Then we learn what it means when we say "with God all things are possible." This is the concept which Habakkuk is trying to realize both for himself and his nation.

Israel had sinned once again, which he touches on, and he tells them that if they repent, Yahweh will forgive them and make right what has been wrong. He was fully aware of the constant repetition of this pattern in the history of his people. Furthermore, even though he was a prophet and undoubtedly a very good man, he was affected by their difficulties and encountered many problems in his own life as a result. He wonders, "How long will this go on?" and philosophically asks "What sense is

Chapter 1:7 through chapter 6:15 is a series of eight visions and their interpretations which were related on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month. And on the fourth day of the ninth month of 518 B.C. he discussed the subject of ritualism versus right living, which is covered through chapter 8.

Zechariah, unlike Haggai, received revelation through visions. Zechariah was very much a mystic who knew what he knew by divine revelation which came to him in his deeper meditations. He had a vital concern for the welfare of his country and people and a strong desire to do something about it, plus a great love of God. The combination of these sincere desires in a person who lives the life to the best of his ability enables the sufficiently developed individual to have revelation. Revelation is the inner voice of the Presence of God telling the individual what is to be, what can be and what should be done. Too often people think that revelation is very mystical, in the negative use of the word—that it is only fanciful pictures—but revelation is always exact and matter-of-fact if it is real. The case of Bernadette is a perfect example. Her revelation was completely simple and clear cut: it was very concise direction. It was not accepted by the church because it did not come to her in a vision of floating angels, which they considered to be the proper atmosphere. Also, and even more important, they did not understand why this simple little child should be chosen. But "God is no respecter of persons." The qualities I mentioned above are what makes revelation possible to a person, and only those. But there is one characteristic that always accompanies revelation, and that is a complete selflessness, to the extent that the individual will, rightly or wrongly, sacrifice himself for the good of whatever the cause may be.

There is an interesting point which arises here with regard to Zechariah's prophecies. We have seen many forms of revelations up to now, and many prophets whose prophecies have not come true, and since we know that revelation is the direct word of God, we might ask how this can be. It is true that many of them did not have true revelation; for example, Ezekiel was a psychic. But many of them were mystics who must have had a tremendous desire in order to have these gifts, and, very frankly, the reason I raise the question at this point is that the degree of this desire in itself may be a source for their misinterpretations. It is very possible to mix our own desires and beliefs with what we actually hear. Zechariah had temple training, and held the



## Z E C H A R I A H

Since Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai, their historical backgrounds are the same. It is helpful that both books give explicit dates for the prophecies so that we are able to determine that Zechariah's period of prophecy began "in the eighth month, in the second year of Darius," or 520 B.C., and ended two years later in 518 B.C. From this we know that he began his work a month before Haggai's concluding prophecy and, from indications in the text, it is evident that they knew each other and that Zechariah was the younger of the two. It will be interesting to see the similarities as well as the distinct differences in their utterances. Zechariah came from a priestly family and it is possible that he himself was a priest. However, one of the unique points of his message is the denial of the necessity of ritualistic sacrifice or fasting. Instead he stresses the need for right living.

*The Interpreter's Bible* affords Zechariah, along with Haggai, the position of being a founder of Judaism. It is not clear whether this refers to the two men being the direct cause of the return to worship in the temple and the old ethical concepts, or whether they were literally the pillars of the ancient world. Some points are certain however: both prophets shared certain ideas in common, such as the exclusivity of the Hebrews; both had as their main theme the rebuilding of the temple; both believed in the imminent coming of the messiah; and both had a strong aversion to the Samaritans and believed that God's blessings belonged solely to Israel, as the chosen of God, a group to which no one else could be admitted.

Zechariah also shared Haggai's belief that Zerubbabel was a man of God. Apropos of this, there were times when all was not brotherly love between Haggai and Zerubbabel and Zechariah often acted as peace maker between the two. It is possible that the question of politics was a basis for their disagreement and that Haggai, a rather forthright man and the elder of the two, became furious if Zerubbabel did not follow his directions. The even younger Zechariah, being much more understanding, tried to keep peace.

The first eight chapters are divided into three sections according to the dates given. Chapter 1, verses 1-6 comprise an introductory speech given in the eighth month of 520 B.C.

there in being good since those who are evil seem to get away with it?" He not only refers to the evil outside the two kingdoms, but the evil within. Still he ponders the question—if God controlled what happened to them, why couldn't He stop both their own error and the oppression of those from without?

Habakkuk prophesies that "a bitter and hasty nation" will be raised by God to conquer and destroy all of Israel that does not conform to His Laws. Then because he, along with the other prophets who spoke of other nations as the weapons of Yahweh, knew that those who broke the Law would in turn be punished, he predicts their fall. He describes this nation as being "greedy as hell" and accuses them of the plunder of other nations, of bloody and oppressive treatment of captives, and of the sin of idolatry, which was their gravest sin, according to him. The book ends with an extremely beautiful psalm of praise, which is believed to have been written by a later editor.

When the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in 1947, the first two chapters of Habakkuk were part of the material found in the caves. The caves had been the "library" of either the group known as the Essenes or one known as the Cult of Righteousness (it is possible that these are one and the same), and these two chapters were used as part of their religious manual, which is interesting. Certain marginal notes were made which indicated that this sect in 100 B.C., applied Habakkuk's description (600 B.C.) of the nation that was going to oppress Israel to their own time and situations. Habakkuk refers to the oppression of the Chaldeans: they applied this to a people known as the "Chittim." There have been many interesting textual changes in the book through the centuries, but since we are dealing with the overall meaning of his message, we will have to leave that as a subject for your own research if you are interested.

The material in CHAPTER 1 has been fairly well covered in the introduction.

CHAPTER 2 contains two very lovely and familiar texts. You will perhaps recognize "that he may run that readeth it" as the subtitle for *The Runner's Bible* (a wonderful book of Biblical quotations), and of course verse 20 is very beautiful. The chapter is, of course, the answer to his question, and we are told that if we believe, have faith, and live righteously our good will be established.

Habakkuk then lists the five woes of the oppressor, and says that evil destroys itself: oppression of others produces

revolt. The first woe says that those who seek to overpower others will in turn be despoiled. The second refers to the oppression of those who were engaged in what we call "real estate grabbing", which is also touched on in Jeremiah. The third woe is upon cruelty and violence; the fourth woe is upon drunkenness and sexual indulgence; and the fifth woe is upon idolatry. Apropos of the last woe of idolatry, the Israelites as well as the Chaldeans were guilty of this, as we have seen, which is the basic reason for the law against intermarriage—in order to retain the purity of the Hebrew blood. They had so often, through intermarriage and association with their captors, taken on the qualities and habits of idolatrous belief. The prophets constantly point out that they were punished by Yahweh because they became guilty of the sins of their enemies.

CHAPTER 3 gives an extremely beautiful picture of God as power. It is a psalm of praise of the power and majesty of God which does not need much explanation. In verse 3, Teman is another name for Edom, and Mount Paran is a hill country between Edom and Sinai. Verses 4-7 deal with the power of the Lord, and in verse 8 he questions why these signs of God's power occur at this point. Then he is told of the power of creation and of the Creator: that He made the sun and moon, and everything that lives must obey Him. He realizes that the reason for the storm is to disperse the enemies and so free the Israelites. In the final verses he says that no matter what seems to happen, God is always there, and God is his strength and salvation.

## ZEPHANIAH

In the opening verse of the book of Zephaniah we are told that he was called to prophesy in the days of Josiah, who was king of Judah around 638-609 B.C. He was a citizen of Jerusalem, and an aristocrat and a noble. He was the great grandson of king Hezekiah, and possibly Josiah's second cousin. It is possibly for this reason that, in spite of his knowledge of God and his great religious desires, he had little, if any, sympathy for the poor: "Let them shift for themselves." His message is directed

coming of Yahweh, and that He would make His permanent home in the temple at Jerusalem. I still wonder whether he thought of the messiah as a personification of God or as a human being who was designated by the call of God as the prophets themselves were. However, in the last verse of the book, Zerubbabel is designated as the chosen servant of the Lord.

Besides lacking a spiritual message, which is in itself unusual, Haggai expresses the not too pleasant quality of exclusiveness. He vigorously opposed any contact with the Samaritans whom he considers to be unclean. One of the worst things we can do to ourselves, now as then, is to hold the attitude of spiritual snobbishness which feels "I am chosen and you are not." We are given the picture of a man who greatly believed and was well-grounded in his religion, but who believed that it was reserved only for those he thought worthy of belonging: he was a committee of one to decide who could be admitted and who would not be.

CHAPTER 1 has been fairly well covered by the introductory remarks: it is his appeal to rebuild the temple, their objections and his reply. In case you find it interesting, the dates given would correspond to August-September, 520 B.C., according to *The Interpreter's Bible*. The people say that the time is not right to rebuild, and they are not ready to do it. He argues with them and assures them that this is the time, and the only way in which they can begin to find themselves is to rebuild the temple so that Yahweh will have a house in which to live and the Jews can come there to worship as they formerly did. He also was very aware that the people had neglected the Jewish customs of worship during their exile, and he wanted to bring them back to this observance.

CHAPTER 2 describes the glories of the temple, and the pressure which Haggai brought to bear, in promises and commands, in order to force them to rebuild. In verses 10-14 he speaks of various forms of uncleanness which should not touch that which is holy. The term "this people" is thought to refer to the Samaritans, which we have mentioned before. And it ends with Zerubbabel being selected as Yahweh's servant, with His blessing.

the people were taken captive and exiled in Babylon. When Cyrus conquered Babylonia in 539 B.C., he allowed the Jews to return to their country, which they found in a state of complete havoc and ruin. Not all of the Jews returned to Palestine for, as we have seen, they had accepted the Babylonian ways and were quite content there. Apparently, those who did return had by this time lost much of their fervent love for their homeland and what little joy they had in their homecoming was greatly dampened by the state of shambles they found there.

The temple of course had been razed at the time of the Babylonian invasion and, until Haggai's time, a period of almost 60 years, nothing had been done to restore it. It was not so much that they had no wish to restore it, but their attitude was "What for? If we rebuild it, it will only be razed when we are invaded again." The people were so apathetic about the condition of the temple that Haggai was determined to arouse them to the point of doing something about it. The main purpose of his prophecy was to urge them to rebuild the once great home of Yahweh.

As the opening text states, Haggai begins to prophesy in the second year of Darius' reign. Darius had appointed Zerubbabel, a Babylonian Jew of the house of David, as governor of Judah, and Joshua was the religious leader at this time: it is to these two men that Haggai directs his message. The rebuilding of the temple began in 520 B.C. and was finished four years later in 516 B.C. Haggai's importance as a prophet rests, not with his message, but with the fact that he was instrumental in bringing this about.

Haggai's concept of the messianic age was similar to that of the other prophets: he believed that it would be preceded by a day of judgment and destruction. He linked the series of small revolutions and civil wars that had been going on at this time with this day of judgment. Incidentally, the concept of the messiah was stressed in the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, but, I think, because of the shortness of the books of the minor prophets we become much more aware of it in these last few books where it has become the focal point of their message. They all link any catastrophe that occurs in their world with the dawning of the final age: the time when Yahweh, the Lord, would come to earth Himself, or would designate someone in His place to lead His people.

This was one of the main reasons for Haggai's sense of urgency in restoring the temple: he believed in the imminent

to the wealthy ruling classes, and it is a very powerful and beautiful message in some ways. It is evident that he was influenced by the writings of Isaiah and Amos, and of course the rediscovery of the Deuteronomic Laws at this time undoubtedly influenced his message as well.

We have dealt with much of the historic background in I Isaiah and Jeremiah. However, since Zephaniah also speaks out against "the remnant of Baal" and idolatrous worship, it may be well to briefly recall some of the facts leading up to this. During the height of Assyrian power, Manasseh was king of Judah (687-642). He was notorious for having furthered the infiltration of Assyrian ritual and customs in Israel. The account of his reign given in II Kings 21 lists the many "abominations of the heathen" which he instituted in order to appease the Assyrians, and, if you were to re-read that list you would find it almost identical with the sins which Moses strongly speaks against in Deuteronomy 13.

In II Kings 21:6 we read of Manasseh that "he made his son pass through fire." As we have seen before, child sacrifice was a part of the worship of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and was widely practiced in Israel at this time. Since this horrible rite did exist, it might be well to look into the origin of the concept, for many of the tragedies of the human race have occurred as the result of a basic misconception of a true idea. The Sacrifice of the First Born is a phrase that symbolizes the fact that the Presence of God sacrifices Himself by being incased in a physical body. The First Born is the Son of God who lives in you and me and everyone else and gives us life and being. It is a complete sacrifice on His part until you and I awaken to the consciousness of His Presence; until then, He is, so to speak, entombed in flesh. As a result of misunderstanding this spiritual truth, people literally and physically interpreted this to mean that the first son should be sacrificed to the God Who had created him, in worship. It is fascinating and often horrifying to see what we do with ideas.

We also find that they indulged in witchcraft and worshipped the dead. Many people think of ancestor worship as being confined to the Chinese religion, but it was part of the religion of the Chaldeans, Assyrians and Medes as well, and here we find that it has become part of the Hebrew worship. The cult of the dead still does exist in certain religions, and, in a sense it is not an unhealthy concept. It is rather beautiful in one

way. They believe that the anniversary of a death should be remembered with prayer and a light which is burned for twenty-four hours. It has ceased to be a fetish in our time, as far as the Hebrews are concerned.

Another aspect of their worship might surprise you: the Hebrews of that day worshipped astral entities. Despite Moses' injunction against it, a tremendous amount of occultism was absorbed from the Assyrians and Babylonians. It was believed that a pantheon of gods existed on another plane of being whom they must worship and to whom they must tithe, which they did. This practice was certainly a far cry from "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Much of Zephaniah's teaching is directed against this because he knew the Law and believed only in God, and knew that this was complete blasphemy.

Manasseh was followed by Amon who was murdered after a two year reign, and then Josiah became king. We recall that from that time on there was quite a change; the book of Deuteronomy was found and Josiah made every attempt to bring his people back to the Mosaic concept, and succeeded to a certain extent. But at this time "the remnant of Baal" remained, and Zephaniah adds his voice to those who were trying to restore Israel to its former purity. The three chapters of his teaching deal with the punishment of Israel, with the punishment and judgment of the other nations, and with the final day of restoration and rejoicing for Israel.

CHAPTER 1. Once more we are told that God is through with His people and is going to punish them. Zephaniah lists their sins and then says that the sacrifice to the Lord will be the punishment of the prince's and king's children, and desolation and distress will be carried out in universal judgment. It is well to remember when we read of universal judgment, that this concept is based on Israel's complete belief in the coming of the messiah: he would not come until the nations of the world, including Israel, were judged and punished. As we near the messianic stage of the New Testament, we will encounter this idea more frequently.

CHAPTER 2 is similar to many we have read before dealing with the judgment of the nations. They are summoned to gather together for punishment, and the humble are offered salvation if they seek God. This is followed by oracles against Philistia, Moab, the Ammonites, the Ethiopians and the Assyrians, who are told that "the Lord will be terrible unto them"

because of their pride. The last verse is thought to be added by a later editor, since it is a quotation from Isaiah and Jeremiah, to emphasize the message.

CHAPTER 3 begins, once more, by listing the sins of Israel and saying that the Lord is in the midst of her to judge her for her stubbornness; and the day will come when the Lord will "gather the nations" to receive His indignation. Then Zephaniah repeats the message of the day of victory and rejoicing for Israel: the remnant will be saved. As we have seen, this is a form of belief in the universal conversion of the nations: that all will come to worship the One God. Here it is thought of as being the Hebraic form of worship, but it actually refers to the day when we will have freedom of worship, in the concept that there is One God, whether you wish to call Him God, Brahma or Allah, and that it is up to the individual to worship God in his own way.

## HAGGAI

Nothing is known of the man Haggai other than certain assumptions based on the text itself which may not be factual. The name Haggai means "festal" which could mean that he was born on a feast day. It is possible that he was a priest, and it is fairly certain that he was rather old at the time of his prophetic work. His period of prophecy is one of the shortest in the Old Testament: four months during the reign of Darius I in 520 B.C. This is almost certainly factual since each of his prophecies is dated by month and year.

One reason why even these points are in the nature of supposition is that the book was not written by Haggai himself. It was written as a second-hand report of what the prophet said and of the effect on the people who heard him. It probably was recorded by someone who was close to him, acting as his secretary or by someone who edited the prophet's own notes of his sayings.

Historically we recall that at the time of the Exile, from 586 B.C. on, Palestine was part of the Babylonian Empire and