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"WATCHING OVER MY WORD"

A Study of the Reform of King Josiah and the
Reactions of the Prophet Jeremiah to the Reform

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Biblical Seminary in
New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Sacred Theology.

by

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PREFACE

Jeremiah's initial reaction to the reformation of Josiah was favorable. He evidently supported Josiah's cause with zealous espousal. After Josiah's death, he began to see the defects of the movement, and his ardor cooled. His esteem for Josiah as a person remained, but he became an opponent of the legalism which he saw in the Deuteronomic reform. Jeremiah detected a spirit of self-righteousness among the people of Israel which arose from mere outward compliance with the Law's demand. Again he did not oppose the law code as such but its misinterpretation and misuse. Therefore, the need for inward transformation and circumcision of the heart became the major thrust of his post-reformation preaching.

John Bright believes that the reform marked the first step in a process which elevated the Mosaic Law to the point where it became "the organizing principle of religion" in Israel. The process was carried forward with growing force during the Exile when there was no central shrine. Bright also believes that this development "rendered progressively superfluous the word of the prophetic movement."

The prophetic light did not go out, however, before Jeremiah and those who followed him interpreted the national destruction and subsequent deportation in terms of God's saving purpose for the

nation. God would not forsake his errant people who must pay so dearly for their sins: he would meet them even in Babylon and write his new covenant upon the fleshly tables of their heart. This message was brought home to Israel in her darkest hour of despair, and because of this hope Judaism survived. Without the spiritual impetus of Jeremiah, even the Deuteronomic legalism would not have survived. God still watched over his word.

Throughout the history of Israel and of the Church these two emphases persist: a rediscovery of the law of God and stern enforcement of it, but also a reaction which seeks an inner walk with God, a knowledge of Him which writes his law upon the human heart. Both approaches to the word of God are necessary: the problem has always been one of balance.

Is this movement which first centralized cult worship in Jerusalem and then elevated the Law to the point that it became the organizing principle of religion reflected in Jeremiah's teaching of the post-reformation period? What is his attitude toward Deuteronomy? What does his preaching of the New Covenant say to this problem? Do these reactions of Jeremiah support Bright's thesis? These are some of the problems to which we plan to address ourselves in this study.

The writer chose this area of study because he felt the history of the Divided Monarchy had not been studied in depth in recent years. Once into the study he was happily surprised to find a number of recent periodical articles, and several new commentaries on the Books

of Kings and Jeremiah, which were evidence that the scholars had not been as neglectful of this area as he had imagined. Furthermore, he had always felt a strong liking for the well intentioned, King Josiah, and the study of his reformation efforts has afforded as much pleasure as it has cost the flesh the weariness of hard labor.

Grateful thanks are given to the writer's most helpful advisor Dr. Donald M. Stine, of the Biblical Seminary faculty; and to Miss Ruth Whitford, Librarian of the Seminary, neither of whom ever hesitated to lay aside their own work to help with counsel or in the tracking down of some stray volume or obscure reference.

Finally, the writer records profuse appreciation for a long suffering wife, whose travail together with him until now has meant the difference between still_birth and live and hopefully somewhat successful delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

"You have seen well, for I am watching over my Word to perform it." ¹ These words from the Divine Producer and Prompter were Jeremiah's cue to go on stage and assume his role as prophet of God. They shall frequently be heard coming from the wings as the great drama of Josiah and Jeremiah, of reform and reaction, moves across the stage of seventh and sixth century Judah. Josiah and Jeremiah, the king and the prophet, play the lead roles with consummate skill and passionate devotion. They are among the few members of the dramatis personae, joined perhaps by Huldah and Baruch, Shaphan, the secretary, and Hilkiah, the high priest, who are not mere actors, but who really live their roles with wholeheartedness and singleness of purpose. Manasseh, the villain of the plot, is an actor through and through, living by sham and compromise, by making the ends justify the means. He succeeds in maintaining himself on stage longer than most of the rest by his policy of all things to please the bosses over in Nineveh. But Manasseh's sham and deceit, as that of the false prophets, the false priests, and other false kings, who make up the supporting cast, always stand under the judgment of the words from the wings: "I am watching over my Word to perform it."

The reform movement of King Josiah was a case of too little, too late. The judgment of God on Judah's long history of apostasy had to come, and it fell to Jeremiah to be the herald of these tragic

tidings. His was a difficult and unhappy role, one he was repeatedly tempted to shed, but one that he could not escape. When, in his moments of disillusionment and despair, he vowed he would never again speak for God, the word burned holes in his soul, and the word rang in his ears, "I am watching over my Word to perform it;" and Jeremiah found that he could not keep his mouth shut.

It is difficult to make an accurate assessment of Jeremiah's reactions and feelings about the reform movement because his writings and oracles contain few direct statements on the subject. His initial reaction to what Josiah was trying to do was evidently favorable. Apparently Jeremiah supported Josiah with prayer and approval even if he did not take an active part in the work of the reformation itself. Later, especially after Josiah's untimely death when the reform movement lagged, Jeremiah began to detect the defects and shortcomings of the movement, and his ardor cooled. It is not that his esteem for Josiah as a person was tarnished. His words to Jehoiakim are an indication to the contrary, as we shall see in examining them more closely (Jeremiah 22:15-16). Rather it was his expectation of true spiritual awakening through the reformation movement that grew dimmer with the passage of time. With genuine prophetic insight Jeremiah saw the Deuteronomic movement developing into legalism and externalism. He saw a growing spirit of self-righteousness in the Judeans arising from legalistic compliance with the Deuteronomic demands. The outside

of the cup was washed, but the inside remained unclean. Jeremiah was not opposed to the codes of Deuteronomy, as such; codes which we shall maintain were the heart of the law book found in the process of repairing the Temple. As a matter of fact, he was very much influenced by Deuteronomic thought, traces of which are found throughout his writings. Cornfeld, et al., go so far as to maintain:

That Jeremiah's work was deeply influenced by the newly discovered scroll can be seen from the fact that it is quoted almost two hundred times in the prophet's oracles.²

The conflict which arose between Jeremiah and others like him, and the court, temple, and other influential segments of Judean society was basically a matter of differing interpretation and application of the same Mosaic Law. Jeremiah began to preach inward transformation and circumcision of the heart, as against mere outward conformity to the Law and Covenant; and his growing opposition to the cultus as it centered in Jerusalem's Temple brought him more and more opposition:

Here, indeed, was a formidable conflict. It is no accident that a prophet of this type saw life and religion in a different light from his contemporaries, thereby dissociating himself from the ideas of his day and causing the deep tragedy of lonely life. The living example of such tension in the last days of Judah was the life experience and problems raised by Jeremiah.³

Professor John Bright believes that the Reform marked the first step in a process which elevated the Mosaic law to "the point where it became the organizing principle of religion."⁴ During the period which followed Josiah's death, the processes that moved the focus of

religion from the cultus of the outlying centers to the cultus of the Jerusalem Temple, and then, through the Exile and post-exilic times, to an exaltation of the Mosaic legislation, were accompanied, to Bright's mind, by a concomitant decline in the ministry of the canonical prophets (or writing prophets):

The official promulgation of a written law, in fact, marked the first step in that process which progressively elevated the law until it became in post-exilic times the organizing principle of religion, and, at the same time, the first step in the concomitant process whereby the prophetic movement, its word rendered progressively superfluous, ultimately came to an end.⁷

Bright's thesis seems to lead to the conclusion that the Pharisaism of Jesus' day had its conception in the events which surrounded the Josianic Reformation. He is not alone in this view. Skinner quotes Dr. Davidson's famous dictum:

Pharisaism and Deuteronomy came into the world the same day.⁸

Can these theories be said to find even partial substantiation in the events and trends of the Post-reformation and Exilic periods? Is this movement which elevated the Law and ignored the Prophets reflected in Jeremiah's teachings and oracles? In other words, how do Jeremiah's reactions to the Reform and its aftermath support Bright's thesis? Most important how does this whole history of Josiah's reform and Jeremiah's reaction bear on the element of Heilsgeschichte which is reflected in Yahweh's words to His young prophet: "I am

watching over my word to perform it?" These are some of the problems and questions to which we want to address ourselves in this study.

CHAPTER I

THE CONTEXTUAL SETTING OF JOSIAH'S REFORM

Few nations in history have known such a series of ups and downs and "so many dramatic reversals of fortune in such a short time,"⁷ as the little Kingdom of Judah in the century between 687 and 587 B. C.

Through the first half of the period a vassal of Assyria, Judah then knew in rapid succession periods of independence and of subjection, first to Egypt, then to Babylon, before finally destroying herself in futile rebellion against the latter. So quickly did these phases follow one another that it was possible for one man, as Jeremiah did, to have witnessed them all.⁸

This was the period of Jeremiah and of King Josiah and the reformation that will hold our attention.

A. The Historical Background of Josiah's Reform

A closer analysis of the historical background of this era in the life story of Judah must be our first concern. If Cornill is right in maintaining that:

From the time of Shalmaneser II on, Assyrian and Hebrew history are, as it were, two connected vessels, where the height of the water in the one is always governed by that in the other. If Assyria was powerful, Israel was prosperous; but if the power in Assyria was declining, Israel suffered accordingly.⁹

then it must follow that the declining powers of Assyria and the

changing winds that blew upon her fortunes strongly affected Judah. Outwardly the Assyrian Empire appeared strong under the leadership of some of her greatest emperors such as Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) and Esarhaddon (681-669 B. C.). But there were internal weaknesses and forces visible and invisible that more and more tended toward dissolution.¹⁰ Assyria was an overextended empire which had to be held together by the ever-dubious agency of force. She had made few friends for herself, treating captive peoples with a vindictiveness and cruelty that has made her name infamous through all subsequent history.¹¹

In the East the Chaldeans of Babylonia were restless and hostile. To the north barbarian tribes such as the Scythians and Cimmerians, along with the Indo-Aryan, Medes, north and east, exerted constant pressures on the Assyrian borders and occasionally overran parts of the Empire. The old nemesis Egypt was experiencing a revival of strength under Psammeticus I of the Twenty-sixth dynasty. By ca. 655 B.C., this new Pharoah had succeeded in breaking from the Assyrian yoke and making Egypt independent.¹²

Assurbanipal (699-633 B.C.), son of the vigorous and warlike Esarhaddon, although successful at squelching the uprising in the early part of his reign, had no real stomach for a military life. He was more interested in the hunt and the harem, and in adding to the numbers of Assyrian and Babylonian literary and historical works that graced the archives of his great library. So, while he had peace in

his later years and could give himself to these pursuits, Assurbanipal did little to strengthen Assyria's hold on the outlying frontiers of her crumbling empire. After his death in 633 B.C., leaving no heirs who were capable of strong rule, Assurbanipal's empire declined rapidly. Her final end came within twenty years of his demise.¹³

What were the implications of the Assyrian decline for Judah? A hasty look at any good map of the Fertile Crescent reveals the strategic position of Palestine, which resembles a great land bridge between the countries of Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia, and Arabia on the south and Syria, Lebanon, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia to the north and east. Obviously the back and forth movements of the imperial armies as they struggled with one another for supremacy, necessitated their use of the Palestinian land bridge. To the west was the sea and to the east the vast Arabian deserts. All north-south movements of the armies as well as of commercial and cultural exchanges must of necessity have passed through the Land of Canaan. So also moved the flowing streams of living terror - the barbarian hordes from the north and east. Located in and around Palestine was a group of smaller nations and city states - Syria with its capital at Damascus, Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia, the Moabites and Ammonites east of the Jordan, the Edomites bordering the Arabah on the south, the Philistines along the southern coastal plain. Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem, was perched atop the rugged Central Ridge, and overflowed

down across the wilderness of Judea towards the Jordan Valley. But its territory was not large.

Dr. Kuist asks:

How were these smaller nationalities to hold out against the great empires, Egypt to the south . . . and Assyria and Babylonia to the north and east . . ., at a time of decisive shift in the center of military and political gravity to Babylon? This crucial question dictated national and international policy during the tumultuous decades of Jeremiah's ministry. That he addressed the claims of God to "all the nations" is written as though in large print in the book.¹⁴

Judah, in particular, was everyone's political "foot-ball." What then was the situation in Judah in the days preceding the reign of Josiah? It is almost impossible to separate the spheres of religious history and political history in the story of ancient Israel. The two were inseparable; and we separate them here, artificially to an extent, in order to look at each in its own light. Hezekiah, King of Judah from 715 to 687/6 B.C.,¹⁵ had been a leader of religious reform and a man who constantly looked for opportunities to lead Judah out from under the Assyrian yoke.¹⁶ We shall see the same combination of love of independence and love for the ways of Yahweh in Josiah, and may conclude that these two loves go hand in hand somehow. Yet Hezekiah's bid for political independence had failed to gain the coveted goal of freedom from Assyria. He was close to suffering severe reprisals from Sennacherib when death overtook him.

Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, (687/6 to 642 B.C.), was of a different sort. Rather than provoke the Assyrian overlords further, he professed to become a willing vassal of Assyria. We shall see how

Manasseh repudiated the religious reforms of his father and returned to the syncretistic approach of Ahaz and his predecessors in which the Assyrian pantheon was accepted along with Jehovah.¹⁷ Martin Noth believes that the Davidite rule was partially restored, possibly under Hezekiah, though with continued political dependence on Assyria. He suggests that the compromising restoration of Assyrian state religion had begun under Hezekiah, who was forced to accede to defilement of the Temple of Jerusalem or face further reprisals. For Noth these troubles of Hezekiah's last days meant that the coming of Manasseh and his policy of religious compromise was not the abrupt departure from the ways of Hezekiah that others make it out to be.¹⁸ Bruce says that Manasseh's "reign marked a complete break with the reforming policy of his father and a reversion to the policy of Ahaz."¹⁹ Bright maintains that, while Manasseh was a loyal vassal, his name being listed by Esarhaddon among twenty-two kings who sent him building materials, and Assurbanipal listing him as one of the vassals who helped him wage war against the Egyptians, he was no more loyal than necessary. Necessity as Manasseh interpreted the situation apparently meant "a total break with that (policy) of Hezekiah and a return to that of Ahaz."²⁰ Whether or not Noth underestimates the difference between the policies of Hezekiah and Manasseh is perhaps a matter of subjective judgment. We shall see that Manasseh's religious policies were radically opposed to the Deuteronomic patterns.

The political implications of his policy of submission can be spelled out in a few words. It is well to remember in this connection,

that Judah was a very small kingdom. Bailey and Kent call it 'microscopic', and evidently the Assyrian emperor, Esarhaddon thought of it as the 'city of Judah', an almost negligible quantity.²¹ It, therefore, paid Manasseh to be as loyal as possible. His country was too small, and his powers too limited, from a human stand point, for him to do otherwise. Therefore the restoration of the Davidite rule was of nominal importance, for, as has been said, Hezekiah's policies had brought Judah under more stringent surveillance than ever. Large numbers of Israelites lived in subjection, scattered about through all the Assyrian provinces. The upper classes of the Northern tribes had been deported to various parts of the Empire, and those who lived in Judah were not free to exercise their governmental skills. "From 701 B.C. there was neither the opportunity nor the desire for political activity." ²²

While political action was at a virtual standstill the religious policies of Manasseh were widely promulgated and led to serious consequences. "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel" (IIKings 21:2). The passage in II Kings 21:1 ff makes the assertion that Manasseh revived the Canaanite fertility cult, which Hezekiah suppressed, rebuilding the "high places" (v.3) and erecting altars to Baal, and an image of Asherah, the mother goddess, probably in the area of the Temple. In making the cult of Baal his official cult, Manasseh reverted to the policies of the infamous Ahab.

These efforts were followed by the official nod to the Assyrian overlordship as Manasseh erected altars to the Assyrian astral deities (called "all the host of heaven" 21:3,5) in the Temple itself. Ancient Mesopotamian religions, particularly that of Babylon, emphasized the worship of the heavenly bodies which were supposed to be indwelt by deities. The hosts of heaven were thought to guide and control the destinies of men. Manasseh, in opening the Temple to Ishtar (the planet Venus), probably did not think of himself as opposing the worship of Yahweh, because from ancient times Yahweh had been thought of as "the lord of hosts." Pagan deities, to the popular Israelite mind, were to be constituted part of Yahweh's heavenly council, and assigned the subordinate roles of messengers and servants (Exodus 15:11; Psalms 29; 89:5-8). For the prophets, the danger of this kind of syncretistic worship was that the pagan deities too easily usurped the place of honor and uniqueness due Yahweh. This was, for them, "a seductive and dangerous mingling of new and old." ²³ Whatever his intentions were with regard to Yahweh, Manasseh went far beyond what was called for by the Assyrians.

All the old Semitic stock of gods, whose altars and sacred poles Hezekiah had scrapped, now trooped back for a final fling before the great prophets and the scourge of the exile should drive them out forever . . . Baal led the way.²⁴

Into the Temple confines came ritual prostitution. In the Valley of Hinnom, south of the Temple area, the vile and terrible worship of Moloch, with its human sacrifices, was carried on with royal blessing.

Manasseh even went so far as to burn his own son on the altar of Moloch, Bruce presumes, "on some occasion of grave national peril." ²⁵ Thamuz, Chemosh, and Milcom were worshipped. Augury and soothsaying flourished, and the age-old practice of dealing with mediums and wizards revived. If an apostate had deliberately set out to violate every Deuteronomic prohibition against idolatry and pagan worship, he could scarcely hope to have improved on the apostasy of Manasseh.

It truly seemed as if the abyss had swallowed up the prophetic teachings and even Jehovah Himself. ²⁶

The prophetic party was not silent, however, for the prophets boldly opposed and denounced the backsliding and promised such divine judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of every one who heard of it "would tingle" (II Kings 21:12). It may be, as some say, that the true power behind the throne of that day was the harem with its women from many foreign lands and pagan religious backgrounds.²⁷ This suggestion may partially account for the extremes of pagan practice to which Manasseh led the Judeans. It also probably accounts for the swift and bloody persecution of the prophets who sought to oppose the return to the "good old days." Here is a close parallel to the baneful influence of Jezebel on Ahab. The prophets' "opposition was drowned in blood" ²⁸ (II Kings 21:16). Tradition holds that Isaiah was sawn asunder during this period.

The Biblical account records a mysterious incident in which Manasseh was bound and taken to Babylon by the Assyrians (II Chronicles 33:10ff). The occasion for his captivity is unknown, but it is

said that as a result Manasseh humbled himself before the God of his fathers (II Chronicles 33:12). After his restoration to Judea he seems to have achieved a measure of independence, undoubtedly due to the weakening of the Assyrian hold on its empire. Taking advantage of the situation he reenforced the armed garrisons in outlying Judean areas and fortified Jerusalem with a new outer wall which he raised to "a very great height" (II Chronicles 33:14). The Chronicler also records a change of heart as well as of political fortunes which resulted in some amending of the wrongs he had done in leading the religious decline (II Chronicles 33:15 ff). It is said that God received his self-humbling and heard his prayers, but in the eyes of the Deuteronomic writers, who were probably responsible for the final compilation of II Kings, Manasseh always remained the king who had "done things more wicked than all the Amorites did, who were before him" (II Kings 21:11).

The reign of Amon, the son of Manasseh, was of short duration, two years, and nothing is known of it except that he continued his father's evil ways and served the same idols (II Kings 21:21-22). The Chronicler notes that Amon did not humble himself before the Lord as Manasseh had, and only "incurred guilt more and more" (II Chronicles 33:23). For some reason, not known to us, some of his own servants conspired against him and assassinated him in the second year of his reign (640 B.C.). This treachery may reflect the presence of pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian groups in the intrigues of the royal

court. The conspirators failed in their aim, whatever it was, for no sooner had the assassination been carried out than the אֲמֹנִי-וְעַמִּי, 'am hā-'āres "the people of the land," stepped in, slew them all in turn and placed Amon's young son, Josiah on the throne. They seem to have desired to keep the status quo of the traditional Davidic line (II Kings 21:24). So at this time in Judah's history the 'am hā-'āres who were the responsible (voting) male citizens, had gained considerable political and social status, seeming to occupy a position beneath "that of the priests on the social ladder." 29 The 'am hā-'āres must be a factor to be reckoned with during the age of Jeremiah. Amon's short reign accomplished nothing except the further entrenching of apostate religion.

At this point, if we may be permitted a brief excursus, we should take account of a development that not only affected the position of the tottering colossus, Assyria; but also may have added to the accumulating pressures for change that eventually enabled Josiah to launch his reforms. Out of the steppe-lands of what is modern Russia poured the barbarian hordes called the Scythians. These marauders, apparently having no explicit program of conquest, made several forays into the territories of Assyria. Assyrian records of the reign of Esarhaddon first mention their depredations. In the latter years of Assurbanipal's rule the Scythians became a serious menace. Herodotus claims that they dominated Western Asia for twenty-eight years and hemmed the Assyrians in on several sides. 30

Bailey and Kent maintain, on the basis of Herodotus' words, that ca. 626 B.C. the Scythians poured out over western Asia.³¹ Since Assurbanipal had died in that year, leaving a weakling son on his throne, Assyria was powerless to check their rampages. The barbarians swept southward along the coastal plain of Palestine, destroying Philistine villages and coming to the frontiers of Egypt with the intention of plundering the Nile Valley. But there the Scythians were met by the new and powerful Pharaoh, Psamtek (or Psammetichus I), who repulsed their drive, either by force or by bribe of gold. On their return the Scythians are said to have "plundered the Temple of Astarte at Ashkelon."³² Bright is dubious about Herodotus' statements, and therefore is not sure, as are Bailey and Kent, that the oracles of Zephaniah and of Jeremiah concerning the "evil from the North" (Jeremiah 1:14-16; 4:5-7, 23-26, 29) relate to the Scythian invasions.³³ It is possible that this threat provided partial impetus for the words of Jeremiah, and even more possible, if the account of their southern foray is at all objective, that their presence had a sobering effect upon the peoples on the central ridge:

Jerusalem on her mountain perch was not touched,
but the terror she felt was a mighty aid to the
reformers. It was a glimpse of hell-fire.³⁴

When Josiah came to the throne (640 B.C.), the fall of Nineveh was still afar off (612 B.C.), but, as we have said, the weakling heirs of Assurbanipal were unable to prevent the decay of the Assyrian Empire. The Medes under Cyaxares, (ca. 625-585) and the

Babylonians under the Chaldean, Nabopolassar (626-608), exerted more and more pressure until within a few years Assyria was fighting a losing battle for survival.³⁵ Into this picture of rapidly increasing weakness suddenly marched an unexpected ally, Egypt. Psammetichus concluded that the Medo-Babylonian alliance posed a far greater threat to Egyptian stability than Assyrian survival. He hoped to use Assyria as a buffer state between Egypt and the rising powers of the East. In exchange for license to stretch his tentacles over Syria-Palestine, he attempted to help the Assyrians and did succeed temporarily in arresting Nabopolassar's advance up the Euphrates. But this did not stop the Medes who in 614 B.C. Captured Asshur, the old Assyrian capital. Nineveh's fall was just two years away. The once cruel and powerful Assyrian Empire went down the drain with no one outside its own domain shedding a tear.³⁶

During these years, as Assyria's grip on the Empire was weakened, Josiah, the young king of Judah, seized the opportunity for independent action and expansion of his domain.

B. The Cultural and Religious Setting of the Reform

In order to understand the religious syncretism of Josiah's day, our thoughts must turn back to the days of Israel's "conquest" of the Land of Canaan and her settlement among the people called generically the "Canaanites." What had the transition from the nomadic life of wilderness wanderings to the settled life of Canaan meant for Israel's tribes in terms of cultural and religious adjustments?

In pre-Israelite times, during the second millenium B.C., Canaanite culture became urbanized to an extent. Many fortress cities and caravan centers sprang up. Many Canaanites became city dwellers, traders and artisans, while others continued an agricultural existence as farmers and herdsmen.³⁷ A feudal system developed along with the urbanization, with the king as landholder as well as leader of the military and religious organizations.³⁸ Here then was a rich urban civilization which had come to maturity during the Bronze Age and had seen extended development of industry and commerce as well as of agriculture. Much of this urbanized living was foreign to the nomadic Israelites who were, for the most part, shepherds and agriculturalists.

On the whole, the Israelite tribes who had come from quite different circumstances, regarded the Canaanite way of life as alien, and it remained alien so long as the independent character of the Canaanites survived in the land . . . In spite of their settlement in Palestine, the genuine urban culture, whose rich diversity was maintained even in the Iron Age, continued to be alien to the Israelites, who were used to simplicity and straightforwardness; what the essentially agricultural and cattle-rearing Israelites considered 'Canaanite' above all was the interest in industry, commerce, and profit making which was rooted in their urban civilization. At a later date the merchant and trader could be described simply as a 'Canaanite' (Isaiah 28:8; Zephaniah 1:11 etc.).³⁹

At first the Israelites were more successful at establishing themselves in mountain areas where the fortified Canaanite cities were not so strong; but the Canaanites were by and large not dispossessed of their holdings in the plains.⁴⁰ But gradually the Israelites intermingled with the Canaanites or were assimilated into

the Canaanite culture as they settled down in their own, not quite so well fortified, villages and towns, or commingled with the Canaanites in their own cities.⁴¹ Israel became an agricultural people; and intermarriage took place between her and her neighbors. It is not difficult to see how the so-called "two religions of Israel"⁴² gradually developed in such a situation.

The tribes of Israel had come into Canaan as an "amphictyony", a term taken from the age-old amphictyonic leagues of ancient Greece.⁴³ These were groups of city states or tribes which formed federations centered in common sanctuaries. In Israel's case the tent-shrine known as "the Tabernacle" formed the focus of the federation.⁴⁴ The convenience of a movable tent-shrine made it possible for other nomadic peoples to enter into covenant relations with Israel, and this may have been what happened as nomadic communities of the Negev such as the Kenites, the Kenizzites, and the Jerahmeelites allied themselves with the tribe of Judah.⁴⁵ But this kind of alliance was a far cry from the mutual coexistence that developed in the settled agricultural communities of Canaan.

Though the assimilation of Canaanite culture was a slow process, and though in fact many things about their neighbors' ways of living always remained foreign to the Israelites, the fact must be recognized that some assimilation did occur, particularly in the sphere of religion, which for both peoples was intimately connected with the whole way of life. The relatively pure Yahweh worship which had been

established in the deserts began to be menaced by the fertility cultus of Canaanite Baalism. As Skinner puts it,

The danger of contamination from this impure religion was enhanced by the fact that the desert faith of Israel made no express provision for the devotional exercises suitable to the needs of an agricultural community.⁴⁶

This situation has an interesting parallel in the Islamic problem of modern Turkey, where the people say that Islam, a religion of the desert Arab, must be reformed before it can claim the whole-hearted allegiance of the now westernized Turk.

It must be pointed out, however, that two of the religious feasts were specifically agricultural: those of the first-fruits and the ingathering of harvest. The book of Deuteronomy abounds with promises of fertility for those who sought God with all their heart.

And if you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be full. Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you (Deut. 11:13-17).

According to Leviticus 26: 3-5, it is promised:

If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments to do them, then I will give you rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall last to

the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last to the time for sowing; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land securely.

The lack lay in an appropriate ritual at seed-time in the spring and during the growing season. Our modern American farmer, despite crop insurance, modern scientific progress, and multiple government aid programs, is fraught with fears of hail, drought, blight, pestilence, excessive rainfall, or fire which may destroy the fruits of an entire year's labor in sudden disaster. His nervous tension mounts until the crop is safely harvested. How much more understandable then is the desire of the primitive Israelite farmer to seek some charm or ritual, already proven successful by his neighbors, to ensure a rich harvest from his fields, the safe delivery of young for his livestock, and even the advent of sons to till his soil. If homage to Baal brings a fruitful year, when there are yet no visible signs of the increase, worship Baal.

Let us imagine a definite case. A Hebrew stakes out a claim in the hollow to the south of Bethel and begins to till the soil. He buys or steals his seed from a Canaanite neighbor, sows it by guess, and sits down to wait for the harvest. Somehow the harvest does not come; the grain turns yellow before it heads. He goes anxiously to his Canaanite friend, who asks him: "Did you make sacrifice to the Baal who owns the field and lives in the big tree at the end of it?" The Hebrew confesses that since he is a Jehovah-worshipper he did not. Whereupon he is told that he may expect no crops till he sacrifices to Baal. Not being rich enough to stand a second loss, he takes his friend's advice next season, allows the Canaanite to teach him the correct method of worship and incidentally to give him some valuable points on how and when to sow and how to take care of his field. Next harvest-time

there is a bumper crop. The Hebrew shows his joy by buying the Canaanite's daughter as a wife for his son, and by becoming a constant worshipper at the Baal-tree. Of course he worships Jehovah, too, for old time's sake; but he understands that the god whom it pays to cultivate, now that he has become a farmer, is Baal.⁴⁷

Out of the localization and assimilation process in the outlying communities, there came a slow but sure development of two religions in Israel. One was the cultus of Yahweh with its line of Zadokite priests and its single cult center, first at Shiloh and Shechem and later at Jerusalem. The other was the syncretistic religion of the largely agricultural localities and outlying cities. The nature religion of the Canaanites "held a strong fascination for the sensuous side of their [the Israelites'] Semitic nature."⁴⁸ It was focused in the worship of the Baals,

who were regarded as the bestowers of life, fertility, and increase within the limited sphere of influence which belonged to each.⁴⁹

All the attending evils of ritual prostitution and perversion accompanied the Baal worship. The local sanctuaries were frequently located on high places, and we later hear Jeremiah inveighing against the atrocities that were practised "on every high hill and under every green tree" (Jeremiah 2:20).

Truly the hills are a delusion, the orgies on the mountains.⁵⁰

At first Yahweh was not connected in the minds of the people with the everyday life of the communities, nor was he associated with the fertility of the land. On the contrary, he assumed the role of the

national God to be appealed to in times of national emergency or universal excitement. The Baals sufficed for the religion of everyday, a compartmentalization of religion not unlike that of modern America. But as the Israelites became more firmly established in the land, they began to think more and more of Yahweh as One who controlled the processes of fertility and productivity. Amos attributes these powers to the Lord in saying:

And I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to harvest.⁵¹

Skinner points out that this development had its good and bad effects for Yahwism. On the one hand, it brought the God of Israel into the arena of everyday life and had something of an elevating effect on the people through making the social and ethical standards of the national cult applicable to ordinary life. On the other, it had the effect of reducing Yahweh to the level of a fertility God, or nature deity, and enabled the association of many of the objectionable features of Canaanite religion with the worship of Yahweh, without appreciable distress to the conscience of the common worshipper.⁵² One thing that facilitated the coexistence and intermingling of the two religions was the common use of the same "high place" or shrine for the worship of both Yahweh and Baal.

Booth sees the alternations between Yahweh worship and reform, and Baal worship and religious degeneration, that characterized the reigns of the kings of Judah, as due to the existence of competing Baalist and Yahwist politico-religious parties:

Since the two parties, Baal and the Lord, were political as well as religious; and since there was always a majority party in power, a minority group awaiting its opportunity, and a great bulk of the people ready to swing either way, it is easy to see that two or three years of bad crops would bring the charge that the wrong god was being worshipped.⁵³

Even if this is somewhat oversimplified, it may well be that the existence of these parties suggests a partial explanation for the sudden alternations of official religious policy of successive Judean regnal periods.

Recent scholarly findings maintain that the so-called "canonical" prophets were functionaries of the cult, and worked together with the priests at the sanctuary.⁵⁴ This cannot be said of a Jeremiah or an Amos, as is obvious from their writings. Even Huldah, when sent for by Josiah, was not living near the Temple but in a newer part of Jerusalem (II Kings 22:12-15). Most canonical prophets do not seem to have been active members of the "prophetic party" of which the scholars speak. They were called forth by God as individuals and ordered to speak God's Word to their times. In all probability Rowley's assessment of the nature of the prophetic ministry is close to the truth:

The prophet claimed to be the mouthpiece of God, and his utterance was commonly introduced by the words 'Thus saith Jehovah' or terminated with the words 'Oracle of Jehovah'. That there were varieties of prophets in Israel is quite certain. Not all lived in groups. Some were consulted in their own home, and some were found in the shrines. Some were attached to the court, either singly or in groups; and again some were found, both singly and in

groups, exercising their function along the public roads. We find inner conflicts amongst the prophets, with mutual recriminations, each side calling the other false prophets. It is quite impossible to find any neat principles of distinction, or any rule of thumb, whereby we can distinguish the true from the false prophet. It is probable that all alike claimed to utter the word of God, and the same formulae probably marked their oracles. But not all proclaimed a message of equally enduring value for men, and the truth of the prophecy lay in the measure of its accord with the spirit of God. The uniqueness of Israel's prophecy lay in the unique spiritual quality of the message that so many of her prophets delivered, through forms and outer behavior that differed so little from those of her neighbors.⁵⁵

Manasseh's crimes drew vigorous opposition from the prophetic party especially when the practice of child sacrifice became more and more widespread. (Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; Micah 6:7). The wicked king of Judah met this opposition with violence: "Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (II Kings 21:16). The common assumption is that much of the "innocent blood" he spilled was the blood of prophets. At any rate the voice of prophecy was stilled; but only temporarily. God was still "watching over His Word to perform it," and it was not long before new prophets were called out to take the places of the fallen. Amos had pointed out that:

The Lord God does nothing, without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets.⁵⁶

As Skinner points out, it was

Precisely the situation [the fall of the Assyrian Empire and the beginning of Josiah's reign] in which the God Who doeth nothing without revealing His

secret to His servants the prophets was wont to raise up a prophet in Israel.⁵⁷

Among these new prophetic voices were those of Zephaniah, Nahum, and Jeremiah. Yahweh was continually watching over his word to perform it as though he intended to have the last word.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good.⁵⁸

Josiah assumed the responsibilities of his kingship in a troubled era. Finding himself between the political machinations and fortunes of Egypt and Assyria, he must consider well the alliances made by his fathers and also weigh the spiritual implications. Assyrian vassalage had brought Assyrian religion with it to Judah; but the power of Nineveh was on the wane, suffering from the invasion of the Scythians, the resurgence of Egypt, and the Medo-Babylonian alliance.

The nation itself was divided into religious factions those for Baal and those for the Lord: even Yahwistic worship was corrupt and the book of the Law no longer remembered. Josiah's forceful reign ended the political and spiritual vacillations of his forefathers, the syncretistic "Baal and Yahweh" worship. He would shake off the yoke of Assyria and all its entanglements and would lead his people in a national back-to-God movement.

NOTES: INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

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33. Bright, op. cit., p. 293.
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35. Bright, op. cit., p. 294-295.
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44. Ibid., p. 146.
45. I Chronicles 2:9; I Samuel 15:6; I Chronicles 4:13-14.
46. Skinner, op. cit., p. 59.
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48. Skinner, op. cit., p. 59.
49. Ibid.
50. Jeremiah 3:23.
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CHAPTER TWO

THE MEN INVOLVED: PROPHET AND KING

A. The Man Josiah - The King II Kings 22:1-2, 3-7; II Chronicles 34:1-7

Two rather worn-out platitudes may be used together to introduce the subject of King Josiah's early regnal years and the influences which made him a different sort of man from his father and grandfather. One of these is the saying that "an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a man." The other is something to the effect that behind every great man there stands a woman with whose presence there must be reckoning if the man's life is to be understood. These two platitudes, worn-out as they are, may go far in explaining the surprising entry of good King Josiah on the stage of Israel's history. The institution which concerns us - the Reformation, was essentially of Josiah's making. When he died, it lost its direction and vigor. But the real question is: "What made Josiah what he was?" What explanation is there for the sudden change from a policy favoring the Baalists, Baalism, and submission to Assyrian vassalage including worship of the "hosts of heaven",¹ to Yahwism and spiritual and political independence? We have spoken of some of the external historical, political, and religious elements; but what environmental

factors made Josiah the man he was?

Bright dates Josiah's regnal years as 640-609.² As we know from II Kings 22:1, he was "eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem." If Bright is correct, and he has much support, Josiah's birth would have been in 648 B.C.; but Gray maintains that Josiah came to the throne in 639 B.C. without an accession year:

We have calculated that Manasseh died in 641. Hence either Amon or Josiah acceded without an accession year. In the circumstances of the death of Amon Josiah was probably elevated immediately in 639.³

Gray seems to have a point; and if he is right, this would put Josiah's birth somewhere in the year 647/646 B.C.

In spite of the importance of Josiah's reign, we know very little about his early years and the influences that helped shape his character. Cornill well expresses the plight of the historian at this point when he says:

Josiah, from all that we know of him, must have been a good and noble character, who took his duties as regent seriously, ruled with justice and mildness, and was a father to his subjects. His contemporary, the prophet Jeremiah, bears the best of testimony for him, and the book of Kings praises him as a second David; but unfortunately we have no details regarding his reign.⁴

That there were good influences brought to bear on his first eight years of life is obvious. The two most easily deduced from piecing together the various biblical sources are the influence of

his mother and the tutorship and guidance of his teachers and regents. On the surface the typical introduction of II Kings 22:1-2 tells us little or nothing more of his mother than the regnal introductions of other of Judah's monarchs such as those of Josiah's father Amon (21:19), and his son Jehoahaz (23:31). Rawlinson suggests that Josiah's mother is "mentioned with some particularity . . . as if she was a person of importance,"⁵ but this does not appear to be the case when 22:1 is compared with the other regnal introductions. What little we can say of her must be by implication. Her name was "Jedidah", meaning "Beloved," and she was a daughter of Adaiiah of Bozkath. Adaiiah, Josiah's maternal grandfather, was undoubtedly a Hebrew, perhaps of a family of Yahwists, because his name meant "Yahweh has adorned himself."⁶ Bozkath is mentioned in Joshua 15:39 as lying between Lachish and Eglon, on the border of the Philistine plain. Rawlinson calls it a "Judean town,"⁷ but Gray thinks it may have been Gath itself and therefore a Philistine border town which occasionally fell into Judean hands.⁸ The trouble with Gray's theory is that Gath was conquered by Sargon II in the campaign of 711 B.C. and afterwards is not mentioned in the history of the Scriptures. It is notably absent from the prophetic listings of Philistine towns and cities.⁹ In all probability Bozkath was a Judean town, and the family of Jedidah a clan of pious Yahweh worshippers. But this is conjecture. All we can say of the queen mother is that according to Jewish custom she had charge of her son's up-bringing during most of those first

eight years; and that probably the power and warmth of her own pious character and devotion to Yahweh were early communicated to Josiah.

We may perhaps ascribe to her careful training and pious zeal the decidedly religious bent of Josiah's character, which began to show itself in the eighth year of his reign, when he was no more than sixteen.¹⁰

Pere de Vaux mentions the function of the g^ēbirā, "The Great Lady", usually the Queen Mother who was an official of the court,¹¹ which accounts for their frequently being mentioned in the regnal introductions. He adds a significant point:

It was the mother who gave her children the first rudiments of education, especially of their moral formation (Pr. 1:8, 6:20). She might continue to advise her children even in adolescence (cf. Pr. 31:1), but as the boys grew up to manhood, they were usually entrusted to their father. One of his most sacred duties was to teach his son the truths of religion (Ex. 10:2; 12:26; 13:8 etc.).¹²

Fortunately for Josiah, Amon, his very ungodly father, died before he could exert much of this kind of influence upon him. Therefore, his mother's influence probably continued to be felt longer than was usual in the lives of the kings of Judah.

In addition to the queen mothers, royal Judean children were reared by nurses (II Kings 11:2) and later were entrusted to tutors who were "chosen from the leading men of the city" (II Kings 10:1, 6f., cf. I Chron. 27:32).¹³ These tutors, together with the "regents", who may have helped Josiah through the first years of his youthful reign, were probably influential in shaping the pattern of Josiah's thinking and behavior. It seems likely that his tutors and regents were also pious

men, members of the Yahwist faction.

With the ascent of young Josiah to the throne, the regency was once again influential as in the times of his grandfather Manasses. Only this time the regency - servants, teachers, ministers - was of a different character, and demonstrated its Yahwistic spirit by instilling Yahwistic principles in the eight-year-old monarch.¹⁴

The King's account indicates that Josiah knew the people working on the temple very well, knowing their honesty to the point that he was able to entrust the money for restoration of the building to them without demanding an accounting (II Kings 22:7). The fact that there was a contemporary revival of the prophetic movement, as shown by the ministries of Jeremiah, and Zephaniah among others, indicates a favorable attitude toward true religion on the part of the officialdom of Josiah's early years. It has been pointed out by Edersheim that up to Josiah's time the "brightest memories" of the annals of Judean royalty dated from the reigns of David, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Uzziah, and Hezekiah; and that his regents and tutors would have had little difficulty in showing Josiah that, in contrast to the evil reigns of Manasseh and his own father, "the times of greatest national prosperity had been those of faithful and earnest allegiance to Jehovah and his service."¹⁵

Finally, as we shall see, the men who were instrumental in initiating the reforms, such as the high priest Hilkiah, and others, were obviously close to Josiah (II Kings 22:3-4). Various references to this inner circle of Josiah's counselors and friends show them to

be men of great devotion to the Lord and to his worship. (II Kings 22:12,14; 23:4; II Chr. 34:8, 20, 22.). It is noteworthy that his kinsman, Zephaniah, carried on an active prophetic ministry in Jerusalem during Josiah's reign.

In addition to the usual citation of the prophet's father (Cushi), his ancestry is traced back four generations: his fourth ancestor, Hezekiah, must have been the king of this name. Thus he was a distant relative of Josiah. He lived in Jerusalem (cf. Zeph. 1:4) and prophesied there.¹⁶

The influence of such a cousin would have been almost inescapable.

The only other fact that is apparent from the primary sources concerning the early years, apart from the initiation of steps toward political independence and religious reform, is Josiah's very youthful marriage. We learn from II Kings 23:36 that Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he acceded to the throne of his father Josiah, which must mean that Josiah was about fourteen years old when he was married. There was nothing unusual about such youthful marriages:

The first duty of a Semite is to perpetuate his name in posterity, the more so if he is of the royal line.¹⁷

All of this indicates, by inference and deduction, something of an explanation of the often-labeled "Deuteronomic" and obviously stylized commendation of Josiah found in II Kings 22:2:

And he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

B. The Man Jeremiah - The Prophet

As in Josiah's case the first years of Jeremiah's life are hidden in the shadows of obscurity. The exact date of his birth is not known though it seems likely that he was born about 650 B.C. in the latter years of Manasseh's reign.¹⁸ We are told that God's Word came to Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiyah, a priest of Anathoth, in the thirteenth regnal year of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:1-2). This call to the prophetic ministry occurred in the year 626 B.C., seven years after the death of Assurbanipal, and therefore in the heart of the period of Assyria's rapid decline.¹⁹ Josiah would have been about twenty-four at the time.

The opening words of the prophecy suggest that the prophet's father Hilkiyah was of the line of priests who dwelt at Anathoth (Jeremiah 1:1). This may well mean that he was a descendent of Abiathar, the priest who had been deposed by Solomon and banished to Anathoth because he had supported Adonijah's claim to the throne of David (I Kings 2:26).²⁰ Jeremiah himself is referred to as a priest in the writings of some scholars, but, as Rowley points out there is no direct evidence in Jeremiah 1:1 that Hilkiyah was actually of Abiathar's line.²¹ He says further:

There is certainly no evidence that Jeremiah ever exercised the priesthood, and it is generally believed that though he belonged to a priestly family he did not do so. That his whole attitude to religion was prophetic rather than priestly is agreed, but this does not prove that he did not belong to a priestly family.²²

If, as Rowley argues against Meek, Jeremiah was not of a priestly line, the anger of his kinsmen over his support of centralized worship, which included the suppression of the shrine at Anathoth, would be difficult to explain.²³ Living in a priestly home meant for Jeremiah a heritage of religious teaching and nurture as well as pious example. Skinner points out that if the theory of Hilkiah's descent from Abiathar is true, no Judean family would have had closer connections with the national religion and none would have been more apt to preserve the best of the old Yahwism:

And nowhere would the best traditions and the purest ethos of the religion of Yahweh be likely to find a surer repository than in a household whose forebears had for so many generations guarded the most sacred symbol of its imageless worship, the ark of God.²⁴

The influences of Jeremiah's home environment are patent in his writings. His early prophecies indicate familiarity with the Temple at Jerusalem (7:1 ff.) as well as with the whole cultic life of the outlying cult centers (Jeremiah 2:20; 3:6,13:). He knew the sacrificial system of the Jerusalem worship (7:21-23), and the work of the "cultic" prophets (chapter 23) and their alliances with the false priests of the outlying centers (23:11). Other, not so apparent religious practices such as fasting and divination (Jeremiah 14:12-14) also came under his scrutiny. When the false prophets spoke he detected their want of divine authority and addressed himself to their hypocrisy (14:14-16). Moreover, when Josiah's reform had begun to show evidences of merely attending to the "outside of the cup" while

leaving the dirty interior untouched Jeremiah called for new understanding of God's covenantal relationship with his people (31:31-34; 14:21). All these things were close to the surface of Jeremiah's prophetic consciousness.

Divine inspiration came to Jeremiah as a genuine prophet of God, but the Spirit of God also used the insights and abilities of discrimination and knowledge that the prophet already possessed whether innately or through environmental factors. Certainly it can be said that the spiritual environment of Jeremiah's home helped shape his prophetic character immeasurably. John D. W. Watts says:

If Hilkiyah was actually a representative of the old priesthood of Eli from Shiloh, Jeremiah was heir to an older and more authentic tradition of Israel's early life than the priests of Jerusalem themselves. It is no wonder the traditions of Moses and the desert covenant with Israel, as well as the inflexible moral demands of her holy God, should have been planted deep in the impressionable young mind.²⁵

Jeremiah remained bound to Anathoth through much of his adult life, through his family inheritance (32:6 ff), and perhaps more so through personal preference for its pastoral beauty and quiet setting.

Therefore, not only were the hereditary factors and home environment important to his development but also the locale of Anathoth itself. The village was located about four miles northeast of Jerusalem (Isaiah 10:30), undoubtedly near the site of the Modern Arab village of Anata.²⁶ It was a Benjamite settlement, lying on the fringes of the mainstream of Judean life, yet close enough to the boundary between

the north (Israel) and the south (Judah-Benjamin) that its people were linked with the life and religious traditions of both areas. It was far enough from Jerusalem to be rural and to "preserve the calm of country life" and yet close enough so that Jeremiah could observe the movements of troops and caravans as they passed in and out of the city.²⁷ Moreover, the whispers of gossip and rumor that emanated from the capital city were not lost to the ears of the inhabitants of a village so close at hand.

The village itself was situated on a rock escarpment, the first of a series of such, which follow the Central Ridge's decline into the Jordan Valley. Between these rock shelves and the Jordan Valley intervenes the so-called "Wilderness of Benjamin", many of whose jagged hilltops were visible from Anathoth. Therefore Anathoth's exposure is to the east across barren rock and desert toward the distant Jordan. Its immediate surroundings were open landscape essentially arid and composed of hard stony soil, a breeding ground for thorns and thistles - but little else²⁸ Pictures of the modern town of Anata indicate occasional vineyards and olive groves, but shepherding was and is its chief means of livelihood. The descent toward the Jordan Trench offers "no shelter against the hot east winds"²⁹, and Jeremiah's poetry reflects the profound impression made upon his youthful mind by the unpleasant effects of those sirocco winds (4:11-13; 51:1).

Georga Adam Smith portrays Anathoth and its environs as a land where sheep frequently wandered off in search of better pasture, and

where hungry wolves from the wastes to the east and lions from the jungle of the Jordan were not unknown, especially to the wandering shepherds. "The waste and crumbling hills shimmering in the heat of the summer"³⁰ were in turn "drenched by the cold northern rains that sweep the bleak uplands" during the winter months.³¹

It was a nursery not unfit for one, who might have been,
(as many think) the greatest poet of his people.³²

Jeremiah's direct encounter with God in nature tended to produce in him an immunity to the pomp and glitter of mere external ritual. Not all the pageantry of the Temple worship nor all its fanfare could blind the spiritual eyes of the country lad from Anathoth.

The influences of the natural surroundings of this rugged country and of the lives of its rustic people are visible in the poetic imagery of Jeremiah and are reflected by his own sensitive nature. He was a man "awake to what was going on in the world of nature and in the world of men. His graceful and powerful lyrics are heavily laden with imagery of the natural history of these uplands. It was a peasant people whom he addressed for the most part; and he chose a folk-lore milieu with which to address them:

It was natural for a rural priest, such as he, aiming at the heart of what was mainly a nation of peasants to use the form or forms of folk-song most familiar to them - in fact the only literary form with which they were familiar.³³

Obviously many things could be said about the character of Jeremiah and the forces that shaped its development. Here a limit must

be set in terms of those factors which best illumine the reactions and responses of Jeremiah to the reformation movement and its results. Therefore something should be said about the influence of the prophetic movement on the early years of Jeremiah. The influence of Hosea upon him is especially evident; but he was probably familiar also with the lives and oracles of Amos, Micah, and "Isaiah of Jerusalem", not to mention his contemporary, the prophet Zephaniah. He was surely imbued with the spirit of the moving narratives of such prophetic heroes as Elijah and Elisha, among others. Jeremiah's early utterances are full of allusions to Israel's unfaithfulness to God, which he likens to adultery or harlotry, Hosea's favorite mode of expression for the twin evils of apostacy and idolatry (2:20, 25, 33ff; 3:1-5, 6-11, 20-21; 5:7-9 etc. Cf. Hosea 1:2; 2:2-15 etc.). Skinner has an excellent comparison of the two prophets showing the profound impression Hosea's teachings made on Jeremiah, but also pointing out the similarities of personality and character:

In Hosea he found not only a teacher, but a spirit kindred to his own. Both were men of exceptionally tender and emotional temperament, sympathizing intensely with the people on which they were constrained to pour out the vials of divine judgment; possibly both were of priestly descent, though neither attached the smallest value to the ceremonial side of the priest's functions. There was an ancestral bond between them inasmuch as Hosea was a native of North Israel from which he shows so lively an interest. It was from Hosea that the younger prophet received the religious interpretation of Israel's history which was the framework in which his own message was to be set.³⁴

From this we gain an understanding of what it cost Jeremiah in terms

of emotional pain to support the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem at the reform's outset, when his sympathies were with the rural peoples. By inheritance and background Jeramiah's feelings were oriented toward the North, where much of the attack on the outlying cult centers took place. This is not to say, as we shall see, that Jeramiah was not jealous for a pure worship of Yahweh; but he could sympathize with people for whom perplexity and upset naturally followed the removal of shrines long a part of their own heritage. Still later, when the reform failed to produce little more than a shift of location for a still impure cultus, an appreciation of Jeremiah's agony of soul is more readily grasped. Having opposed his own people and their religion to support the reform, he found that the reform in turn had betrayed him. As Skinner well says of Hosea and Jeremiah, "These are the two martyr prophets of the Old Testament".³⁵

The date of Jeremiah's call is important to the discussion of his reaction to the reforms. As has been pointed out already, it has been set commonly ca. 626 B.C. on the basis of the text of Jeremiah 1:2:

To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

This was five years before the initiation of the reforms that grew out of the discovery of the law book in the Temple. A recent monograph by C. F. Whitely denies the commonly accepted date of ca. 626 B.C. for Jeremiah's

call, casts doubt on the authenticity of Jeremiah 1:2, and expresses uncertainty as to whether Jeremiah was active at any time during the reign of Josiah.³⁶ In fact, Whitely is quite sure that there is no evidence to establish the call of Jeremiah earlier than the reign of Jehoiakim. He maintains that the prophet did not begin his ministry until after the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.³⁷ Much of his argument is based on the observation that after Jeremiah 1:2 there is no dated material until chapter twenty-five, cited in the text as from the reign of Jehoiakim. Whitely's dating of the "Temple Sermon" in the months following Carchemish is a "probable";³⁸ and he cites no evidence for his assertion that the Temple Sermon was one of Jeremiah's earliest utterances, coming shortly after the call of the prophet. Neither does there seem to be much weight of proof for Whitely's theory that Jeremiah's call was in 605 B.C. He says further:

Apart from the opening paragraph of the book we have no precisely dated material 'til Chapter XXV. There we read that 'in the fourth year of Jehoiakim . . . the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the word of Yahweh came of Jeremiah.³⁹

Evidently he accepts this introduction as genuine but rejects the Jeremiaic authorship of the similar statement in 1:2. His only evidence is support from F. Horst and H. G. May; but this does not constitute proof. The material from chapters 1-24 is for him evidently part of the series of additions tacked on when Baruch rewrote the prophecies that had been burned by Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:32).

Nor is there any material in chapters i-xxiv which can

be regarded as pertaining to events prior to 605 B.C.⁴⁰

He points out that "Babylon" would have to be substituted for "Assyria" in Jeremiah 2:18 but says that "Assyria" was often applied to Babylon in the post-exilic age.⁴¹ This seems a begging of the question.

Although the scroll burned by Jehoiakim may have contained political implications and forecasts relative to the Babylonian conquest, little weight is lent to the argument that all of chapters 1 to 24 are post-Josianic. Because Jeremiah had been barred from the Temple when Baruch read the message of the first scroll, it does not necessarily follow that the Temple Sermon had just been preached, or that it was one of Jeremiah's first oracles. The Temple Sermon, as we shall see, was doubtless preached in Jehoiakim's reign; but to link it with the period immediately following the call of Jeremiah involves the whole problem of the extent to which his support of the reform movement and cult centralization is reflected in the earlier utterances. He could not have preached the Temple Sermon until he had become thoroughly disillusioned with the direction the reform movement was taking. Little by little the Jerusalem shrine took on the character of a fetish so that its very presence was thought to bring security and blessing. But all this took time.

We believe the date of Jeremiah's call to be ca. 626 B.C. on the basis of the statement of Jeremiah 1:2. There seems to be little reason for rejecting the genuineness of this date and accepting that of chapter 25. A telling point against Whitely's thesis is the word

of Jeremiah himself in chapter 25:3:

For twenty three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, the work of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken to you, but you have not listened.

It is our conclusion, then, that when first the Lord spoke to Jeremiah, calling him to a life of prophetic ministry, Jeremiah was a young man, probably in his early twenties. In his own mind he was too young to be an effective mouth piece for God:

Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.⁴²

The Lord's answer to Jeremiah's objection is reminiscent of his answer to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3 and 4). No more than Yahweh expected Moses to be able to appeal to Pharaoh by mere human powers of persuasion did he expect Jeremiah to prophesy on his own initiative. The concept of the presence of God with his man is crucial for an understanding of the role of Jeremiah and is of special importance to this study. Yahweh is to be "Immanuel" for Jeremiah as well as for Moses:

Do not say, 'I am only a youth', for to all whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak. Be not afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you says the Lord.⁴³

As Immanuel Yahweh communicates His own powers to the prophet. The prophet's words are his words, as indicated by the touch of God on the mouth of the prophet: "Behold I have put my words in your mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9). "Touched" is in the hiphil (Isaiah 6:7), which stresses the "purposiveness and deliberateness" of God's act (Laetsch).⁴⁴

Here "caused it to touch" has the object of inspiring Jeremiah, as opposed to the touch of Isaiah's lips with the coal of purification.⁴⁵ As if this much of the vision were not enough to calm Jeremiah's fears concerning his own inadequacy, God gives him a sign or visual parable of divine power and of the communication of that power through Jeremiah:

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, "I see a rod of almond". Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it".⁴⁶

While it is true that the almond tree was called the "early awake tree" by the Hebrews because it was a harbinger of spring, the first tree to bloom after winter and therefore a sign of things to come,⁴⁷ the sign Jeremiah was given was not a living tree but a rod of almond. There is, therefore, dual symbolism in this parable object: the first indicated by the play on words, the second by the meaning of the rod. The play on the words "almond tree" יִדְּוֹ, (šōqēd) and "I watch" יִדְּוֹ, (šōqēd) has been universally noted. As the almond tree is a sign of awakening life, so Jeremiah is to know that God is awake and watching over His word to see that it is effective, creative, accomplishing his purposes so that it never is void of returns.

The Hebrew used here (shâkêd) is not the ordinary word for almond tree, but a poetical expression, meaning that which is awakening, and referring to the blossoming of this tree while the others are still in their winter sleep. 'I watch over' v. 6; 31:28; xlv:27. Here the passage is, The Lord is rousing Himself. The period of trial is rapidly approaching its end, and the punishment so long delayed is about to be at last inflicted.⁴⁸

Pearl Stone Wood argues effectively that the prophet's vision is of a rod.⁴⁹ Leslie, who views the almond as a "blossoming sprig", answers:

The view of Pearl Stone Wood . . . that the almond rod symbolizes the judgment of God, and that 'watch' (here rendered 'awake') is used in the sense of foreboding evil, as of a leopard watching against their cities, misses the reality of the divine empowerment of the prophet for his prophetic ministry, which is the center of attention here.

Nevertheless, we feel that the almond rod here is a rod, the sign of judgment and power. Through this symbolic object God promises that the authority of Jeremiah's prophetic word to "pluck up and break down" or to "build and to plant" will be established (v. 10). If he prophesies judgment, judgment will follow; if pardon then pardon and restoration. The word is not Jeremiah's, but God's word in Jeremiah's mouth.(v. 9).

Here God, far from promising a better day ahead for Judah, is warning that he will not put up with the sin and idolatry of Judah forever. "God's word was waking up, and he was watching over it 'to perform it'".

Throughout this study of the reform of Josiah and the reactions of Jeremiah to the reform, these words shall be in our minds. God's word through the true prophet cannot fall to the ground. God is always awake to what is going on in his world. He overlooks nothing, forgets nothing, and in his time the prophetic word bears its fruit or metes out its judgment. God's performance of his word is as sure

as the fact that the word is God's to begin with:

As it was the Lord who had caused Jeremiah to see the almond branch, so it was the Lord who interpreted this vision to the prophet. 'I will hasten', literally, waking am I; watchfully ready. That is characteristic of me, I watch over my word to do it, to fulfill it. The Lord expressly assures Jeremiah of this fact by a special vision in order to give the prophet that unflinching courage which only divinely engendered certainty of the truthfulness and unfailing fulfillment of one's proclamation can create. No preacher should ever forget that he is the messenger of Him who watches over His Word; who will suffer no promises to fall to the ground, who will with equal wakefulness watch over the fulfillment of His threats.⁵¹

The two young men in the wings stand in readiness as the drama of reform begins. The king steps forward expectantly, surrounded by a strong supporting cast of pious Yahwists, his court, eager to perform all that is written in the book of the law. The other, the rural prophet, stands rejected by his kinsmen, alone, comforted only by God's promise of his presence and the certainty that the oracles which are given him will surely be fulfilled.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

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16. T. M. Mauch, "Zephaniah", The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol, IV (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 950.
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22. Ibid., p. 139.
23. Ibid., p. 140.
24. Skinner, op. cit., p. 19
25. John D. W. Watts, "Jeremiah - a Character Study", Review and Expositor, Vol. LVIII (1961), pp. 428-429.
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28. Smith, op. cit., p. 68
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid. p. 70
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 44.

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35. Ibid.
36. C. F. Whitely, "The Date of Jeremiah's Call", Vetus Testamentum, Vol. XIV, No. 4, (October, 1964), pp. 467-483.
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38. Ibid., pp. 468-469.
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CHAPTER THREE

THE REFORMATION OF KING JOSIAH II Kings 22:8 ff. II Chronicles 34:8-35:19

A. The Chronology of the Reforms

Of the early years of King Josiah's reign, the years preceding the repair of the Temple (II Kings 22:3-7), and the discovery of the Law book (II Kings 22:8 ff), we know comparatively little. The account of II Kings 22-23 says nothing of them beyond what is given in the typically formal introduction to his reign (II Kings 22:1-2). If we take the passages as they stand in the present texts of II Kings and II Chronicles, the Chronicler may receive credit for describing some of the activities of the reign prior to Josiah's eighteenth regnal year (II Chronicles 34:3-7), though there is no general agreement among the scholars concerning the chronological problem here. Some have stumbled over the relationship of II Chronicles 34:3-7, as we have it in our versions, to II Kings 22-23.¹ Gray, for example, observes that II Chronicle 34:3 assigns the Josianic campaign against the fertility cult in Jerusalem to the twelfth regnal year (628 B.C.), which he agrees is possible except for the fact that the iconoclasm in "Ephraim and Manasseh" at that time is unlikely in view of II Kings 23:8 "which limits Josiah's initial activity to 'from Geba to

Beersheba'." ² Gray does applaud the Chronicler for preserving the picture of the reform as proceeding in stages, 628 B.C. and 622 B.C., and perhaps in other stages beyond these.³

There have been other attempts at reconciliation of the Kings and Chronicles passages. One suggests that II Kings describes the consummation of reform begun in an earlier period while the Chronicler describes in general terms the entire reform without concern for chronology. ⁴ Barnes avers that the order in II Kings is correct: the repair of the Temple, finding the Law, and renewal of the Covenant preceding the iconoclastic reforms, so that II Chronicles 34:3-7 must contain a number of insertions and transcriptional errors.⁵ Ernest Bertheau, writing in the Keil series of Commentaries, maintains that a strict chronology is not to be found in either passage; and he sees no reason why the more detailed descriptions of II Kings 23:4-20 may not contain references to events that occurred before the eighteenth regnal year of Josiah.⁶

It is obvious that there is no scholarly unanimity concerning this chronology, and the problem of reconciling II Kings 23:4-20 and II Chronicles 34:3-7 remains. Why then should we not propose another alternative and, without being unduly dogmatic about it, find an acceptable chronology, as Edersheim does, in the order of the accounts as we now have them?⁷ If the Kings passage was written or compiled by a member or members of a Deuteronomic school, it is not unreasonable to assume that its focus would be on the aspects of reform that arose

out of the finding of the Law book in the Temple, especially if that book were in whole or part related to the book of Deuteronomy. On the other hand, it would seem natural that the Chronicler, having an interest in the general scope of Israel's history, would include an account of the preliminary iconoclastic activities of Josiah mentioned in 34:3-7. A reading of Welch's account of the problem of reconciliation suggests, beyond a doubt, that the writers or compilers of the two books emphasized the events and relationships between events which most interested them or were most congenial to their ways of thinking.⁸

Such a reconciliation as we here propose assumes that II Chronicles 34:3-7 is, by and large, concerned with preliminary reforms begun in Josiah's twelfth regnal year; and II Kings 23:4-20 with the reformation efforts that followed the discovery of the Law and renewal of the Covenant (II Kings 22:8 - 23:3). The passages could then be arranged in the following manner:

I. The Early Efforts of Josiah

II Chronicles 34:1-7; II Kings 22:1-2

A. The Typical Regnal Introduction

II Kings 22:1-2; II Chronicles 34:1-2

B. The Preliminary Iconoclasm

II Chronicles 34:3-7 (Eighth regnal year and twelfth regnal year)

II. The Repair of the Temple and Discovery of the Law

II Kings 22:3-20 II Chronicles 34:8-28

- A. The Command to Initiate Temple Repair
(Eighteenth regnal year)
II Kings 22:3-7 (v. 7 belongs to the phase of actual work)
 - B. The Repair of the Temple Described
II Chronicles 34:8-13
 - C. The Discovery of the Law Book
II Kings 22:8-13; II Chronicles 34:14-20
 - D. The Envoys Sent to HulDAH
II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:19-28
 - E. The Reaffirmation of the Covenant
II Kings 23:1-3; II Chronicles 34:29-32
- III. The Deuteronomic Reform
II Kings 23:3-27; II Chronicles 34:33; 35:1-19
- A. The Reformation of Worship
II Kings 23:4-20 (eighteenth year); II Chronicles 34:33
 - B. The Reinstitution of the Passover
(Eighteenth regnal year)
II Kings 23:21-23; II Chronicles 35:1-19
 - C. The Results of the Reform
II Kings 23:28-30; II Chronicles 35:20-27

Such a scheme seems to account for the various phases of the history and also for the variant interests of the authors, but it needs defense. The following words of Edersheim show his essential acceptance of this approach to the chronology as a possible and workable solution:

First and foremost in this reign stand the measures of religious reformation inaugurated by Josiah. These comprise the preliminary abolition of idolatry; the repair of the Temple, the discovery in it of the book of the Law, the consequent national reformation by the king; and, lastly, the solemn national observance of the Passover. We have stated the events in the order of their time, as given in the Book of Kings, from which the arrangement in the Book of Chronicles differs only in appearance. Each of these two accounts relates with different circumstantiality, one or other of the events mentioned - in each case in accordance with the different view-point of the writers to which reference has frequently been made. . . . The account both in the Book of Kings and in Chronicles places the Temple restoration 'in the eighteenth year of King Josiah'. But in the former the record of the religious reformation begins with this event, while the Chronicler prefaces it with a very brief summary of what had previously been done for the abolition of idolatry (II Chron. 34:3-7). That something of this kind must have preceded the restoration of the Temple seems evident. It cannot be supposed that a monarch like Josiah should for seventeen years have tolerated all that Amon had introduced, and then in his eighteenth year, suddenly proceeded to the sweeping measures which alike the writers of Kings and Chronicles narrate.⁹

Edersheim makes a strong point here. Josiah could not have made such a radical break with the ways of Manasseh and Amon had he not begun to think and act reform until his eighteenth regnal year (Cf. II Chron. 34:3). F. F. Bruce also agrees with this chronology.

Even before this date [c. 621 B.C.], he had begun to purify his kingdom of the idolatrous installations which marred it. In Jerusalem particularly he cleansed the temple of all the apparatus of sun-worship and other planetary cults which had been established there during the long period of Assyrian domination when his grand father Manasseh was king.¹⁰

Dentan declares:

In Chronicles, the king had already begun to manifest

unusual piety in his eight year, and in his twelfth year had initiated a thorough going reformation (vv. 3-7) which finally culminated in the renovation of the Temple (vv. 8-13) and the discovery of the book of the Law (vv. 14-21). The finding of the book was not, therefore, the cause of the reformation (as in Kings) but only incidental to it.¹¹

Donald W. B. Robinson in a monograph entitled Josiah's Reform and the Book of the Law, (1951), presents a carefully worked out defense of his thesis that all the activity of reform mentioned in both II Kings 23:5-20 and II Chronicles 34:3-7 took place before the discovery of the Law in the Temple (621 B.C.)¹² Without going into a detailed analysis of his study, it can be said that certain of his supporting evidence also lends weight to the theory advanced here as to the reconciliation of the materials of these two passages. For instance, Robinson argues strongly that rather than the impetus for the reforms coming from the discovery of the Law book, it came from the prophetic ministries of such men as Zephaniah and Jeremiah (who were contemporaries of Josiah in his view and ours), coupled with such other external influences as the pressures exerted by the marauding Scythians, and the decline of the Assyrian powers.¹³ The influences of the prophetic activities of Zephaniah and Jeremiah cannot be ignored here and must be viewed as having a significant effect on the early life of Josiah as well as on the members of the Yahwistic party who may well have been numbered among his regents and advisors.¹⁴ The teachings of these prophets may very well have had direct relationship to the activities of what we are calling the "preliminary

iconoclasm" of II Chronicles 34:3-7. Robinson's interesting comparison of various passages from Zephaniah and Jeremiah with the text of II Kings 23¹⁵ does not prove conclusively a direct relationship between them. Only in the comparison of Zephaniah 1:4-5 with II Kings 23:5, where the three abuses of Baal worship, the worship of the host of heaven, and the employment of the idolatrous priests, the Chemarim, are mentioned together, is there strong evidence of the impact of the prophetic word on the reform activity.¹⁶ It is significant that before 621 B. C. Zephaniah condemned these three abuses and others. But even this comparison is not conclusive evidence to prove his point. What is most significant is that the total weight of these comparisons:

Zephaniah 2:9,11	with II Kings 23:13
Jeremiah 2:28	with II Kings 23:8
Jeremiah 2:20; 3:2	with II Kings 23:8
Jeremiah 1:16	with II Kings 23:14
Jeremiah 3:9	with II Kings 23:14
Jeremiah 7:30,31	with II Kings 23:6,7,12
Jeremiah 7:30,31	with II Kings 23:10

show that the impact of the prophetic teaching is reflected in the activities of the reform. This may be as true of those mentioned in II Chronicles 34:3-7 as of those in II Kings 23 and perhaps more so. The conclusion of Robinson, while we do not agree with his theory that II Kings 23 is pre-621, also helps our chronology and reconciliation:

Since, therefore, all the reforms of II Kings 23:5-20

are found to be reflected in the pre-621 utterances of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, sometimes with quite remarkable verbal correspondence, is it possible to avoid the conclusion that the reformation of Josiah actually began in the twelfth year of the reign, as the Chronicler states, and that the king was influenced by the preaching of these two prophets.¹⁷

We think not! Robinson's findings then help us to understand something of the extent to which the prophetic word became a significant element in the whole complex of forces and influences which moved the sixteen year old Josiah to begin "seeking after the God of David" (II Chron. 34:3).

Though II Chronicles 34:3-7 is a briefly worded resume of the earlier reform activity, it also reflects the cleaning up of many of the same evils to which these prophets addressed themselves. We shall attempt to show as we study this passage that the parallels between it and II Kings 23:4-20 are not close enough to prove conclusively that both speak of the same post Law book reforms. There is some internal evidence to support our contention that they speak of different periods of reform on either side of the book's discovery. While elements of the different phases of the reform are similar in a general way, it is not completely impossible to suppose that Josiah found it necessary to repeat some of his earlier efforts during the period of the later reforms of II Kings 23. If Judah's relationship to Assyria continued in the shadows of uncertainty until after 612 B.C. when Nineveh fell, Josiah may have been unable to exert the full weight of his authority over the whole Davidic area before 612. The

continuance of his reform measures would, therefore, have been difficult to maintain. Six years later it may well have been necessary for him to go over some of the same iconoclastic ground.

B. The Early Reform Efforts of King Josiah II Kings 22:1-2; II Chronicles 34:1-7

The typical regnal introductions, II Kings 22:1-2 and II Chronicles 34:1-2, are similar in most details. From them we learn that Josiah was eight years old when he acceded to the throne and that he reigned thirty one years in Jerusalem. Only the Kings account tells us the name and lineage of his mother (22:1), of whom we have already spoken. Commendations similar to that of the second verse of each passage are found in the introductions of the reigns of Asa (II Chron. 14:2); Jotham (II Chron. 27:2); and Hezekiah (II Chron. 29:2). Of all the kings of Judah, it is said only Josiah:

did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.¹⁸

The elaboration of this commendation begins in II Chronicles 34:3. In Josiah's eighth regnal year he began "to seek after the God of David his father" (II Chron. 34:3). What does this mean? The third verse says that this took place "when he was yet a boy", but a comparison of verse three with verse one indicates that he was sixteen years old. The word translated "to seek" in the RSV of verse 3 is וַיִּשְׁאֵל "to seek from anyone, to inquire, to seek the deity in prayer."¹⁹ This may indicate that in this year Josiah came of

age as a monarch and began to rule on his own apart from the coaching of the regents. His decision at this critical moment in Judah's history demonstrated that he meant to be numbered among the few true sons of David in Judah's regnal line by seeking divine guidance for directing the affairs of state.

The Chronicler says that in the twelfth year of his reign Josiah began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the machinery of idolatry.²⁰ The reform activity began in earnest (v. 3b) marked by a purging of pagan rites in Judah and Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, though certainty is impossible, it is quite plausible to suppose (cf. II Chron. 34:3-8) that the decision to repudiate the official Assyrian cult was made as early as Josiah's eighth year (633/2), probably just after Assurbanapal's death, and that by his twelfth year (629/8), as the independence-reform movement gathered momentum, a radical purge of idolatrous practices of all sorts was begun which extended itself into northern Israel also as Josiah moved into that area. . . . As he took control of the north, the reform was extended there also and the shrines of Samaria, particularly the rival temple of Bethel, desecrated and destroyed and their priests put to death. According to II Chronicles 34:6, which there is no reason to doubt, the reform extended as far as northern Galilee.²¹

"He began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places" ha-bāmôt,
תִּדְבָּר . תִּדְבָּר The "high place" was essentially Canaanite
 in origin,²² consisting of a sanctuary situated on a hill, natural or
 man-made, and frequently associated with groves of trees.

Furnished with altars for sacrifice, stone pillars, incense, water, and poles of wood where trees were lacking (sometimes even where they were not lacking), the sanctuaries of the high places could be out in the open or enclosed in roofed buildings.²³

In the period after the settlement of the land of Palestine as the Israelites little by little absorbed the ways of the Canaanites, the use of high places by the Israelites became fairly common. Solomon built many high places (I Kings 11:7), and in numerous places in the North the kings of Israel constructed their sanctuaries in the hills (II Kings 17:9). Only three of the kings of Judah are said to have done anything about removing ha - bāmôt besides Josiah: Asa (II Chron. 14:3), Jehosphat (II Chron. 17:6), and Hezekiah (II Kings 18:4). In the book of Kings it is said that Jehosphat, Asa's son, did not remove the high places. Yet the fact that Chronicles says he removed them after his father had presumably removed them may indicate that in some cases the destruction was only partial, or that they were rebuilt by local populations after the reforming kings had turned their attention to other things.

The asherim אֲשֵׁרִים, hā - 'āšērîm (plural for Asherah) were cult objects representing the goddess Asherah (this usage is found in the RSV). The Ras Shamra texts demonstrate that she was distinct from "Astarte"; and scholars have come to the conclusion that she was an Amorite or Canaanite goddess worshipped in various parts of the ancient Near East. The Ras Shamra texts also indicate that in Ugarit she was worshipped as consort of El and mother of seventy gods includ-

ing Baal.²⁴ It is not always clear in the Old Testament whether the goddess or cult object was being spoken of, while in these Kings and Chronicles passages and others like them, where the cult objects are in view, it is not clear what form the objects took. Whether they were all carved likenesses or whether some were simply poles cannot be known with certainty. Because they were made of wood, it is quite likely that few if any survived. Archaeologists have not been able to identify with the goddess any known cult objects.²⁵ At any rate Josiah included these objects, often found in the high places, on his list marked for destruction (II Chronicles 34:4).

The graven and molten images are mentioned together here and in other Old Testament passages (Nahum 1:14; Hab. 2:18; Isa. 48:5; Jer. 10:14; 51:17; Deut. 27:15), a fact which some scholars take to indicate a general denotation of all kinds of idols, those fashioned of wood or stone and those of metal.²⁶ The graven image is פֶּסֶל pesel, "idol, image", the בְּסֵלִים pâsilîm, is plural. It could be made of metal as well as of wood and stone (Judges 17:3,4). Therefore it would seem the word could stand for idols in general. כִּסּוּפִים from (root) כִּסַּף, is a casting of metal which came to stand specifically for a "molten image."²⁷ The graven image differed from the molten image in that it was carved while the latter was cast of molten metal in a form. It is clear that this II Chronicles 34 account speaks in general terms of the iconoclasm in Judah and Jerusalem. Verse four, however, specifi-

cally indicates the personal interest and concern of the young king for the destruction of these idolatrous shrines so abhorrent to Yahweh (Lev. 26:30; Ps. 78:58). The texts say that the altars of the Baals were broken down "in his presence" (II Chron. 34:4). The use of the pronoun "he" throughout doubtless indicates that he personally supervised all or much of this work. "He hewed down the incense altars" which were located above or on top of the main Baal altars (24:4). A pottery incense stand found at Megiddo and dating from ca. 1150-1100 B.C., showing attached podium, may indicate that small altars or stands were occasionally placed atop the larger altars of burnt offerings.²⁸ Josiah also broke up the Asherim and various images and ground them into powder so that their dust could be strewed over the graves of the idolators who had sacrificed to the gods they represented, effecting what the I.C.C. Commentators call a "retribution pollution . . . of the resting place of the impious dead."²⁹

We read further in verse 5 of Josiah's burning "the bones of the priests on their altars." It is not clear from this text whether or not he slew live priests and then burned their bones in an act of further defilement of the high places and dishonoring of the dead priests. The verse gives the impression that these were bones of already dead idolatrous priests, exhumed and burned. Curtis and Madsen compare this with II Kings 23:16 and 20.³⁰ The text of verse 16 in that chapter speaks of Josiah's seeing the tombs on the mountain at Bethel and of his removing the bones from them to burn upon the

altar to defile it. This would seem to parallel II Chronicles 34:5, but need not be identical with it. The word of 34:5 appears to make this bone burning a more widespread activity, presumably in Judah and Jerusalem. According to our chronology the Bethel incident ~~might have~~ to be assigned to the period of the iconoclastic activity of II Chronicles 34:6 since Bethel lay in the territory classically belonging to Ephraim (see Westminster maps of period of Judges in I.D.B.).³¹ ^{But} Gray remarks:

Another passage generally taken as secondary is the account of Josiah's desecration of the shrine of Bethel (23:14f) and his sparing of the prophet's tomb (23:16-20). We cannot dismiss this matter so summarily as Pfeiffer does on the assumption that Josiah had no jurisdiction over the province of Samaria. The limitation of the suppression of local sanctuaries 'from Geba to Beersheba' (23:8) would appear to be the strongest argument for the view that the Bethel incident is an interpolation. This, however, merely refers to a phase in the first main stage of the reformation, of which, we believe, the whole passage gives a telescoped account.³²

A Samarian phase of the reform is mentioned in II Kings 23:20, when Josiah had the priests of the high places slain upon the altar and had the bones of "men", presumably others besides the priests, burned upon them. (Cf. 23:19 "cities of Samaria"). Here again there is no possibility of exact identification with II Chronicles 34:5.

After the purging of Judah and Jerusalem, which may not have been total and complete, as we shall later suggest, Josiah extended his preliminary reform operations across the boundary between Samaria

and Judah into the northern areas of Israel: "the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali" (v.6). The mention of Simeon, whose territory actually lay south of Judah, is doubtless due to the fact that Simeon was numbered among the ten tribes of the Northern confederation known as "Israel."³³ The pattern of iconoclasm in Judah and Jerusalem was repeated in these outlying areas; and when all the clean up operations were completed to Josiah's satisfaction, "he returned to Jerusalem" (II Chron. 34:7). One or two further observations should be made concerning this passage. Verse 7b reads, "and hewed down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel." This sounds, on the surface, like a complete purging of the northern areas of their idolatry, especially if it may be inferred that the same completeness characterized the purging of the altars, the Asherim, and the various other images of these areas. But such an inference is of uncertain value. If it is true that the reform was this thorough, then it would appear unlikely that Josiah would have had to repeat it in his eighteenth regnal year, the same year (II Chron. 34:8 and II Kings 22:3) in which the book of the Law was found and the reforms of II Kings 23 begun.

Whether the suggested universality of II Chronicles 34:7 has to be taken literally is a question. It is said by the Chronicler that Manasseh had purged Jerusalem of idols and idol altars (33:14-17), but Kings finds that Manasseh's altars still stood in the courts of the temple (II Kings 23:12). The seeming contradictions between Kings

and Chronicles concerning the extent of the iconoclastic ventures of Asa and Jehoshaphat, if they are not simply flat contradictions, may indicate, as with the problem of Manasseh's altars, that the claims of the Chronicler of total destruction are spoken in generalities and should not be taken to speak of mathematically precise completeness.

The Chronicler here assigns a period of six years (compare verse 3b with verse 8) for the work of this preliminary reform activity. Such an enormous undertaking must well have taken a number of years. The Kings' account, if it is supposed to describe the same reform activity as II Chronicles 34, would compress the reforms into one year. But the II Kings 23 account admits of something less than logical order. The "vessels" of Baal and Asherah were removed from the Temple (23:4) before the Asherah itself (23:6). It is also difficult if not impossible to determine chronology in II Kings 23. If verse 23 of that chapter is taken in logical and chronological position, it would suggest that after all the iconoclastic activity, still in the eighteenth regnal year, the Passover was kept to the Lord in Jerusalem. It is logical that the clean-up would take place before the Passover; but it seems impossible, if II Kings 23 describes the same activity as II Chronicles 34, that all that activity could have been compressed into one and the same year. Surely the Deuteronomists or whoever put II Kings in its present form could not have been naive enough to suppose all this could have been accomplished in such a short span of time. We shall indicate further reasons for thinking the two passages

speak of different phases of the reform when we treat the II Kings 23 account.

C. The Repair of the Temple and Discovery of the Law Book

II Kings 22:3-20; II Chronicles 34:8-28

We read next that in his eighteenth regnal year (ca. 622 B.C.) King Josiah sent Shaphan to Hilkiah the Priest to call for an accounting of the money collected from the people for the Temple coffers, that it might be turned over to the workmen who had "the oversight of the house of the Lord". וְעֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָכָה 'šy', 'ōšē ha - m'lakāh, literally "those who did the work" are not tradesmen, according to Gray but Temple officials who were masters or overseers of the work.³⁴ These in turn were to give the money to the artisans who were already at work on the Temple (v.5), the "carpenters", "builders", and "masons" (v.6) that they might buy materials for the continued repair of the house of God (v.6).

The II Chronicles account indicates that Maaseiah, the "governor" of Jerusalem, and Joah, son of Joahaz the recorder, joined Shaphan on his errand to Hilkiah (34:8-9). They are said to have "delivered" the money to Hilkiah and all four together to have turned it over to the master workmen who in turn gave it to the artisans (II Chron. 34:8-10). The Kings' author has Hilkiah total up the money, "reckon the amount" (v.4), while the Chronicler has it delivered to him by the others (34:9). The Chronicler shows more

concern for the details here; and though it is somewhat difficult to follow his chronology of the reconstruction, there need not be any irreconcilable variation from the Kings' account. The Chronicler mentions specific materials to be used in the reconstruction, and names the overseers of the work, all Levites, commenting that "the men did the work faithfully" (II Chron. 34:11-12). A whole bureaucracy of Levitical officials is mentioned including "scribes, officials, gate keepers (v.13)", and even "musicians" (v.12).

While the money was being brought out to Hilkiah for the accounting, the Chronicler says Hilkiah, the priest, found "the book of the Law" in the Temple, which he delivered to Shaphan, with the words, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord" (II Chron. 34:14-15 ; cf. II Kings 22:8). What was this sēper ha-tôrāh? Undoubtedly the book was in the form of a scroll of skins or papyrus 35, but the identity of the "Law Book" found in the Temple is a much studied problem, one which is important to the story of what followed its discovery, and to the subsequent reactions of Jeremiah to the reform movement.

According to II Kings 22:8, Hilkiah the priest announced his discovery of the Law book to Shaphan, the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord". The Chronicler seems to connect the discovery with the bringing of the money for Temple repair out of the sanctuary (II Chron. 34:14). He also adds that "Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord given

through Moses" (34:14) (Italics ours.) The ASV margin reads "by the hand of Moses". Evidently the Chronicler was quite content to identify the book as Mosaic legislation, perhaps in his mind with Deuteronomy. The Kings' writer refers to "the law of Moses" as that by which Josiah patterned his life (II Kings 23:25); but an immediate or direct connection of that reference with the Law book's discovery need not be admitted, for II Kings 23:25 is a general reference to Josiah's excellence, written in much the same style as the typical regnal introductions.

E. Naville aroused some interest in the idea that this scroll may have been a foundation deposit such as were found in Egyptians walls and in foundation stones of the Akkadians and Hittites.³⁶ But nothing is said about a foundation deposit in the instance under consideration:

The book in question was not a foundation deposit, rather it was a document laid away in the temple library, perhaps for safekeeping even as such libraries existed in ancient temples.³⁷

It is probably that the Temple was badly neglected during the years when Manasseh and Amon were busy with other things and that the degree of its chaotic disrepair is reflected in the statements concerning Josiah's repairs (II Kings 22:3-7). That carpenters, builders, masons, timber, and quarried stone were needed (II Kings 22:5-6) and "timber for couplings, and beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed" (II Chron. 34:11) is evidence that the damage was extensive and the repair a major undertaking. From this it would

seem quite possible that Hilkiah found the scroll, probably a Temple copy, buried in rubble or hidden in some forgotten archive.

Josiah had succeeded his father at the age of eight, and in the previous fifty-seven years the kingdom had twice over been deluged with all the abominations of idolatry. The greater proportion therefore of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have had little chance of knowing the law and its requirements. The Temple had been neglected, perhaps closed, during a large part of these years. . . . The holy place would have become foul with neglect.³⁸

At any rate when Hilkiah delivered the scroll to Shaphan, the scribe, realizing its true significance, promptly took it to the king. With it went a report of the delivery of the money to the workmen (II Kings 22:8-9). When Shaphan read the words of the Law book before the king, Josiah's immediate reaction was fear and self-humbling. "He rent his clothes" (22:11). So great was the impact upon him of what had been read, Josiah promptly sent his servants to determine of some prophet what was his and Israel's relationship to God. (cf. II Chron. 34:21).

Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all this is written concerning us.³⁹

What can be said of the identification of the scroll discovered in the Temple? Robert Dentan summarizes the opinion of the majority of the scholars consulted here:

Just what the book was, where it came from, and how it got there are among the most fundamental questions discussed by students of the Old Testament. As to what

it was, there can hardly be any doubt that it was some form of the book of Deuteronomy; the numerous points of agreement in both words and matter between the laws of Deuteronomy and the steps of the reform, especially with respect to the destruction of the 'high places' (the local shrines) and the consequent limitation of sacrificial worship to the Temple in Jerusalem, cannot be readily explained on any other assumption.⁴⁰

Dentan also suggests that a commonly held view sees the book as a compendium of ancient laws, traditionally ascribed to Moses, but collected and edited in the time of Manasseh by members of the prophetic party. They deposited their finished product in the library of the Temple at Jerusalem hoping it might there be discovered and used.⁴¹ Others of the more recent commentaries likewise identify Josiah's "Law book" with all or part of Deuteronomy.⁴² John Gray points out that Jerome was first to identify the book with the nucleus of Deuteronomy. He says this view was given modern validation by Dewett's exhaustive treatment of the problem in 1805; and that most critical scholars now accept this view adding their own modifications.⁴³

It is argued by many who hold to the theory that the book was Deuteronomy that the precepts and laws of the canonical book of Deuteronomy are reflected in the reform activities of Josiah.⁴⁴ Skinner thinks the coincidences are numerous, but Gray modified this to include only the--

renunciation of the local fertility-cult and the suppression of the local cult centers in favor of 'the place that Yahweh had chosen to put his name in'.⁴⁵

F. F. Bruce agrees with the consensus of these scholars:

From the activity which followed immediately [the finding of the book], when the king undertook to put the prescriptions of the scroll into operation there is little doubt that it was (as Jerome discerned) a copy of the book of Deuteronomy, or at least of the law-code which forms the kernel of that book. (Chapters 12-26).⁴⁶

We shall not here treat the views of those few scholars who do not identify the scroll with Deuteronomy. The fact that the scroll found in the Temple was read at least twice in the same day, presumably in its entirety (II Kings 22:8-and 11), seems to indicate that it did not contain the full text of our canonical Deuteronomy. Gray has a fine treatment of the various canonical segments which were probably not found in the scroll that came to Josiah.⁴⁷ He concludes that Deuteronomy, chapters 12 to 26 together with the blessings and curses of chapter twenty-eight, which made such an impression on Josiah, to which may have been added a brief introduction, compose the "Law book" that Hilkiah found.⁴⁸

The problem of the date and authorship of the original Deuteronomy bears on the critical problems connected with Josiah's reform activity. Three major views have characterized the mainstream of critical opinion:⁴⁹

1. The book found in the Temple was the original Deuteronomy written ad hoc in Josiah's reign, and completed just before the reformation was inaugurated. This makes Hilkiah's discovery a "pious fraud".

2. Ernst Sellin held that the book was to be related to Hezekiah's reform activities and his efforts for centralization of the cult in Jerusalem (II Kings 18:4). There is, however, no biblical or extrabiblical evidence for such a view. Some think that Hezekiah's reform became the occasion for the collection and revisions of traditions that became the law-book discovered by Hilkiah.⁵⁰ This latter idea may be related to the third view which follows.

3. The third view assigns the origin of Deuteronomy to the period of the early monarchy, or even to the time of the Judges.⁵¹ Gray finds this the most significant and acceptable of the three views, pointing out that if Deuteronomy had been produced in Jerusalem in the time of Josiah, or even in the period of Hezekiah, to say nothing of the exilic or post-exilic periods, the author or authors would never have "localized the giving and solemn reception of the law at Shechem" (Deuteronomy 27:4,12; Joshua 24).⁵² Gray thinks that after the fall of the Northern kingdom, collections of North Israelite traditions, which were associated with the annual covenant renewal ceremony of the amphictyonic gathering at Shechem, were put together by refugees who may have found haven in Judah. He thinks it possible that the resultant Deuteronomic work had an influence on the reform activities of Hezekiah.⁵³

More conservative scholars also add elements of strong evidence for an older provenance. G. T. Manley makes a careful study of the evidences and from them presents a strong case for the basic Mosaic provenance of the core of Deuteronomy.⁵⁴ That the first theory, i.e.

that Deuteronomy was written ad hoc in Josiah's time, tends to open the door to extreme interpretations, is well illustrated by the unrestrained fabrications of Booth's view. He maintains that the ferocity of Manasseh's persecutions drove the reform prophets into an underground existence in Jerusalem. While these prophets were in hiding they wrote a book to oppose the evils of Manasseh's apostasy, the heart of which was taken from the Mosaic "covenant code" of Exodus 20:22-23:33. They embellished Moses with their own eighth-century idealistic thought. Booth then says that these clandestine authors framed their writings in the form of a series of homiletic discourses by Moses, borrowing heavily from the historical narrative JE for the historical background of Moses' life. Because these prophets were so vehemently opposed to the worship of the "high places", they constantly reiterated God's word to Moses that he would in the future choose a central location for Yahweh worship (Deuteronomy 26:2). It is Booth's contention that Deuteronomy could never have been written during or before the age of the United Kingdom:

It could not possibly have been effective in the days of the United Kingdom, as too much territory was involved.⁵⁵

He thinks, rather, that by the time of Manasseh's reign, with the kingdom shrunken to essentially the area of Judea, it was possible for all the people to travel to a central sanctuary. Booth further suggests that during the Baal worshipping regime of Manasseh, the possession of such a book would have been fatal; and so the prophet-

authors hid it somewhere in the Temple. He admits that it may have been "genuinely lost".⁵⁶ This theory is very interesting but appears far too simple. Von Rad's article on "Deuteronomy" presents a very complex theory as to its basic origins in the Northern kingdom before 621 B.C. as a collection of sermons. He admits some Josianic influence on its "sacred and legal regulations" which would allow for a final compilation after Josiah's time.⁵⁷ After Wellhausen, quite a number of critics tried to associate the origin of Deuteronomy with the period of Manasseh and Josiah,⁵⁸ but we have already mentioned the more recent trend toward dating it earlier (Welch and Edward Robertson among others).⁵⁹ One of the most significant reasons for rejecting a theory such as Booth's is that, if the primary aim of the Deuteronomic legislation was to abolish the "high places" and centralize the cult worship in Jerusalem, it is strange that there is no mention of cultic "high places" in our canonical Deuteronomy. The account of Deuteronomy 33:29 seems to refer simply to hilly places rather than to sanctuary locations, and 32:13 certainly does. It would seem incredible that the cultic high places would have gone unmentioned if reform prophets or other Yahwists of the Manasseh-Josiah period had written or even put these writings in the final form. Manley also points out that:

The details of Josiah's reformation do not correspond so closely with the laws as⁶⁰ to require an immediate connection between them.

Manley notes two other factors which are important to a consideration

of the date and authorship of Deuteronomy.⁶¹ He first suggests that it is not surprising that the idolatry practiced for fifty years under Manasseh and Amon had caused the law to be all but forgotten. That the action taken following the discovery of the book of the Law by Hilkiah (II Kings 22:8) was not an innovation, but a reformation in the true sense, is evidenced both by the preceding account and by the expression used. According to Manley, "The book of the Law" (not a "law book" or a "roll of laws") cannot mean anything else, either grammatically or historically, than the Mosaic book of the Law (Pentateuch) or some portion of it. The expression shows that the allusion is to something already known, and not to anything which had come to light for the first time.⁶² We have already mentioned the loss of familiarity with the word of Yahweh because of the long period of apostasy as a possible reason for this.

Manley's second point is that the testimony of Jeremiah (7:12-14), with its explicit reference to Deuteronomy 12:11 and to Shiloh, is an additional evidence that Joshua was not promulgating something new but causing the people to return to precepts laid down by Moses, kept for a time and then abandoned by their fathers. Manley also says there is no satisfactory reason why the alleged compilers of Josiah's period should have stopped short of naming Jerusalem.⁶³

We cannot here attempt to fix any date for the writing of that Deuteronomic core which formed the Law book discovered in the Temple.

We assume that it was a portion of Deuteronomy, probably essentially chapters 12 to 26 and chapters 27 and 28. We prefer the alternative of an early authorship, but cannot be dogmatic about the matter. It would seem most likely that the scroll found by Hilkiah contained materials that were written well before the time of Manasseh and genuinely forgotten or lost during the long period of his apostate reign.

Montgomery has a good summary of internal Deuteronomic evidences that seems to deal a death blow to most theories of a late (Manasseh and later) provenance:

There is in Deuteronomy no partisanship for the Davidic monarchy, no reference to the promises of David; for the first time in history we learn of a monarchy, which, if it is to be established, is to be constitutional: 'He shall write him a copy of this law in a book', and 'he shall read therein all the days of his life . . . that his heart be not lift up above his brethren' (17:18 ff). Also of the primacy of Judah there is no hint. Similarly in the immediately following Law of the Priests (18:1-8), these are 'the priests, the Levites', and the provincial Levites shall have full privilege if they come up to the sanctuary. There is not a word about Saddu- kites, high priesthood and the like, nor is Jerusalem named; there is only an indirect reference to 'the place which YHWH shall choose'.⁶⁴

The profound impact made on Josiah must likely have come from Deuteronomy 27 and 28. He called for prophetic interpretation immediately. Hilkiah the priest, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah took the scroll to Huldah, the prophetess, whose husband, Shallum was a minor Temple official, "Keeper of the Wardrobe" (II Kings 22:14). A number of commentators have wondered why Zephaniah, who was actively

engaged in a prophetic ministry at the time (Zephaniah 1:1), or Jeremiah, whose active ministry had begun about five years before Josiah's eighteenth regnal year (Jeremiah 1:1-2), was not consulted rather than an otherwise obscure prophetess.⁶⁵ Huldah lived in the second Quarter of Jerusalem (II Kings 22:14) and it may have been a matter as simple as the fact that she was readily available. Dentan thinks that Zephaniah and Jeremiah may not have seemed "important figures" in these earlier days of Josiah's reign,⁶⁶ but there is no evidence that Huldah was important either. Gray reasons that the envoys of Josiah might well have considered Zephaniah and Jeremiah too independent and apt to give answers that might prove embarrassing "ultra vires".⁶⁷ Huldah, being the wife of a minor Temple official, a courtier of Josiah according to Skinner,⁶⁸ would give them a divinely authoritative answer without embarrassing them. All of this is relatively unimportant to the subject at hand, except that scholars see the Huldah passage (22:14-20) as secondary and/or subject to Deuteronomic revision.⁶⁹ It does have the impress of reality and historicity upon it, for surely a Deuteronomic fabrication or later insertion would have used the name of a better known prophet. Huldah received the envoys and informed them that God did have a message for Josiah relative to the Law book which had been found:

Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense to

other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched.⁷⁰

These words demonstrate the fact that neither Jeremiah nor Zephaniah was needed. Huldah was a true prophetess, speaking a message consistent with that of the other true prophets who were contemporary. Judah, as Israel before her, had gone too far in sin, had refused God's constant offer of pardon, and now must be judged. The wrath of God would not be quenched because Israel's God was one who always watched over his word to perform it. Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Ezekiel all prophesied the same inevitable consequence of the failure of this people to mend their ways.⁷¹ Huldah's reference to the book which had been found (v.16) seems also to advance the theory that the book was Deuteronomy. This is further enhanced by verse 19:

When you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse.

These words are very likely a reference to the "cursings" of Deuteronomy 27:15 ff and 28:15 ff, as many scholars have pointed out:

'Calamity . . . even all the words of this book . . .'
indicates the consequences of the curses on trans-
gression of the Law in Deuteronomy 28:15 ff.⁷²

As for Josiah himself, the prophetess offered words of commendation and hope. His self-humbling and tears had been recognized before God (22:19-20) and because his heart was set upon doing the will of God, the calamitous judgment of God would be deferred and Josiah would not see the "evil" which would come upon Judah and Jerusalem after his

days (22:19-20). The account in Chronicles does not add any significant detail except that the wording of II Chronicles 34:24 makes the case for the identification of the scroll with Deuteronomy even stronger:

Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which was read before the king of Judah.⁷³

Huldah's words did not really tell Josiah very much except that God's wrath, which he had already anticipated (II Kings 22:13), would be deferred during his lifetime. It is to his everlasting credit that he refused to take a fatalistic view of the immediate future to the extent of giving over the work of the reformation because of the inevitability of coming judgment. Josiah now begins a new stage of reform effort based on the dictates of the Law book discovered in the Temple:

Josiah therefore set himself to institute a thorough-going reformation.⁷⁴

D. The Deuteronomic Reform Itself II Kings 23:1-27.

II Chronicles 34:29 - 35:19

Josiah's first act was that of covenant renewal. In this he was not setting a precedent; for, as has been suggested, covenant renewal became an annual act of rededication to Yahweh following the conquest of the land.⁷⁵ Some think this annual ceremony had had its origins in a covenant renewal ceremony led by Moses shortly before his death, while the people of Israel were still encamped in Moab.⁷⁶

Newman thinks the book of Deuteronomy itself had its origin in the sermons of the covenant renewal ceremonies:

Subsequently, in Palestine, this ceremony which reenacted the original covenant at Sinai would have been repeated, just as Christians reenact the Last Supper in the service of Holy Communion. This covenant renewal ceremony was evidently celebrated annually in the autumn by representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel at their central site of worship where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. . . . In this annual covenant ceremony a leader, like Joshua at Shechem in Josh., ch. 24, would take the role of Moses, just as the Christian minister takes the role of Christ in the Communion service. . . the leader would address the people in homiletical exhortation From generation to generation these sermonic traditions were preserved. . . . After that time, [the fall of Samaria], however, these Deuteronomic traditions were brought south to Jerusalem by northern exiles.⁷⁷

What is important for our purposes is not that Newman adds another variation to the large corpus of theories concerning the origin of Deuteronomy but that his words help us understand the context in which Josiah stood as he gathered the people together. He was standing in the role of Moses in company with Joshua and a whole succession of covenant mediators and therefore had more than precedent for what he was doing.

Gathering all the elders of Jerusalem and Judah, the elders being the heads of households who were chosen as representatives of the people,⁷⁸ Josiah went up to the Temple (23:1-2). Possibly the references in verse two to "all the men of Judah", "all the inhabitants of Jerusalem", and "all the people, both small and great" may indicate the elder representatives; together with a group of the prophetic party and the priests.

These (and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people) were the elders spoken of in the previous verse, the representative men of the principle classes from every part of the Kingdom.⁷⁹

If we compare verse two with Joshua 8:34; Nehemiah 7:38, 8:1-4; and Exodus 24:5-8, we may assume that the indefinite subject should give way to the definite⁸⁰ and that we may read: "he [Josiah himself] read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord" (II Kings 23:2). This maintains the parallel of the covenant-renewer standing in the place of Moses to lead the people and further emphasizes Josiah's personal concern for the process of reform.

The Hebrew וַיִּכְרֹת אֶת־הַבְּרִית is from כָּרַת בְּרִית. The wording, kārat b'rit is literally "to cut a covenant" (verse 3). According to some scholars this is the typical Old Testament phrase originating from the practice of cutting sacrificial animals in two, so that the two parties of the covenant could walk between them (Gen. 15:17; Jer. 34:18, 19).⁸¹ Barnes says this word also means "build", or "rebuild" indicating covenant renewal.⁸² Therefore the Scripture writers recognize this as covenant renewal in traditional style. That the covenant was made "before the Lord" rather than with the Lord has been taken to imply that this particular renewal was not bilateral, in other words binding two parties human and divine to the various obligations.⁸³ This fact may further suggest that this was covenant renewal rather than the making of a new covenant, for the initiative for the latter would have come from God.

The word (*bērith*) seems to have denoted simply a well-understood and complex religious ceremony, which rendered an undertaking permanently and irrevocably binding on those concerned; and this ceremony was equally applicable to mutual engagements between two parties, to conditions imposed by one party on another, and to obligations assumed by one party for himself. . . . It does not appear that in the present case Yahweh was a party to the covenant. . . . It was nothing more than a solemn engagement on the part of king and people together to keep the law.⁸⁴

G. Forer noted here an emphasis on the older amphytionic type of covenant, familiar in Northern Israel, as over against the covenant with the Davidic line that was familiar to the Judeans.⁸⁵ The importance of this fact is that with the former type, such as in the annual covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem, "a formal renunciation of alien elements in religion was an important part of the transaction."⁸⁶

It was only natural then, after the people joined the king in committing themselves to the covenant, that further reform activity should follow. The Chronicler says, "And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it" (II Chron. 34:32), an obscure reference which may mean they stood to acknowledge the agreement.

The Deuteronomic reform begins in earnest with verse four of II Kings 23. It seems to be connected with what immediately precedes it since each of the first four verses of Chapter twenty-three have as subject, "the King!" Though there is a new paragraph at verse four, the wording may indicate that the reform activity was an immediate successor to the covenant renewal ceremony.

The inauguration of the covenant was immediately followed by a series of sweeping reforms which were carried out with every mark of earnestness and even violence.⁸⁷

Our previous contention that this Deuteronomic phase of the reform activity is not necessarily to be equated with the phase of II Chronicles 34:3-7, which we have called a "preliminary" stage, finds support from several of the more recent commentators. For example, Dentan says:

In the Chroniclers' version the renovation of the Temple came as the climax of an effort at reform which had already been going on for ten years (II Chron. 34:3-8), but the narrative in Kings, which makes the great reformation an outgrowth of this first, tentative movement toward national and religious self-assertion, seems more likely to be correct.⁸⁸

Though Dentan may wish to choose between the accounts, he does here recognize successive stages in the reform. The problem seems to us more synoptic than a matter of contradictory expositions. In both cases, the work of the Chronicler and that of the Deuteronomists (or whoever wrote II Kings), there are two phases of reform mentioned. Possibly there are some points of overlapping between II Chron. 34:3-7 and II Kings 23:4ff; but the fact that II Chronicles 34:33 refers to this second Deuteronomic phase, if ever so briefly, leads us to stand by our division of the reform activity into pre-Deuteronomic (II Chron. 34:3-7) and post-Deuteronomic (II Kings 23:4-20) phases. Newman's word also helps confirm the concept of two phases:

This great covenant assembly was followed by a renewed and intensified effort to purge the country of pagan cults and practices (vs.4-20)⁸⁹

In considering this renewal of the reform efforts, it is necessary to be more than ever conscious of its political context because a

surface reading of II Kings 23 may readily give the impression that this was strictly a religious reform. Anderson gives balanced expression to this dual political-religious basis of the reform when he says:

In the following years, Josiah probably stepped up his program of nationalistic reform, especially with the rise to power of Nabopolassar (625-605 B.C.) who led the Babylonians to independence. And just as Hezekiah expressed his stiffening attitude toward Assyria in an attempt to cleanse Judean worship of Assyrian and other alien elements, so Josiah's nationalism was accompanied by religious reform. In this reform he was supported by the conservative land owners of Judah, referred to in II Kings 11:14, 20 as 'the people of the land,' who had been hostile to Manasseh's appeasement of Assyria and longed for national independence (see II Kings 21:23-23). Indeed this reform was probably already under way when a remarkable discovery was made in the eighteenth year of his reign - that is, 621 B.C. We miss the import of the account in II Kings 22 if we fail to read it in the political context. . . . The finding of the Book of the Torah at the opportune moment accelerated and gave direction to the royal reform that Josiah had initiated some years earlier. Behind Josiah's house-cleaning was a desire to recover Judah's vitality and strength and to avoid the curse that the Torah invoked upon the nation when it disobeyed Yahweh's commandments (cf. Deut. 11:26-23; ch. 28).⁹⁰

This extended quotation helps put the whole drift of the present argument in perspective and context. The Deuteronomic phase evidently began immediately after the covenant-renewal ceremony ended and took hold of that closest at hand and already begun, the idolatry of the Temple area. Anderson thinks the work on the Temple not merely routine repair, "But repairs designed to remove all traces of Assyrian and other alien influences."⁹¹ As the reform activities of

the twelfth regnal year had included a purge of the high places, the Asherim, and various kinds of images in Jerusalem and Judah (II Chron. 34:3b), it may be that II Kings 23:6, which speaks of the Asherah being brought out of the house of the Lord and burned at the Kidron, should be assigned to the earlier stage. Now, under the influence of Deuteronomy, a more thorough purge is initiated (23:4) in which Josiah commands the priests and "keepers of the threshold" to bring out all appurtenances of Canaanite religion, "the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven", that they might be burned in the fields of the Kidron valley and their ashes carried to Bethel.⁹² Montgomery finds this "carrying coals to Newcastle" an "absurd addition, suggested by the story in vv. 15 ff.";⁹³ but there is no way to prove his contention. In verse five we have an element that recurs in this segment (23:4-20) which may be a clue to the previous reluctance of Josiah to make the purge as thorough-going as it now became. At this point he deposed the "idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places" (v. 5). The phrase "the kings of Judah" recurs in vv. 11 and 12 in connection with other established idolatrous practices. In verse twelve also we read of the altars of Manasseh and in verse thirteen of the high places of Solomon. Verse fifteen speaks of the destruction of the altar and high place of Jereboam at Bethel. It may well have been beyond the earlier powers of Josiah and against wisdom to have purged some of these places and objects doubly venerated by the people of the land because ordained

at the hands of previous kings of Judah and Israel. Now with the Assyrian hold on Syro-Palestine all but gone, and under the impetus given by the discovery of Deuteronomy, Josiah no longer felt any restraint. Therefore his zeal knew no bounds, and he went beyond Hezekiah in the care with which he sought to eradicate all traces of syncretistic religion.⁹⁴

Josiah was able to take this step, upon which his predecessors had not successfully engaged because the bond between the king and Judah outside the city-state of Jerusalem had been broken since Sennacherib's conquest and provincial reorganization in 701.⁹⁵

The reform of the Temple area itself also included the elimination of ritual prostitution and the destruction of the houses of the cult prostitutes which cluttered up the Temple area. ha-q^ēdēšîm
 - "Temple prostitutes" (cf. I Kings 14:24) is a collective noun and includes both sexes of those who were "set apart" for the immoral rites of the Canaanite worship.⁹⁶ The Deuteronomic code (23:18) banned the introduction of any such practices, so that Josiah was following the Law code in eliminating ritual prostitution and destroying the houses of the q^ēdēšîm, which had been established in the Temple during Manasseh's reign (II Kings 22:9).

After the cleansing of the Temple Josiah turned his attention to Judah as a whole. He brought out the priests of the outlying cult centers and tried to concentrate them in Jerusalem.⁹⁷ In doing so, he defiled the high places where these priests had burned incense. The scope of this purging of high places is indicated by the phrase, "from

Geba to Beersheba" which is a description of the limits of Judah's territory (II Kings 23:8). "Geba", a Levite City (Joshua 21:17; I Chron. 6:60) was on the traditional north border of Judah (Zech. 14:10; cf. Neh. 11:31); and guarded the south end of the Michmash pass. Its ancient name is preserved in the modern village of Jeba east of Rama and six miles north-northeast of Jerusalem.⁹⁸ At least this seems to be the most likely location. It has often been confused with Gibeah and Gibeon which are nearby⁹⁹, so that Skinner could equate it with Gibeah of Saul¹⁰⁰ while Gray grants either alternative.¹⁰¹ At any rate, it stands, in this context, for the northern boundary of Judah. Beersheba in the south, retained from the classical designation for the whole land, "Dan to Beersheba" was mentioned in Amos (5:5; 8:14) along with Gilgal and Bethel as important cult centers to which the inhabitants of northern Israel made pilgrimages. It may be Beersheba that the Chronicler had in mind when he included Simeon along with Samaria in describing the iconoclastic efforts of the "preliminary" reform (II Chron. 34:6). Throughout the length and breadth of Judah Josiah tore down the high places, including the so-called "high places of the gates" "that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city" (II Kings 23:8). Lumby takes "high places of the gates" to mean high altar shrines located in the open spaces about city gates.¹⁰² This may be supported by the RSV's rendering, "which were on one's left at the gate of the city" (v. 8). Skinner says most modern scholars take them to be "high places (or house) of the

satyrs" (changing the she_{arim} to se_{irim});¹⁰³ and Barnes suggests that these may have been shrines on "the roofs of towers by which the gates were defended", citing the example of Mesha of Moab offering up his son as a burnt offering "upon a wall" (II Kings 3:27).¹⁰⁴ There is no certain answer as to exactly what this form of high place was.

More important, as far as this stage of the reform was concerned, was the afore mentioned attempt to centralize the priests at the central sanctuary of Jerusalem as Deuteronomy 18:6-8 seems to enjoin. In the case at hand, however, (v. 9) the priests of the outlying high places did not remain at the Temple at Jerusalem (cf. v. 8a), evidently because they were not allowed to share in the ministry of the altar as the Deuteronomic code allowed (Deut. 18:6ff).¹⁰⁵ Skinner thinks these outlander priests were permitted to share Temple dues, and were recognized as brethren of the Temple priests.¹⁰⁶ But, as Gray points out Deuteronomy 18:6ff seems to have in mind occasional visits to Jerusalem or voluntary migration, while Josiah allowed no other alternative but that of moving to Jerusalem and there remaining in the position of second class priests because of their former association with the high places (v. 9).¹⁰⁷ They were thus supported by the Temple, but shared only in the Passover observance, which is what is meant by their eating "unleavened bread among their brethren" (v. 9). The explanation for this one indulgence seems to have been that at Passover time more priests were needed.

The connection of this centralizing of the cultus at Jerusalem

with Deuteronomy is evident. The account in Deuteronomy stipulates that the local high places and all their paraphernalia should be demolished, and the worship of Yahweh centralized at the place which Yahweh chose, that is in the central sanctuary (Deuteronomy 12:2-3,5 11, 14). The Code further indicated that all animal sacrifice for the purpose of worship must be confined to the central sanctuary (12:13-14; 16:5-6), and that the Passover, along with the other great feasts, must also be observed by the making of pilgrimages to the central shrine (16:1-6). While Deuteronomy had said that the country priests were entitled to minister at the central sanctuary (18:1-8), the writer of II Kings 23:9 recognized the impracticality of adding so many more priests to an already full compliment of Temple ministers. Anderson thinks II Kings 23:9 indicates that a livelihood was found for them among their own people.¹⁰⁸ Skinner also believes the refusal to let them serve the Temple was on practical grounds rather than discriminatory.¹⁰⁹

Josiah's next step was the elimination of the terrible rites of Molech worship centered in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem (II Kings 23:10). "Molech" was evidently the fire-place or hearth upon which children were sacrificed.¹¹⁰ This practice, noted among the cultic activities of the harem of Solomon,¹¹¹ was probably associated with the worship of an Ammonite god, Melek-Attar.¹¹²

The horses and chariots which the former kings of Judah had dedicated to sun-worship were removed from the Temple entrance, and

their chariots burned (v. 11). The ancients thought of the sun god, Shamash of the Babylonians and Helios of the Greeks, as riding a chariot drawn by horses, but it is not known who introduced the worship of the sun god and these appurtenances among the Hebrews.¹¹³ Evidently Manasseh and Amon were responsible for their being on location at the Temple gate.¹¹⁴ The reform activities continued the purge of idolatrous rites and equipment for which the previous kings were responsible. The altars on the roof made by Judean kings (v. 12), and the altars of Manasseh in the two courts of the Temple were pulled down and broken up, their dusts strewn upon waters of the Kidron (v. 12), doubtless as a symbol of the washing away of their polluting influences. Roof-top altars were known to the prophets. Zephaniah spoke of them (1:5), and Jeremiah mentioned them in connection with Baal worship (Jer. 32:29). In addition, Solomon's high places located on the Mount of Olives, part of which is here called "the Mount of Corruption" because its locale was considered tainted by pagan rites honoring Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom, also were defiled (v. 13).

Having finished the work of purging Judea of idolatry, Josiah once again turned his attention to Samaria, particularly to the old rival cult center at Bethel which had been erected by Jereboam after the division of the monarchy (v. 15ff). Lumby notes that the Chronicler had omitted all mention of this desecration of Bethel,¹¹⁵ and Skinner suggests that Josiah's activity at Bethel "probably indicates some relaxation of central control from Nineveh." ¹¹⁶

These two thoughts taken together may add further weight to our theory that II Chronicles 34 account does not survey the whole reform activity of Josiah.

Skinner and Gray suggest that verses 16 to 20 are a later Deuteronomic insertion intended to show the fulfillment of the words of the prophet of I Kings 13:1-10.¹¹⁷ These writers claim that verses 16-20 could not have been written by the same hand as verse 15 because that verse shows the destruction of the altar at Bethel, while verse sixteen introduces a paragraph in which the altar still stands.¹¹⁸ The problem lies beyond the scope of this study, and the segment (16-20) adds little to the present discussion other than that it records Josiah's destruction of the shrines of Israelite high places in the cities of Samaria. It is noteworthy that these were erected by the kings of Israel (v.19). Skinner would like to think that the slaying of the priests of the high places (v. 20) was a grizzly detail added by the Deuteronomists but not originally Josianic.

It is a relief to think that Josiah's reformation may not have been really stained by such atrocities as are recorded in verse 20.¹¹⁹

Perhaps it is not too much to say that Josiah's recollection of the fearful curses of Deuteronomy 27 and 28 could have overshadowed feelings of repugnance he might otherwise have had in killing these prophets. It is true, as Dentan points out, that if verse twenty is taken literally, the treatment of the priests of the northern areas was more drastic than that meted out to their counterparts in Judah.¹²⁰

With the completion of the iconoclastic purge in the north, this phase of the reform came to an end, and King Josiah "returned to Jerusalem."¹²¹

E. The Passover Observance

The "book of the covenant," the Deuteronomic scroll found in the Temple, had given instructions for the keeping of the Passover (II Kings 23:21). Gray expresses exasperation that the Deuteronomic account maintains silence about specific motives for the "innovation." The motives for the inauguration of the Passover at this time (evidently soon after Josiah's return to Jerusalem, for it was still in the eighteenth year, v. 23) pose little difficulty if the discovery of the book of Deuteronomy prompted this phase of the reform effort. Deuteronomy sets forth the ordinances for the localization of the Passover at the central sanctuary (Deuteronomy 16:1-8). It would seem then quite natural for Josiah to have followed the purging of pagan worship with a great national act of worship of Yahweh. Gray alludes to some political and nationalistic overtones which may have to be taken into account here:

Nicol'sky would see in the celebration of Josiah's Passover, which was probably already associated with the deliverance from Egypt, an assertion of nationalist feeling at a time when there was a danger of Judah exchanging Assyrian for Egyptian vassalage, which was what actually happened in 609. Certainly, as he points out, Egypt under Psammetichos I (671-617) was already challenging Assyria in Palestine, as the tradition of the 29 years' menace to Ashdod (Herodotus II 147) suggests. He makes the feasible suggestion that the danger of Egyptian domination was the major problem confronting Judah on the accession of the young Josiah. If that were so, and if the institution

of the Passover by Josiah in Jerusalem were designed as an anti-Egyptian demonstration, it is odd that the anti-Egyptian party who put Josiah on the throne should have waited eighteen years for this demonstration.¹²²

We tend to view these nationalistic feelings as secondary to Josiah's chief motive which was the desire to conform to the dictates of Deuteronomy.

To such an effort a variety of interests lent their support in the age of Josiah. The reviving spirit of nationality, due to the decline of the Assyrian independence, welcomed the restoration of religion on a distinctly national basis, as opposed to the cosmopolitan and syncretistic tendencies which had marked the period of the Assyrian domination. Another contributory influence was the demand for just and humane treatment of the poor and defenceless, which was so characteristic of Hebrew legislation, and is strongly in evidence in the law of Deuteronomy. But after all we cannot doubt that the central impulse of the reformation was a genuine interest in the religious life of the nation, and a desire to realize the ideal of righteousness contained in the teaching of the great prophets.¹²³

But we would not deny that the cause of national unity was very possibly furthered by the observance of the Passover.

This centralization of the Passover celebration in the Jerusalem Temple seems to be what Gray had reference to in using the word "innovation."¹²⁴ He and others point out that the earliest account of the institution of the Passover pictures it as a family feast to be observed in the homes of the celebrants (Exodus 12:3-6; 21-27) rather than by making pilgrimages to a central shrine.¹²⁵

The novelty of Josiah's Passover, on the other hand, consists in the elevation of the Passover to the status of a pilgrimage feast celebrated at a central

sanctuary with a real national significance. 126

The novel element may be reflected in the words of II Kings 23:22.

A parallel expression in II Chronicles 35:18 says:

No passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet; none of the kings of Israel had kept such a passover as was kept by Josiah; and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The reference to the "days of Samuel the prophet", which is rendered "the times of the Judges" in II Kings 23:22, apparently implies that Josiah's Passover observance set no precedent. The unique centralizing of the Josianic feast at Jerusalem which involved immense logistic problems, such as those represented in the vast numbers of animal victims (II Chron. 35:7-9) to be sacrificed, made it more impressive than any other Passover, surpassing even that of Hezekiah's day (II Chronicles 30:1-27). Hezekiah's Passover had in its festal impressiveness, surpassed anything seen in Jerusalem since the time of Solomon (II Chron. 30:26). In addition Josiah's observance followed the injunctions of the Law more strictly than had any previous Passover.¹²⁷ The centralization concerns us here more than the details of Josiah's observance, which only the Chronicler records. That Josiah was following the instructions of Deuteronomy seems clear when its words are reviewed:

You may not offer the passover sacrifice within any of your towns which the Lord your God gives you, but at the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the passover sacrifice.¹²⁸

There have been those who have supposed that Deuteronomy 16:1-7 contradicts the earliest Passover instructions of Exodus 12:1ff.¹²⁹ According to Exodus 12:1-7 the sacrifices of the Egyptian Passover were to be slain in the individual homes and the blood sprinkled on the door-posts and lintel of the houses in which the feasting was to take place. In Deuteronomy sixteen the slaying of the sacrificial animals was to take place at the central sanctuary designated by the phrase "at the place which the Lord your God will choose", used six times in that chapter (verses 2,6,7,11,15,16). In this case the blood was to be sprinkled upon a central altar instead of the doors of the private dwellings.¹³⁰ The first instructions were given when the Israelites were still in Egypt and when there was no central sanctuary or common altar. Therefore Moses consecrated the individual homes as sanctuaries. However, the Deuteronomic account looks forward to the settled life of Palestine where a central sanctuary would become a reality; and presumably a safe-guard against syncretistic deviations that might arise if the cult practices were carried on in different locales:

This rule contains a new feature, which Moses prescribes with reference to the keeping of the Passover in the land of Canaan, and by which he modifies the instructions of the first Passover in Egypt, to suit the altered circumstances. In Egypt, when Israel was not yet raised into the nation of Jehovah, and had as yet no sanctuary and no common altar, the different houses necessarily served as altars. But when this necessity was at an end, the slaying and eating of the Passover in the different houses was to cease, and they were both to take place at the sanctuary before the Lord, as was the case with the feast of Passover at Sinai.¹³¹

So our chief interest in Josiah's Passover has to do with its relationship to Deuteronomy and its part in the centralization of worship. There seems to be no good reason to doubt that, as it was the primary motivating force behind the specific reform activities mentioned in II Kings 23, so the teaching of the Law book found by Hilkiah accounts for the pattern of Passover observance followed by Josiah:

The principle features of the reform were the centralization of worship and sacrifice, and the abolition of all the provincial shrines. All images, and cultic objects associated with the old Canaanite sanctuaries, sacred pillars and posts (mazzeboth and asherim), were destroyed, and all sacred prostitution was done away with, and when in the following year the feast of the Passover was observed, it was centralized in Jerusalem. Every one of these reforms could find its basis in the book of Deuteronomy, and there is no reason to look beyond this book for their inspiration. When the law-book was read before the king, he was alarmed at the curse it pronounced on those who did not carry out its provisions, and again Deuteronomy XXVII: 15-68 can provide the appropriate basis for his fear.¹³²

These words of H. H. Rowley provide a clear statement as to the basic motivation for the whole of the Deuteronomic reform activity as well as for the Passover. The final words of the II Kings 23 account re-emphasize the place of the Deuteronomic word in all this. After a very brief mention of the final clean-up operations, the elimination of "mediums and wizards", the teraphim, the idols, and "all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem" (v. 24), the writer proclaims that Josiah's intention was:

that he might establish the words of the Law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord.¹³³

Moreover the word of glowing praise of Josiah's character and reign emphasizes his dependence on the "law of Moses." (v. 25).

F. The Death of King Josiah and its Effect on the Reform

II Kings 23:28-30; II Chronicles 35:20-27

What might have been the course of Israel's history had Josiah enjoyed a longer reign cannot but be a matter of speculation. Of the twelve regnal years which followed the great Passover of the eighteenth year (ca. 621 B.C.), we know next to nothing. It is possible that the last iconoclastic activities mentioned in II Kings 23:23 filled part of those remaining years, which would mean that Josiah had every intention of making sure that the accomplishments of the reformation would not be lost. His untimely death at the hands of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (ca. 609 B.C.) meant that royal concern for the purity of religion came to an end. Of each of the two sons who immediately succeeded Josiah: Jehoahaz (II Kings 23:31), who reigned only three months in Jerusalem, and Jehoiakim (II Kings 23:34), whom Necho made his vassal and placed on the throne of Judah, it is said "he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done" (II Kings 23:32,37). We shall not concern ourselves here with the problems of reconciling Huldah's promise of a peaceful end of days for Josiah (II Kings 2:20) with his murder at Megiddo (II Kings 23:29), or of the reasons for Josiah's opposing Necho's march through the Plain of Megiddo (II Kings 23:28-30; II Chronicles 35:20-24).

Of the latter problem we shall mention only the belief of some scholars that Necho called Josiah to Megiddo and assassinated him because his sympathies were with the Chaldeans and against the Assyrians. The modern theory holds (cf. the RSV reading of II Kings 23:29) that Necho was going to the aid of Assyria because of the fast-growing power of Babylon.¹³⁴ A. C. Welch has also suggested that because of Josiah's growing control over northern Israel, he had become a potent threat to the army of Egypt which might have to retreat from Carchemish through Galilee.¹³⁵

More recently, however, it has come to be accepted that Pharoah-Necho saw that the real danger was from Babylonia and that it was in their interests to bolster up the tottering power of Assyria. Thus when Nineveh was captured in 612 by the Babylonians and the Medes, Egypt was supporting the Assyrians. The weakness of Assyria in the reign of Josiah lends support to the account of his independent political activity.¹³⁶

Our major concern is with the effect of Josiah's death on the aftermath of the reform. It is said in II Chronicles 35:24-25 that "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah." We may find reflections of this lament in Jeremiah chapter twenty-two (vv. 10,12; 15-16, 18-19). We shall later consider Jeremiah's brief assessment of Josiah's life and character as expressed in verses 15 and 16 of Jeremiah twenty-two. At this point, however, what interests us are the words of Jeremiah 22:10:

Weep not for him who is dead,
Nor bemoan him;

But weep bitterly for him who goes away,
For he shall return no more to see his native land.¹³⁷

This remarkable word concerning Josiah the dead king and his son Jehoahaz ("Shallum" v. 11), "him who goes away", reflects the chaotic state of affairs that characterized the history of Judah immediately after Josiah's death. By the right of succession Eliakim (later "Jehoiakim"), the crown prince, should have acceded to the throne. But because he had favored a policy of cooperation with Egypt against his father's opposition to that enemy of the south, he was rejected by "the people of the land" (II Chron. 36:1). They enthroned his brother, Shallum, who took the regnal name "Jehoahaz" (II Chron. 36:1), an act which represented open opposition to Pharoah Necho and his ambitions. Necho had the king of only three months' reign chained and brought to his new headquarters at Riblah on the Orontes. In his place he installed Eliakim and gave him the regnal name, "Jehoiakim." ¹³⁸

Eventually Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt where he died (II Chronicles 36:4). It is this deportation of Jehoahaz which Jeremiah laments in 22:10, and this prediction was carried out to the letter. ¹³⁹ The lamentation reveals the clarity and depth of Jeremiah's understanding of the situation. As a reforming prophet, he could see that the most important part of the reformation, the work of the spiritual purification of men's hearts, had not yet advanced very far. He was not really denying the fact that Josiah should be lamented but going further to warn the Israelites that Jehoahaz's loss and Jehoiakim's enthronement meant vassaldom to Egypt and a consequent loss of the

impetus of Josiah's efforts toward true and inward religion.

You [Jehoiakim] have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.¹⁴⁰

Jeremiah knew very well that under this kind of rule the positive values of Josiah's reforms would be lost and only a shell of externalistic religion remain. Even the rituals would not escape the stain of further syncretism, doubtless Egyptian in color:

King Jehoiakim soon showed himself to be a ruler of sharp contrast to his father, the lamented king Josiah. He was a slave of egotism, ambition, extravagance, and display. He was selfish, cruel, reckless, and unjust . . . His reign meant to Jeremiah the beginnings of grave tension between the prophet and the authoritative political and religious leaders of Judah.¹⁴¹

Though Huldah had predicted temporary suspension of the inexorable working of divine judgment because of the faithfulness of Josiah (II Kings 22:16-20), nothing is to be gained by speculation as to whether God's wrath could have been tempered had Josiah lived to lead the nation further into true repentance and spiritual revival. God was "watching over his word to perform it." The tragic implication of the narrative is that in spite of Josiah's personal superiority to all kings before or after his reign (II Kings 23:25), the Lord's word of judgment must stand because Judah as a people had failed her God:

Still the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. And the Lord said, 'I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city

which I have chosen, Jerusalem and the house of which I said, my name shall be there.¹⁴²

If these terrible words were written by Deuteronomists, they were doubtless very bitter to their taste as representing God's rejection of much for which they had hoped and worked.

G. The Summarization of the Development and Results of Josiah's Reform

It has been our contention that the accounts of II Kings 22-23 and II Chronicles 34-35 in the main compliment rather than contradict each other. While both segments are stylized to a degree and edited according to the view-points of final editors and, therefore, may admit of points of overlapping in their accounts of the reform, we have attempted a chronology that claims II Chronicles 34:3-7 to be largely a description of reform measures preliminary to the finding of the Law scroll in the Temple, and II Kings 23:4ff of reform activity subsequent to that discovery.

As for the Law book itself, its identification with at least chapters twelve through twenty-six of Deuteronomy seems beyond further question. H. H. Rowley in a statement written as late as 1963 says:

That Josiah's Law Book was Deuteronomy in some form, seems to be one of the most firmly established results of Old Testament scholarship.¹⁴³

Josiah's subsequent reform activities follow the admonitions of Deuteronomy very closely.

This was no new law, still less the 'pious fraud' it has sometimes been called, but rather a homiletical collection of ancient laws that derived ultimately from the legal tradition of the amphictyony.¹⁴⁴

Its discovery amounted to a new breath of Mosaic tradition, summoning the people of Israel to covenant renewal of the Mosaic rather than Davidic form, and calling for commitment to the will of Yahweh.

Josiah's covenant renewal ceremony was made "before Yahweh" (II Kings 23:3), indicating that this was indeed renewal not innovation, Yahweh being a witness rather than a party to the act, and the king playing the role of Moses according to the Deuteronomic tradition.

The reform activities not only purged Judah and the northern territories of pagan practices and some of the syncretistic elements of Israelite religion, but also followed the Deuteronomic injunctions for the centralization of the cult of Yahweh, and the integration of the priests of outlying cult centers with the work of the central shrine. In addition the Deuteronomic localization of the Passover celebration at that place "where the Lord God chose to place his name", was effected in Josiah's great Passover observance.

Josiah's untimely death was a great blow to a nation enjoying a growing measure of independence under his energetic rule. It was also a severe blow to the development of the reformation. As long as Josiah lived, though we know little of the regnal years which followed the Passover, we feel sure that the reform was maintained, and the cause of covenant commitment officially espoused. Public morality and spiritual life could not help but have benefited by the elimination of the syncretistic and pagan elements of religion. But the question of how successful the reform was in the long run is another problem.

Bright suggests some contrasting values and results.¹⁴⁵ Jerusalem was established as the only legitimate sanctuary center, and many gladly accepted this change as having spiritual and nationalistic values (Jeremiah 41:5). Nevertheless, it was natural also that others who lived in outlying areas came to resent the centralization bitterly, particularly the priests' of the abolished Yahwistic centers who lost their age-old status and vocation. Since the Jerusalem clergy refused them equality with themselves in the priestly offices of the Temple, many outlanders rejected integration with Jerusalem and became welfare wards of their own local communities (II Kings 23:9). Therefore, one result of the reform was a priestly monopoly in Jerusalem. Another result must have been a degree of secularization of life in the outlying areas which no longer had local shrines.¹⁴⁶ A great deal of reflection and discussion could go into analysis of the pros and cons of the centralization and to what extent this was spiritually healthy for the nation as a whole.

Perhaps the most significant short-range result of the reform was negative. Its effects were little felt beneath the spiritual surface. First the Mosaic law, then in turn the Temple itself assumed the role of fetish whose very presence (it was popularly assumed) guaranteed Yahweh's presence and blessing.

More serious was the fact that the reform tended to be satisfied with external measures which, while not profoundly affecting the spiritual life of the nation, engendered a false sense of peace that nothing could penetrate. Jeremiah complained that it produced nothing but increased cultic activity without real

return to the ancient paths (Jer. 6:16-21), and that the sins of society continued without protest from the clergy (ch. 5:20-31). It seemed to him that the nation, so proud of its possession of Yahweh's law that it could no longer hear his prophetic word (ch. 8:8f.) was plunging to ruin like a horse charging head long into battle (vs. 4-7).¹⁴⁷

It is to these problems that a discussion of Jeremiah's reactions to the reformation of Josiah must address itself.

NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. Gray, op. cit., p. 658. See also Adam C. Welch, The Work of The Chronicler (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 135-138.
2. Gray, op. cit., p. 658.
3. Ibid.
4. Edward Lewis Curtis and Albert Alonso Madsen, The Books of Chronicles, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 503.
5. William Emery Barnes, The Books of Chronicles, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: The University Press, 1899), p. 279.
6. Ernst Bertheau, Commentary on the Books of Chronicles, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1857), P. 447.
7. Edersheim, op. cit., pp. 178-179.
8. Welch, Chronicler, pp. 135-148.
9. Edersheim, op. cit., pp. 178-179.
10. Bruce, op. cit., p. 77.
11. Robert C. Dentan, The First and Second Books of the Chronicles, Vol. VII: The Layman's Bible Commentary (Richmond, John Knox Press, 1964), p. 152.
12. Donald W. B. Robinson, Josiah's Reform and the Book of the Law, (London: The Tyndale Press, 1951), p. 511.
13. Ibid., pp. 15-16. Robinson here admits that the Scythian hypothesis fails of conclusive demonstration.
14. We have previously addressed ourselves to the matter of the contemporaneity of these prophets.
15. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 17-25.

16. Ibid., p. 17.
17. Ibid., pp. 22-23
18. Curtis and Madsen, op. cit., p. 503 Cf. Bertheau, op. cit.,
19. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 205.
20. II Chronicles 34:36.
21. Bright, op. cit., p. 296-297.
22. G. Henton Davies, "High Place, Sanctuary", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. II, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962).
23. Ibid.
24. W. L. Reed, "Asherah", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. I, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 250-251.
25. Ibid.
26. W. L. Reed, "Graven Image", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. II (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) p. 471.; Cf. Curtis and Madsen, op. cit. p. 503.
27. G. B. Cooke, "Molten Image", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. III, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) p. 423.
28. K. Gallig, "Incense Altar", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. II (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 699. See plate No. 4., p. 699.
29. Curtis and Madsen, op. cit., p. 504.
30. Ibid.
31. Map VI, Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. I (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962).
32. Gray, op. cit., p. 649.
33. Curtis and Madsen, op. cit., p. 504; Cf. W. H. Bennet, The Book of Chronicles, The Expositor's Bible (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), p. 456.
34. Gray, op. cit., p. 531
35. Ibid., p. 659.

36. Quoted by James Alan Montgomery, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1951), pp. 544-545.
37. Ibid., p. 545.
38. Joseph Rawson Lumby, The Second Book of Kings, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: The University Press, 1897), p. 227.
39. II Kings 22:13.
40. Dentan, op. cit., p. 120.
41. Ibid.
42. Gray, op. cit., pp. 651-652; Leslie, op. cit., p. 232; Kuist, op. cit., p. 44, apparently makes the identification with Deuteronomy.
43. Gray, op. cit., p. 651; Cf. John Skinner, Kings, The New Century Bible (New York: Henry Frowde, n.d.), p. 411.
44. Skinner, Kings, p. 411.
45. Gray, op. cit., p. 651.
46. Identified by St. Jerome; Bruce, op. cit., p. 77.
47. Gray, op. cit., p. 652.
48. Ibid.
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50. Ibid., p. 653.
51. Th. Oestreicher, Das Deuteronomische Grundgesetz; A. C. Welch, The Code of Deuteronomy; Deuteronomy, the Framework and the Code; E. Robertson, the Old Testament Problem as cited by Gray, op. cit., p. 653.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid. For an elaboration of the concept that Deuteronomy had its roots in the early Covenant renewal ceremonies, see Murray Newman, "Covenant Renewal in Israel's Life", Crossroads, vol. XV. No. 1, (October-December 1964), pp. 20-42.

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56. Ibid., p. 155.
57. G. Von Rad, "Deuteronomy", The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. I (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 831-838.
58. G. T. Manley, The New Bible Handbook (Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1947), p. 148.
59. Ibid.
60. Manley, The Book of the Law, p. 178.
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62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Montgomery, op. cit., pp. 545-546.
65. Dentan, op. cit., p. 121; Gray, op. cit., p. 660; Montgomery, op. cit., p. 525.
66. Dentan, op. cit., p. 121.
67. Gray, op. cit., p. 660.
68. Skinner, Kings, p. 414.
69. Gray, op. cit., p. 660.
70. II Kings 22:16-17.
71. Jer. 5:15-17; 7:30-8:3; Ezekiel 5:5-17; Zephaniah 1:4-18.
72. Gray, op. cit., p. 661.
73. II Chron. 34:24.
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75. Newman, op. cit., p. 23.

76. Ibid.
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79. Lumby, op. cit., p. 231.
80. Gray, op. cit., p. 662.
81. G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant", Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. I (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) pp. 715-716.
82. Barnes, op. cit., p. 127.
83. Skinner, Kings, p. 416.
84. Ibid., pp. 416-417.
85. Cited in Gray, op. cit., p. 663.
86. Ibid.
87. Skinner, Kings, p. 418.
88. Dentan, op. cit., p. 120.
89. Newman, op. cit., p. 22.; Italics ours.
90. Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1957), pp. 305-306.
91. Ibid, p. 306.
92. Gray, op. cit., p. 663, Note. Gray reads "limekilns of the Kidron" suggesting that misr^epot is 'burning places', therefore, referring to lime kilns.
93. Montgomery, op. cit., p. 529.
94. II Kings 23:25.
95. Gray, op. cit., p. 667.
96. C. F. Burney, Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), p. 193.
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99. Ibid.
100. Skinner, Kings, p. 419
101. Gray, op. cit., p. 668.
102. Lumby, op. cit., p. 234.
103. Skinner, Kings, p. 419.
104. Barnes, op. cit., p. 130.
105. Skinner, Kings, p. 420; Lumby, op. cit., p. 235.
106. Skinner, Kings, p. 106.
107. Gray, op. cit., p. 668.
108. Anderson, op. cit., p. 308.
109. Skinner, Kings, p. 420.
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111. Ibid.
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113. Skinner, Kings, p. 420.
114. Lumby, op. cit., p. 235.
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116. Skinner, Kings, p. 422.
117. Ibid.; Cf. Gray, op. cit., p. 671-672.
118. Skinner, Kings, p. 422. Cf. Gray, op. cit., p. 671-672.
119. Skinner, Kings, p. 422.
120. Dentan, op. cit., p. 123.
121. II Kings 23:20.

122. N. M. Nicolsky, 'Pascha im Kult des Jerusalem_ischen Tempels', ZAV, XLV (1927, pp. 242-4,; quoted by Gray, op. cit., pp. 675-676.
123. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 93.
124. Gray, op. cit., p. 675.
125. Ibid.; Cf. Dentan, op. cit., p. 123.
126. Gray, op. cit., p. 675.
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128. Deuteronomy 16:5-6.
129. Among them is Hupfeld, as cited in footnote by C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, "Penteteuch" Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. James Martin, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 374.
130. Keil and Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 376.
131. Ibid.
132. Rowley, The Growth of the O. T., pp. 29-30
133. II Kings 23:246.
134. Leslie, op. cit., p. 110.
135. Adam C. Welch, Jeremiah, His Time and His Work, (London: Humphrey Milford, 1928), p. 21.
136. E. W. Todd, "The Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah", Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. IX (1956), p. 293
137. Jeremiah 22:10.
138. Leslie, op. cit., pp. 110-111.
139. Ibid. p. 112.
140. Jeremiah 22:17,
141. Leslie, op. cit., p. 112.

142. II Kings 23:26-27.
143. Rowley, Men of God, p. 161.
144. Bright, op. cit., p. 299.
145. Ibid., p. 301.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid., pp. 301-302.

CHAPTER FOUR

JEREMIAH'S REACTIONS TO THE REFORM

A. The Prophet's Relationship to Deuteronomy

Assuming that the call of Jeremiah to a prophetic ministry was ca. 626 B.C., we also assume, with Skinner and others, that when the news of the discovery of an ancient Mosaic Law book (621 B.C.) began to spread around the Judean countryside on the wind of rumor, Jeremiah was still living in comparative obscurity in Anathoth. It has been thought that the silence of his early prophetic years was the result of the non-fulfillment of the prophecies concerning "the foe from the north" (Jeremiah 1:14 ff; 6:1):

His early prophecies speak of a peril from the north, and this has long been thought by many scholars to have reference to the Scythian peril, of which Herodotus gives some account. If this is true, then the predictions of Jeremiah were not fulfilled, and this is thought to have so troubled the prophet that he lapsed into silence for some time.²

Whatever the truth of these speculations, Jeremiah could not have ignored the reports emanating from the capital city of widespread iconoclastic activity, of a thrilling covenant renewal ceremony, and of plans for a great national Passover observance. Evidently he was

not ignorant of Josiah's efforts to effect needed reforms of religion which were close to the hearts of the true prophets.

The first fact that strikes us is that Jeremiah's name does not appear among the active promoters of the reformation. To infer from this, or from the other fact that he was not even consulted as to the authority of the Law-book, that he was unsympathetic or hostile is to stretch the argument from silence much too far. In all probability he was still living in Anathoth, and his influence did not extend beyond his native town. He was not consulted simply because no one thought of him as a person to be consulted. The tidings of what had transpired in Jerusalem came upon him, as upon all his neighbors, like a thunder-clap. But we may be sure that the event did not leave him unmoved. He might approve the measures that had been taken, or he might condemn them: a neutral on-looker he could not be. This was the biggest effort that had ever been made to bring the life of Israel into conformity with the will of God; it deals with the evils which he himself had denounced; and he could not avoid asking himself whether the thing was of the Lord or of man.³

What can be inferred of Jeremiah's attitudes toward the Deuteronomic legislation as it was discovered by Hilkiyah and officially promulgated by Josiah? Did he accept the Law as of divine origin, or was he suspicious of man-made, even fraudulent provenance? Skinner calls attention to two passages in Jeremiah where "it is thought clear and direct reference to Deuteronomy can be discovered"; ch. XI: 1-8 and ch. VII:8.⁴

The first passage, Jeremiah 11:1-8, contains two parts. The first, (vv. 1-5), is a reminder of the curse that is upon a man who will not hear and obey the words of "this Covenant" (v.3), which God commanded the fathers of Israel when he brought them out of Egypt.

The second (vv.6-8) commands Jeremiah to preach in the streets of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, saying, "Hear the words of this covenant and do them" (v.6). Skinner points out that the references to "this covenant" (v.3,6,8) have been taken by many to stand for Josiah's covenant renewal previously mentioned.⁵ Welch cites Erbt and König as having made this identification.⁶ However Welch himself rejects the idea and concludes that the words "this covenant" have reference to "that into which Israel entered with Yahweh at Sinai" at the time of the Exodus (Jer. 11:4,7).⁷ Keil and Delitzsch suggest that these oracles contain nothing that could not be related to Josiah's era, but say nothing about any relationship of 11:1-8 to Josiah's book of Deuteronomy.⁸ They admit, however, that the words, "Cursed is the man, etc." are taken from Deuteronomy 27:26, "from the directions for the engagement to keep the covenant, which the people were to solemnize upon their entry into Canaan."⁹ They also connect Jeremiah's command for "hearing" (v.3) with the promulgation of the law upon the mountains, Gerizim and Ebal (Joshua 8:30-35). That event was a call for covenant renewal designed to bind Israel to "keep or follow the law".¹⁰ The law to be established was the "law of the covenant" Yahweh made with Israel in Moab (Deuteronomy 28:69; 29:8), which, as these authors point out, was itself "but a renewal of that solemnly concluded at Sinai" (Exodus 24).¹¹ Elmer Leslie relates Jeremiah's phrase, "this covenant" directly to the moment of covenant making at Mount Sinai,¹² but he is also quite ready to recognize the hand of a Deuteronomic

editor, which seems to amount to a tacit admission of Deuteronomic elements in the account however they got there.¹³

Skinner maintains that the chief difficulty here is the indefiniteness of the expression "this covenant".¹⁴ He cites Davidson's view that in the last analysis any specific reference to Mosaic covenant must go back to the Sinai experience and that Jeremiah was not formally championing Deuteronomy.¹⁵ For Jeremiah, Davidson said, the idea of "covenant" is the basic principle of Old Testament religion, i.e., that Yahweh is Israel's God and Israel Yahweh's people. This concept may have been suggested by Josiah's covenant, but this does not prove Jeremiah's support of Deuteronomy.¹⁶ Erbt, as Skinner points out, found a "definite historical situation" behind the oracle, that which suited the situation best was the national covenant renewal of Josiah (II Kings 23:1 ff).¹⁷ Jeremiah, according to Erbt, was stirred by this great public espousal of the truths the prophets had so long proclaimed, and he sensed the voice of God coming to him in an inward revelation: "Cursed be he who will not hear the words of this covenant!" (11:3). To this warning, Jeremiah responded: "So be it, Lord" (v.5). According to this view, which excises verses 4, 5, 7 and 8 as later Deuteronomic additions, the command of Yahweh to "proclaim these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem" (v.6) found a responsiveness in Jeremiah's prophetic heart that led him to begin an itinerant ministry in the cities of Judah urging acceptance of the reform and its covenant renewal.¹⁸ Skinner seems to feel that

if Jeremiah 11:1-8 is authentic at all, it must at least reflect a public advocacy on Jeremiah's part of the basic principles of Josiah's reformation.¹⁹ However one looks at the problem, it seems unbiblical to separate the Deuteronomic covenant from that of Horeb, for they were not separate covenants. Skinner's ideas seem to be quite sane and impressive on this score:

For the explanation of 'this covenant' (vv.6,8) as meaning simply the formal idea of the covenant without special reference to Deuteronomy (which might suffice for vv.3-5) cannot be applied to vv.6-8. It is true that in v.7, the covenant idea seems to be viewed as a continuous principle running through the whole history of the nation, demanding obedience to a continuous revelation of the will of God through prophecy (cf. VII:25). But in v.8, the clause 'I brought upon them all the words of this covenant' must refer to a particular document containing specific threats against breaches of the covenant; and this could hardly be anything else than the book of Deuteronomy.²⁰

Skinner concludes that Jeremiah "was at first strongly in favor of the law of Deuteronomy, and lent his moral support to the reformation of Josiah."²¹

The passage in Jeremiah 8:8 poses deeper problems. It reads in the RSV:

How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.

Many commentators make no immediate connection between this oracle and the time of Josiah's reforms, including Keil and Delitzsch, and in more modern times Leslie. Skinner is ready to connect the words "The Law of the Lord" (the Torah) with Deuteronomy:²²

In Jeremiah's time Deuteronomy was the only written law which we can readily imagine to have been the object of such religious confidence as is described in the first half of this verse; and that Torah here means written law is so much the most natural view that we need hardly consider possible alternatives.²³

Welch also finds this passage to refer to Josiah's time:

The oracle is undated, but it is difficult to find any period of Jeremiah's life to which it can be referred except the reign of Josiah.²⁴

Welch's interpretation of what the "false pen of the scribes" was doing (v.8b) is that the Jerusalem priesthood had taken over the Deuteronomic law as found in the Temple and perverted it, either by scribal interpretation or through novel scribal additions which introduced elements having no divine authority. Welch suggests that Jeremiah here signified his rejection of the priestly perversions of the reform because they amounted to falsifications of divine revelation by the pen of man, which turned the understanding of Israel away from the original purposes of Yahweh's law.²⁵ Skinner notes that Marti's view of the verse as expressing Jeremiah's antipathy to Deuteronomy received acceptance among first rate Old Testament scholars.²⁶ He also asks whether other views are possible. He points out that two meanings are possible for the second half of verse eight:

1. That the people did not have the true Torah because Deuteronomy itself was a fraud, or

2. That having the true Torah of Yahweh, the people of Israel were not better off than before its discovery because it had been so "overlaid by scribal additions as to have lost all value as an ethical

standard".²⁷ For Skinner chapter 8:8 represents a "much later estimate" of the reform movement than does the passage in 11:1-8.²⁸ He concludes that the two passages taken together reflect an early espousal of the reform (11:1-8) and a growing disappointment with its "spiritual fruits" as time went on (8:8).²⁹ He also concludes that Jeremiah was not concerned so much with the content of the written law as with its effect on the inner heart and life of the people:

He had looked on Deuteronomy as setting forth a high ideal of national life, and a means of accomplishing much-needed reforms: in that sense it was to him a word of God; and he could say 'amen' to the curse on him who refused to obey it. But to the people it became a fetish, and its possession a substitute for the inward knowledge of God which then and always was to Jeremiah the essence of religion.³⁰

Skinner's views seem to present the soundest assessment of these difficult matters of exegesis and interpretation. Rowley, while pointing out that every aspect of them has been challenged at one time or another, finds them still essentially sound.³¹ Of the prophet's relationship to Deuteronomy as a code, it seems necessary to conclude that he did not, could not, have opposed the Law code as such, but did oppose the abuses to which it more and more lent itself as the reform years wore on.

B. The Prophet's Feelings for King Josiah

When the Deuteronomic law was promulgated, Josiah was twenty-six years old and Jeremiah about twenty-four. These two young men were contemporaries. Whether or not they were acquainted, whether or not

there was any personal interaction between them, the fact that they were contemporaries is important. One was the greatest Judean king since David: the other, perhaps Israel's greatest prophet. Sooner or later they were bound to interact directly or indirectly. We must remember that, as Leslie points out, Jeremiah "observed the total official career of the monarch who at his tragic death was only thirty-nine."³²

What can be said, as Jeremiah's reactions to the reform are considered, of the young prophet's personal feelings for the young king? Only one of the oracles of Jeremiah throws any direct light on the matter, the passage in Jeremiah 22:13-19 in which the prophet compares Josiah with his profligate son, the now ruling Jehoiakim. For Jehoiakim, Jeremiah has nothing but scorn and warning:

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice;
who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing
and does not give him his wages. . . .
Do you think you are a king because you
compete in cedar? ³³

As Egypt's vassal Jehoiakim had set out to be a typical oriental despot indulging himself in magnificent works and building a palatial dwelling at the expense of his subjects whom he taxed and impressed (Jeremiah 22:13). He was cruel and selfish, a man as different from his father as day is from night.

If his father wanted to model his reign after David, then Jehoiakim's ambition was to be another Solomon. Jeremiah draws a sharp contrast between the two rulers in his oracle in 22:13-19.³⁴

Josiah, on the other hand, lived a full and regal life, yet a righteous one:

Did not your father eat and drink and do
justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
and it was well.
Is not this to know me?³⁵

Josiah had enjoyed life and at the same time carried out his rule as under divine guidance, administering justice and sustaining the cause of righteousness. This eulogy is not overdrawn. It is restrained, yet for Jeremiah is high praise. When Josiah took the part of the poor and needy, things went well. Keil and Delitzsch maintain this means that "things were well managed in the kingdom at large." ³⁶ This practical working out in daily life of the Deuteronomic ideals was to the prophetic mind tantamount to "knowing" Yahweh.

An earnest, God-fearing man, enjoying in measure the pleasure of the table. . . . , but resolute in administering justice and upholding the rights of the poor; such is Jeremiah's portrait of the king who had made Deuteronomy not only the law of the realm, but also the rule of his own life. 'Was not this to know Me?' saith Yahweh.³⁷

This passage in Jeremiah is enough to suggest that Josiah's regnal activities were consistent with the characterizations of him in the Kings and Chronicles (II Kings 22:2; 23:25; II Chronicles 34:3; 35:18, 26-27). Jeremiah, therefore, held Josiah in high esteem. Nowhere in his oracles is there the slightest note of criticism of Josiah as a man or as a ruler. In the account of II Chronicles 35:25 we are reminded that at the news of Josiah's tragic death "Jeremiah

also uttered a lament for Josiah."

Having come to the conclusion that Jeremiah's later disillusionment was not bound up with the teachings of the Deuteronomic code in themselves, nor with any particular defects in King Josiah as a man, we must consider more of what his feelings for the reformation itself were particularly after the death of Josiah in 609 B.C.

C. The Prophet's Attitude Toward the Deuteronomic Reformation

Leslie envisions a period of silence in Jeremiah's ministry as a watchman of Judah between the years 621 and 609 B.C.³⁸ He tries to account for this imagined silence by accepting some of the ideas of Volz, who believed that Jeremiah's preaching of 3:1-5, 3:19-4:4 had prepared the ground for the reform activity of Josiah.³⁹ We have previously suggested that the prophetic activity of Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and others may well have contributed to the forces which set the reform in motion, but Volz may be too sure of his ground at this point. Skinner's concept of Jeremiah living in comparative obscurity at Anathoth at the time of Deuteronomy's discovery,⁴⁰ and the fact that Huldah was consulted rather than Jeremiah (II Kings 22:14 ff) may be indications that Volz's theory goes too far when he says:

It discloses to us that through Jeremiah there took place under Josiah a turn to the true religion. His preaching prepared the way for the reform.⁴¹

It is difficult to reconcile the thought of a complete prophetic silence between 621 and 609 with the words of Jeremiah 25:3 which have already come under consideration against Whitely's contentions.⁴²

Jeremiah's own testimony was that he kept up a continuous prophetic output from the thirteenth year of Josiah until "the fourth year of Jehoiakim." This, apparently, dates his testimony (Jeremiah 25:1). If we cannot agree completely that Jeremiah was silent during these years, we can accept some of Volz's ideas of Jeremiah's feelings about the early stages of the reform:

He greeted the proclamation of Josiah joyfully, bringing as it did the fulfillment of many of his wishes, the elimination of the worship of celestial bodies, of the worship at the high places and of superstitions, and the renewal oath (4:2) of the entire nation to obey the Lord as the sole God. (cf. II Kings 23:3ff)⁴³

Doubtless Jeremiah did at first welcome the advent of reform as an ally in his struggle against paganism and syncretism. This agrees with the theories of Skinner which we have previously adopted. The reform's demand for social justice also must have warmed the heart of Jeremiah; and he cannot but have welcomed Josiah's extension of national control into Samaria as far north as Bethel. Jeremiah's ancestry was of North Israel, and his sympathies were with the people of the North as seen in the lament for Rachel's children (Jer. 31:15):

Jeremiah never forgot that he was a northerner, and such a picture as he gives of Rachel weeping over her children (31:15) interprets the prophet's yearning for these exiles, who along with their descendants, since 734, have been in Assyria or Assyrian dominated areas.⁴⁴

Jeremiah's initial approval of the reform measures may also be reflected in the personal antagonism of the men of Anathoth who plotted to assassinate him:

Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, and say, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, or you will die by our hand,' - therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: "Behold, I will punish them; the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; and none of them shall be left. For I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, the year of their punishment."⁴⁵

It is true that a prophet was often least esteemed in his own country, and that "a man's foes shall be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:36). But it is difficult to account for the degree of this animosity toward Jeremiah by his own kinsmen on other grounds than that Jeremiah had thrown his support behind the reforms with their emphasis on the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem. The priests of Anathoth, as Dr. Kuist implies, were descended from Abiathar, while the sons of Zadok were in control of the Jerusalem priesthood:

Josiah's reforms, which tended to centralize all worship in Jerusalem and prohibit it elsewhere (II Kings 23:4-20), entrenched the sons of Zadok more firmly in Jerusalem, and so the Anathoth priests were excluded even more fully than before. May it not be that this is what stirred the men of Anathoth into a frenzy of hate when one of their own number, by prophesying in the name of the Lord, lent his support to the reforms of Josiah?⁴⁶

Here is additional evidence that Jeremiah at first supported the reform activities. But we have seen how Jeremiah began to grow distrustful of the results of the reform as he detected a creeping perversion of the national understanding of the Law of God and saw the abuses which grew out of its misinterpretation. This disillusion-

ment evidently grew in the mind of Jeremiah until, as reflected in some of his post-Josianic writings, he became almost completely disenchanted with the reform's results. Let us briefly survey some evidences of his growing distaste for the Deuteronomic results. Skinner suggests that the internal evidence of Jeremiah's growing alienation may be scanty because it is "probably true that Jeremiah remained long a supporter of the accomplished reformation."⁴⁷ He feels that the book of Deuteronomy must have very shortly after its discovery passed into the hands of the Jerusalem priesthood, "in whose hands it developed tendencies which more than neutralized any good that the movement ever contained."⁴⁸ Jeremiah quickly perceived the sprouting seeds of perversion - formalism, the wrong emphasis on the cultus, the false sense of national security fostered by the mere possession of the Law book. In time his utterances against these perversions became more frequent and more strongly denunciatory.

The difficulty is to determine how far such utterances express disillusionment or change of attitude on his part, or whether they are consistent with an earlier advocacy of the Deuteronomic covenant.⁴⁹

It is interesting that Anderson, as opposed to the aforementioned ideas of Volz and Leslie on Jeremiah's silence, says that while Jeremiah did step into the "public arena" again at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, suggesting a period of silence, his silence probably resulted from "growing disillusionment about Josiah's reform program."⁵⁰ It is most significant, in this connection, that Jeremiah, while he strongly attacked the evils of formalism and fetish-making,

never directly accosted the Deuteronomic Law itself.

The really significant fact is that while he relentlessly exposes the evil effects of the formal acceptance of Deuteronomy, he never (with the disputed exception of VII:8) directly assails the Law itself, or the men who were responsible for first putting it in force.⁵¹

We can examine only a few of the passages which seem to reflect Jeremiah's growing conviction that the reform was inadequate.

The words of Jeremiah 11:9-13 are instructive in that they portray the men of Judah and Jerusalem as still in revolt against Yahweh:

Again the Lord said to me, 'There is revolt among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words; they have gone after other gods to serve them, the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers For your gods have become as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to burn incense to Baal.⁵²

Dr. Kuist notes that this "revolt" might refer to local uprisings in protest over the abolition of the local shrines, or "to quiet but determined resistance to the reforms across the land."⁵³ It is not known whether Josiah was still alive or whether these reactions occurred during Jehoiakim's reign. At any rate Jeremiah detects in them a reversal of the direction of the reform: "They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers" (v. 10). The reform had not gone deep enough; it had not changed the hearts nor convicted the consciences of God's people. As the novelty and initial impetus of reform began to wear thin the people returned to their old ways,

erecting more altars to Baal and worshipping the same old pantheon of pagan gods (v. 13), if not openly, at least in their hearts and in the secret places (v. 12). As a nation Judah had already violated the covenant she had so recently vowed to keep (v. 10). To Jeremiah's mind this was nothing more or less than "open treason against God."⁵⁴

Though it may be obscure in the Hebrew, Jeremiah 11:15 is significant at this point:

What right has my beloved in my house, when she has
done vile deeds?
Can vows and sacrificial flesh avert your doom?
Can you then exult?

The RSV rendering follows the Septuagint and fits the context well. Why do the Covenant people continue to come to the Temple in Jerusalem when their deeds are "vile"? What good are their offerings and vows made at the Temple for Yahweh, when the people turn away to their localities and there continue to burn incense to Baal (v. 17)? God will judge this kind of hypocrisy, and Jeremiah will no longer go on interceding for the false lovers of Yahweh (vv. 14-17). Obviously, the reformation had failed to transform the hearts of the people.

Other passages such as 6:16-21 seem to reflect similar opposition to the outworkings of Deuteronomy in the popular life.

To what purpose does frankincense come to me from Sheba,
Or sweet cane from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable,
nor your sacrifices pleasing to me.⁵⁵

Skinner observes that here the 'old paths' of the true ethical principles of the Mosaic Torah which these people had "rejected" (v. 19), are

contrasted with "new-fangled costly refinements in cultus - frankincense that comes from Sheba' and 'fine calamus from a far off land' (v. 20)."⁵⁶

Evidently the people, disillusioned with the Deuteronomic Reform, were turning enthusiastically to the old ways.⁵⁷

These failures of the reform to penetrate the hearts of men nettled Jeremiah's spirit until he could not restrain himself. To his mind the Temple had become the most obvious symbol of all that was wanting in the situation. Early in the reign of Jehoiakim he felt led to preach his powerful "Temple Sermon." Its delivery marked the beginning of Jeremiah's open opposition to the reform (Jeremiah 7:1-15; 21-26; chapter 26).

In the temple address, therefore, the prophet parts company with the reformers, or those who still clung to the hope that by the accomplished reformation the state had been saved.⁵⁸

We shall discuss the sermon at some length because of its importance for an understanding of Jeremiah's feelings about the reform.

Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place.⁵⁹

With these words, Jeremiah fired the first salvo of his open warfare with the Deuteronomic reformers. It is not possible to date the occasion of the Temple Sermon exactly. In the light of the words of Jeremiah 26:1-6 where we read:

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, 'Thus says the Lord: stand in the court of

the Lord's house and speak to all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the house of the Lord all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back.

We prefer to date it early in the reign of King Jehoiakim. This view is accepted by a number of scholars.⁶⁰

It is our contention that Jeremiah 7:1-15 together with 7:21-26 form the sum and substance of the oracle that came to Jeremiah "out of communion with the Lord."⁶¹ These passages embody the original revelation of God's message which was later to be preached at the Temple. The words of chapter 26:1-6, however, speak of the occasion of the actual deliverance of the sermon. What follows 26:1 is a brief command concerning the time and place of the delivery of the message, "in the court of the Lord's house" "to all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the house of the Lord" (26:2). After a word of hope that repentance may follow (v. 3), a brief summary of the conclusions of the message is set forth. Probably in neither passage do we have the exact rendering of the words which Jeremiah preached, though 7:1-15, and 21-26 must be a close approximation of the actual content. Jeremiah undoubtedly took the directions of 7:1 and 26:1 to mean that he should stand in one of the inner gates leading from the court of the people to the court of the priests, where he could be heard by both people and priests. "All of you men of Judah" (7:1) indicates the direct address of the actual message, while the words "to all the cities of Judah which come to worship" (26:2) are a general reference to the people from all over Judah who would be at Jerusalem for some

great convocation, either feast or coronation. Leslie feels the words indicate a "time between his [Jehoiakim's] accession to the throne and the beginning of the first regnal year", ⁶² perhaps a festival celebrating the enthronement of Jehoiakim. The sermonic introduction of verses 3-4 sets forth, in good homiletic style, brief positive and negative commands. The God who identifies himself through his prophet as "The Lord of hosts" (v. 3) calls on the people of Judah to "amend their ways and their doings." This introduces the central issue of the sermon. The people are to "amend" - אָמַדּוּ, "to make good their doings", which are the various acts composing a way of life, and also "their ways" אֲדָרָתָם, their settled habits, which are the tendencies or underlying directives of the "doings." All this means that they are not merely to amend their conduct but to make their ways good, that is, to lead a good life.⁶³ The fruit of this amendment of their ways would be permanent residence in the land (v. 7). The words "I will let you dwell in this place" (v. 7) must have come as a shock to the hearers. Jeremiah wanted to impress on them that they were sojourners in a land not their own. Like a dash of cold water in the face, these words must have jarred a people whose very presence in the Temple supposedly evidenced good spiritual intention.

The negative imperative "do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord,'" (7:4) gets at the root cause of their false way of life, which is their false religion. The Hebrew

כַּח-דְּבַר יְהוָה is a construct form meaning "^{these} words of deception" or "lying words." A basic meaning of כַּח is "to disappoint"; and it is well for us to remember that a lie involves eventual disappointment. The "deceptive words," a threefold repetition of the phrase "This is the temple of the Lord," were evidently an incantation of the false prophets who were in league with the supporters of the centralized cult. The repetition was made for the sake of emphasizing the importance of worshipping at the central sanctuary. But for Jeremiah it was a heathenish "vain repetition". In Micah's day people had said, "Yahweh is in our midst, upon us no evil can come" (Micah 3:11). At this point in Jeremiah's career, the Jerusalem Temple had been substituted in the minds of the people for the real presence of God. Its very presence was thought to guarantee security and blessing. The people were being lulled into a false sense of security by cultic priests and false prophets who placed an emphasis on the rites and rituals of the sanctuary rather than on the inward transformation of life.

The main body of the sermon includes verses 5-15 and 21-26. Jeremiah speaks of the nature and result of spiritual amendment (verses 5-7).

"For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever.

He begins with a conditional sentence (vv. 5,6) which spells out the nature of the amending of their ways and doings. The Hebrew phrase

- דִּלְמָא 'וְ, "for if" signifies "but on the contrary".⁶⁴ Here the prophet has returned to the positive emphasis.

He speaks of what he would oppose to trust in lying words, which is amendment of the whole way of life. He gives four Deuteronomic examples of "ways and doings": the execution of justice; the right treatment of the אֲרָמִי, "strangers in the land", and of the fatherless and widows; and the prohibition against shedding innocent blood. These examples represent man-to-man relationships.

The final example urges the avoidance of idolatry "going after other gods to your own hurt", representing man's relationship to Yahweh.

The direct antecedents of these commands are found in Deuteronomy: 1:16; 10:18; 14:29; 15:11; 16:11,14; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:12, 13; 27:19, which relate the commands concerning the care of sojourners,

fatherless, and widows; Deuteronomy: 10:18; 16:19,20; 24:17,19 (the last two of which connect "justice" with the "sojourners") and 32:4,

which have to do with the exercise of justice; Deuteronomy: 19:10,13; 21:8, which have to do with the shedding and guilt of "innocent blood";

and Deuteronomy 5:7; 6:14; 7:4; 8:19; 11:16, 28; 13:2, 6, 13; 17:3; 18:20; 28:14, 36, 64; 29:26; 30:17; 31:18, 20, which prohibit the

worship and service of "other gods." Jeremiah has masterfully turned

Deuteronomy against the Deuteronomists, and there is more to come

(vv. 8ff). Keil says "to your own hurt" (v. 6) relates to all the

foregoing commands⁶⁵

The apodosis (v. 7) reiterates the promise of permanent dwelling in the "land" introduced in verse 3. The addition here of "in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever" strengthens the thought of verse 3 that Yahweh is the landlord, the "suzerain" and the people his guests in a land not theirs. The word "forever", לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד denotes a period of time without beginning or end - or of such duration that no man can know its terminal points. It also re-emphasizes the covenant aspect of their dwelling in the land. God gave the land to the fathers of Israel through a covenant, which was a type of suzerainty treaty according to some modern scholars (a theory propounded in the work of Meredith Kline for one).⁶⁶

As the covenant was to be in force forever, so the covenant land was to be the permanent possession of their posterity, the covenant people. Jeremiah emphasizes this: "In the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever." This statement can form part of the apodosis of a conditional thought pattern because, though the covenant promise itself was absolute, and the land a permanent possession of the whole posterity of Abraham, the privilege of any one generation or individual of that posterity to dwell there was conditioned on obedience to the covenant and its code. Jeremiah's message gains a growing power to grip and to convict its hearers by this use of Deuteronomy and reference to the conditions of the Covenant.

Jeremiah returns to the second emphasis of his introduction in

verse 8, the nature of their misplaced trust (vv. 8-10).

He warns the Israelites their trust in the "deceptive words" will be fruitless, "to no avail". לְבַלְתָּ is literally

"so as not", in order not. The phrase לְבַלְתָּ הוֹפִיעַ, (infinitive construct) becomes "in order not to profit." The result is strong

and final. The people are living under a strong delusion and therefore need strong warnings. Jeremiah refuses to temper the message

with timidity or misplaced love. They break all the Deuteronomic laws (v. 9) stealing, murdering, swearing falsely, going after other

gods, even to the extent of burning incense to Baal, and think that

because they come to the Temple in Jerusalem crying, "We are delivered"

(v. 10), that they will remain secure. Jeremiah knows that they will

go out from the Temple where, in their minds, God is not, and commit

the same sins all over again - somehow with lasting impunity. These

crimes are direct and flagrant violations of the decalogue as set

forth in its Deuteronomic form (Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Jeremiah is

overwhelmed by the failure of the reform to prevent flagrant violations

of the basic section of the Code. He is amazed at the hypocrisy of

these people who come to the Temple thinking or pretending that

merely by coming to a holy place they are free from guilt. "We are

delivered" is וַיִּצֵל, niphal of צָלַ

and thus "to snatch or deliver any one from danger," "pull out",

"to be plucked out," "delivered". This cry evidently signified their

belief that they were not only forgiven but safe from all harm because

in some magical way Yahweh's favor and powers were supposed to rub off on them.

God sets before them their brazen shamefulness. While they are committing these atrocities, they come into the presence of that God whose very Commandment they have broken, stand in the dwelling of the God of unchanging justice and righteousness, and having gone through their rites, they say: We are delivered, now we are safe, we are God's own! And all that not for the purpose of changing their ways, but to keep on doing all these abominations.⁶⁷

This amazing revelation of their sin and hypocrisy is framed as a question (vv. 8-10). It is followed by another question which summarizes the way God feels about their attitudes and motives:

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?

(7:11)

By their actions, they have turned the holy place where God meets with his people into an underworld hangout. The question would strike Jeremiah's audience with an impact similar to that which might be generated if a modern preacher accused his upper middle class white Protestant congregation of turning the church building into a house of ill repute through their sinful ways.

Jeremiah follows this expose of the enormity of the people's folly, of their trusting the "deceiving words", with a word about the Temple adherents. Had the Temple become nothing more than a den of thieves in their eyes? Had the God whose name was affixed to the house sunk so low in their estimation that they thought their ways compatible with true religion? Or did they not care? God too has eyes that see.

God knows the real truth of these things (v. 11), for God knows the answers to the questions. Judgment shall follow for those who hold the honor of the name, "Yahweh" in such low esteem. Jeremiah has been able to use Deuteronomy against these idolators, and he is able to cite historical precedent for the judgment he now pronounces. "The divine landlord serves his notice of eviction."⁶⁸ Jeremiah first invites Judah to visit Shiloh where the Tabernacle of old had found its permanent home (Joshua 18:1). Jeremiah's hearers are reminded of what Yahweh did to his sanctuary at Shiloh "where I made my name to dwell at first" (v. 12).

Archaeology seems to confirm the fact that the Israelites first settled Shiloh, there being no evidences for Canaanite settlement between 1600 - 1200 B. C.⁶⁹ With the loss of the Ark of the Covenant to the Philistines, Shiloh ceased to be an Israelite cult center and never regained its former importance. The Danish Palestine expedition excavating at modern Silun found evidence that Shiloh was destroyed about 1050 B.C., probably under assault from the Philistines (I Sam. 4:11). The ruins were evidently still visible in the time of Jeremiah, and therefore provided a visible analogy to what he was predicting for Jerusalem.⁷⁰ God forsook "his dwelling at Shiloh" says Psalm 78:60, and therefore by Jeremiah's time the ruins of Shiloh were evidently a symbol of desolation to all Judah.

God through Jeremiah promises that the Temple of Jerusalem will suffer a similar fate to that of Shiloh's sanctuary (v. 14). In

addition to the destruction of the Temple, God promises the removal of the people. "I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim" (v. 15). Again Jeremiah has the historical precedent of the exile and dispersion of the Northern tribes of Israel to which he may allude. This double-edged judgment, the destruction of the Temple in which they trusted, and the Exile from the Covenant Land on which they based their security - will be the logical and inescapable result of failure to heed the warnings of the prophet of verses 3 and 4. There the Temple and the Land were inextricably bound up with the commands of God, and here their loss is the anticipated result of failure to obey.

The double judgment is pronounced in terms of absolute inevitability, the contingent note of the previous verses (5-7) being absent. This, as we have said, has caused some scholars to find 5-7 a Deuteronomic insertion.⁷¹ But we should note that the judgment is the effect of a causal process (v. 13):

And now because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do the house . . . as I did to Shiloh.⁷²

The whole sermon embodies a telescoping of the contingent and the absolute. It surveys the course of present and future human-historical processes. It views together what might have been had repentance followed the warnings, and what will be since repentance has not been forthcoming. Jeremiah has learned through the inspired prophetic in-

sight and revelation that Judah will not repent. Therefore the pronouncement of judgment is final. So it is because of the people's refusal to amend their way of life after repeated warnings go unheeded that the double judgment must fall.

Though we have preferred to view as part of the "Temple Sermon" 7:21-26 which records God's desire for obedience rather than observance, we have not time to consider it in detail. The segment is, however, woven of the same cloth as verses 1-15, joining the warnings against continued disobedience, with historical analogies to Israel's failures of the past in a pattern similar to that of 1-15. The Exodus story and the warnings to the "fathers" because of similar and persistent disobedience give us parallels which help confirm the relationship of 21-26 to 1-15.

Whether Jeremiah uttered the verses that deal with the sacrifices at the same time as those which refer to the temple, or uttered them on a different occasion, he declared that the sacrificial system formed no essential part of the revelation made to Moses, and he also announced in the divine name that Yahweh was about to destroy the temple, the religious center where these sacrifices were offered. What such an announcement in the name of Yahweh means is that the interests of true religion would be better served if the whole system should disappear.⁷³

Jeremiah's sermon, when it was finally preached (as we think 26:1-6 records), aroused immediate and violent reactions. The prophet was seized by the priests and false prophets and threatened with death. So quickly did the news of the turmoil spread that it soon reached Jehoiakim's court, and some of the nobles went up to the "New Gate" of

the Temple (26:10) to hear the case out. There the priests and prophets continued to demand the death penalty, and the situation was very tense. It is rather ironic that certain lay elders came to Jeremiah's defense by citing another historical analogy - Micah's words "in the days of Hezekiah." ⁷⁴ Jeremiah's life was spared through the multiple influences of his own quiet courage in self-defense, the precedent of Micah's experience, and the help of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan (26:24).

The sermon, therefore, marked the flinging down of the gauntlet. From this point on Jeremiah waged lonely warfare against the emptiness and sham of the Deuteronomic religion. He was later barred from the Temple environs but he kept on using the Temple as a pulpit by employing Baruch as his mouthpiece (ch. 39).

The strong Deuteronomic flavor of the Sermon shows that Jeremiah was not opposed to the Code itself. He believed the Deuteronomic legislation vital to the foundation of true spirituality and morality, as shown by his contrasting Deuteronomic demands and Israelite behaviour. What he opposed was the trend toward externalization of religion which entrenched itself more and more deeply with the continuation of the reform movement. The trend was based on the Deuteronomic materials and a growing tendency to ignore the moral codes of Deuteronomy.

Neither was Jeremiah opposed to the centralization of the cult and its worship in the Jerusalem Temple as such. What he opposed, as the Sermon so graphically shows, was the perversion of the worship

and the superstitious quasimagical use which they made of the sanctuary and its rites.

The Temple, he says in effect, is not what men call it or imagine it to be, but what by their actions they make it. It might have been the place where Yahweh's gracious presence was experienced if they had hallowed his name by lives lived in piety and righteousness, but used as they use it, it has become even in Yahweh's eyes a cave for robbers to shelter themselves in.⁷⁵

Some say the central issue of the Sermon has to do with what it is that affords protection and security.⁷⁶

In Jesus' day the idolatrous tendencies of the heart of man had made Herod's Temple a "den of thieves." Jeremiah's problem was Jesus' problem and is our problem. Many of our church men succumb to the temptation of making fetishes out of church buildings or church observances. So Jeremiah's Temple Sermon has much to say to the modern preacher, and Jeremiah's courage in preaching it needs to rub off on those of us who are called to speak the word of the Lord to the "Judeans" of our own Jerusalems.

Jeremiah continued to agonize over the stubbornness and rebelliousness of the Judeans (5:23). He constantly warned them of their approaching doom, but they did not listen (6:10). The real problem was rooted deep in their spiritual nature, "the heart" of man which is so readily self-deceived :

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately corrupt;
Who can understand it? ⁷⁷

This great insight into the modern understanding of depth psychology

and man's spiritual nature introduces the subject of the prophet's crowning insight into the defectiveness of the Deuteronomic reforms. Deuteronomy as Law and covenant suffered from the same defects as the Sinaitic covenant and Law, which could not enable man to find the moral strength to obey God. Jeremiah clearly saw that a "new covenant" was needed (31:31-34) which would meet man's moral inability on a different level.

Chapters 30 through 33 of Jeremiah have been called the "Book of Consolation" because they breathe promise and hope in the midst of a biblical record noted for its air of pessimism.⁷⁸ One of the prominent elements of this segment, and a remarkable one, is that Israel and Judah are in view together (30:1; 31:27, 31). The restoration of the fortunes of one will include the other. To Jeremiah's mind this means some kind of reunion of North and South. This is typical of the optimistic outlook of the section, all the more remarkable because at the time of writing the Babylonians were attacking Jerusalem; and Jeremiah himself was in prison for suggesting that Jerusalem should capitulate to the Chaldeans.⁷⁹ The nature of the setting is well expressed by Cawley when he says:

Up till now the tone of Jeremiah's prophecies has been gloomy in the extreme. True from time to time a gleam of light fell upon the dark path of God's people, but that was an exception rather than the rule. These chapters present a remarkable change. Though we still hear the thunder of judgment in the distance, on the whole the sky is clear, and the message is one of hope. This is rather remarkable, for chapters XXXii and XXXiii were written in the tenth year of Zedekiah, i.e. on the very eve of the final collapse....What an extraordinary

situation! Jeremiah is in prison, famine and pestilence rage in the city, and the Babylonian army is battering against the wall of Jerusalem. This was Judah's midnight hour and the people needed hope and comfort. In this dark hour God has a message for His people. The message is that the nation is not to perish. More than that the time will come when even the Gentile nations will acknowledge God's truth, and when a righteous branch will arise from the house of David whose name will be the Lord our Righteousness.⁸⁰

Through Jeremiah God said, "The days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (31:31)". The phrase "to make a new covenant" emphasizes a covenant which is functionally new in contrast to the old, but just as literally covenanted as the old covenant made at Sinai (31:32).⁸¹ When the prophet speaks of God's taking the fathers "by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (31:32), he represents the whole history of the Exodus process and the subsequent forty years of wandering in the wilderness. God, as a father, had taken his children by the hand to lead them out of the darkness of Egypt, but they had failed to follow his lead. They broke "faith" with their Father-Husband, Yahweh by breaking their covenant vows (31:32). Again as at Sinai this "new covenant" will be made with both Israel and Judah (31:31,33) which indicates the whole people of God in unity, and which links the old historical covenant of the past with a universal covenant of the eschatological future:

No longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord.⁸²

The old covenant unlike the new had no power to enable men to keep

its conditions and the people of Israel literally "broke" the covenant time and again (31:32). The new will not simply restate or rewrite the precepts of the old. The old precepts as a code of law will be superseded; and a new form of man's relationship to God introduced (31:33). God himself will put his law into the hearts of men (v.33). Whereas the old covenant had been written on tablets of stone, the new would be inscribed upon the "fleshly tablets" of the hearts of men (31:33; cf. II Cor. 3:3). The "heart" as the seat of man's inner life was to become the locus of a new law, not a code but a power of enablement:

The law written on the heart implies an inner principle which can deal with each case of conscience sympathetically as it arises, and can ensure the fulfillment of its behests because it has brought the inner life into perfect harmony with itself.⁸³

Of course Peake's word here rests on the additional revelation that the book of Hebrews (ch.8) introduces concerning the ultimate Christological fulfillment of these truths. But the statement does emphasize the degree of newness that Jeremiah envisioned for the "new covenant."

Jeremiah's relative universalism of verse 34 was a mighty step forward in the progress of revelation. But greater fulfillment which includes Gentiles must await the coming of the Christ.

Jeremiah's emphasis on the universal knowledge of God - from the least to the greatest - takes on deepened force when we recall how Jeremiah had sought among the poor and the great (5:4-5), for men who knew the way of the Lord, yet without success. But when this new life with God begins, the knowledge of God will be possessed by the least and the greatest alike within the nation of Israel.⁸⁴

Jeremiah's "new Covenant" projects other great innovations which are important in the light of the obsolescence of the old. There will be total forgiveness of sin and iniquity, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (v.34). There will be covenant-permanence, for the new covenant will not lend itself to being broken (32:40).

Anderson has a fine summary of the several facets of this "finely cut jewel" which left its imprint upon the future of all divine revelation more indelibly than any other of Jeremiah's oracles:⁸⁵

- a. The new covenant like the old rests upon the initiative and authority of God. "I will make ..." (v.31).
- b. But this Covenant will not be like the Mosaic Covenant which became a "broken" covenant (v.31).

Even the attempt of the Deuteronomic Reformation to restore the Mosaic covenant had failed - a failure that must have been in the background of Jeremiah's prophecy.⁸⁶

The history of broken covenants would come to an end with the permanence of the new.

- c. The new covenant would also fulfill the original intention of that made at Sinai, a purpose that had been eclipsed by religious ceremonies and laws. The Torah would then be written on men's hearts, finding personal response to the God who says "Obey my voice".

- d. A new community would arise (v.33), truly a covenant community. Here the typical covenant formula is used, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (v.33), emphasizing the

interraction of the two parties to the berith. But under the new the knowledge of God will be inward as when "a friend knows a friend."

e. The new Covenant will rest on divine forgiveness (v.34) which is total and universal, for all who will accept the covenant.

f. The climax of all this is seen in the words, "Behold the days are coming" (v.31), suggesting the fulfillment of the divine purpose in history. Through all of this Jeremiah came to see clearly that God's activity in history consists of a two-fold endeavor, as Jeremiah was informed at his calling - first a tearing down, and then a building up.

See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.⁸⁷

The prophetess, Huldah, had been right:

Because they have forsaken me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched.⁸⁸

The reforms of Josiah only temporarily arrested the day of judgment when the "breaking down" of the old order would be complete, Jerusalem destroyed, (II Kings 25:8-12) Jeremiah 52:12-16), the nation defeated and in Exile. They were but the dying gasps of the old covenant order as Jeremiah came to understand, a covenant which could never make men ultimately righteous. Through all of this drama of reform God was "watching over his word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12). The goodness of King Josiah was recognized, and

the rightness of Deuteronomy as a code. The centralization of the cult as a principle was accepted by Jeremiah as God's spokesman. But when the clouds of disillusionment over the failure of all this to produce a true spiritual renaissance were dispelled, Jeremiah's pessimism gave way to hope. God was still watching over his word. The judgment of breaking down must come, but it would be followed by the "building up" of the New Order - a day in which restoration and reunion would be accompanied by a new and permanent covenant under which the divine Producer-Director would become the Friend of sinners and the Saviour of the lost.

NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 89.
2. Rowley, Men of God, p. 134.
3. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p.96.
4. Ibid., p. 97
5. Ibid.
6. Welch, Jeremiah, pp. 94-96.
7. Ibid., p. 97
8. Keil and Delitzsch, The Prophecies of Jeremiah, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. David Patrick, vol. I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 209.
9. Ibid., p. 211.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Leslie, op. cit., p. 83.
13. Ibid., pp. 82-84.
14. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 98.
15. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
16. Ibid., p. 100.
17. Ibid., pp. 100-102.
18. Ibid., p. 101.
19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 102.
21. Ibid., pp. 102-103.
22. Ibid., p. 103.
23. Ibid.
24. Welch, Jeremiah, p. 90.
25. Ibid., p. 92.
26. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 103.
27. Ibid., p. 104.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., pp. 104-105.
30. Ibid., p. 105.
31. Rowley, Men of God, pp. 133-134.
32. Leslie, op. cit., p. 93.
33. Jeremiah 22: 13a, 15a.
34. Anderson, op. cit., p. 330.
35. Jeremiah 22: 15b-16.
36. Keil and Delitzsch, Jeremiah, p. 340.
37. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 248.
38. Leslie, op. cit., p. 93.
39. Ibid.
40. See page 115.
41. Paul Volz, Der Prophet Jeremiah, (Leipzig: a Deichert, 1922),
p. 42, quoted by Leslie, op. cit., p. 93.
42. See page p. 42 ff.
43. Volz, op. cit., p. 42, quoted by Leslie, op. cit., p. 93.

44. Ibid., p. 94
45. Jeremiah 11: 21-23.
46. Kuist, op. cit., p. 46.
47. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 114.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., pp. 114-115.
50. Anderson, op. cit., p. 331.
51. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 115.
52. Jeremiah 11:9-10, 13.
53. Kuist, op. cit., p. 45.
54. Leslie, op. cit., p. 84.
55. Jeremiah 6:20-21.
56. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 116.
57. Anderson, op. cit., p. 331.
58. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 177.
59. Jeremiah 7:2-3.
60. Kuist, op. cit., p. 36; Leslie, op. cit., p. 114.; Welch, Jeremiah, p. 135.; Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 169.
61. Leslie, op. cit., p. 114.
62. Ibid.
63. C. F. Keil, The Prophecies of Jeremiah, The Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), p. 153.
64. Ibid., p. 154.
65. Ibid., p. 155.
66. Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963).
67. Laetsch, op. cit., p. 95.

68. Ibid., p. 96
69. W. L. Reed, "Shiloh", Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, vol. IV (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 328
70. Ibid., p. 330
71. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 170.
72. Jeremiah 7:13-14.
73. Welch, Jeremiah, p. 143.
74. Micah 3:12; 4:1; Jeremiah 26:18; Cf. Welch, Jeremiah, p. 143.
75. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, p. 175.
76. James Philip Hyatt, "The Book of Jeremiah", The Interpreter's Bible, Vol V (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 870. Here Hyatt refers to the ideas of Volz.
77. Jeremiah 17:9.
78. Kuist, op. cit., p. 19
79. This view of Jeremiah's situation is maintained by conservatives such as F. Cawley, "Jeremiah", The New Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eardmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 626.
80. Ibid.
81. Kuist, op. cit., p. 95.
82. Jeremiah 31:34.
83. Arthur S. Peake, Jeremiah and Lamentations, The New Century Bible, (New York: Henry Frowde, n.d.), p. 106.
84. Leslie, op. cit., p. 106.
85. Anderson, op. cit., pp. 353-354
86. Ibid.
87. Jeremiah 1:10.
88. II Kings 22:17.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD'S WATCHING OVER HIS WORD:

A. The Aftermath of the Reform

The tragic death of Josiah and subsequent national humiliation, first by Egypt (609 - 605 B.C.)¹ and then by the Babylonians from 605 until the final destruction of Jerusalem in July of 587 B.C.² must have appeared to the multitudes of Israel as a "denial of the Deuteronomic theology."³ They saw in the reforms of Josiah and the centralization of worship at Jerusalem basic compliance with the requirements of Deuteronomy. Stunned and disillusioned by the tragic turn of events, they felt betrayed by Yahweh for this tragedy that suggested that compliance had not issued in divine blessing as Deuteronomy promised (Deuteronomy 28: 1-6). They had forgotten the words of Huldah (II Kings 22:16-17), and the dire warnings of coming judgment by Jeremiah and other prophets (Zephaniah 1:2f, 7, 14-18; Hosea 3:12, 4:1f Jeremiah 7:20, 34, etc.) Instead they had believed the promises of the false prophets who cried "peace when there was no peace" (Jeremiah 8:11). Jeremiah's words from Egypt apparently indicate that some of the exiles living at Patros blamed Josiah's reformation for the nation's troubles:

We will do everything that we have vowed, burn incense to to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, as we did both we and our fathers, our kings and our princes,

in cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered and saw no evil. But since we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.

This attitude may have been typical of many Judeans, both those in Exile and those still in the land, as the pagan practices began to creep back into the life of Judah. Under the rule of Jehoiakim, the prophets thundered against the growing drift away from Yahwism, but few heeded their cries (Jeremiah 7:16-18; 11:9-13 etc.). Jehoiakim even dared to put some of the prophets to death for their "pains" (Jeremiah 26:20-23). Bright notes that the official Deuteronomic theology prevailed, but in a completely distorted form:

One senses that the official theology with its immutable promises had triumphed in its most distorted form, and that the people were entrenched in the confidence that Temple, city, and nation were eternally secure in Yahweh's covenant with David - for so prophet and priest assured them. (chs. 5:12; 7:4; 14:13 etc.)⁵

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the deportation of many of Judah's leading citizens to Babylon, the national theology, an outgrowth of the Deuteronomic reforms, was in trouble.⁶ In Babylon the exiles found themselves shorn of the Covenant Land, and without the Temple of Jerusalem, the place where Yahweh had promised to dwell (Deuteronomy 16:2). The theology of the Covenant seemed to be inextricably bound up with these holy places.

The most serious adjustment that the Jews of Babylonia had to make was a religious adjustment. Their faith had been oriented

to the land of Palestine, the inheritance Yahweh had given them, and to the Temple of Jerusalem, the place where Yahweh caused his "name" to dwell. The greatest danger was that in time the Jewish faith, torn from these historical moorings, would be drowned in the sea of Babylonian culture.

The exiles were faced with the ancient problem (that had faced Israel in the transition from wilderness to settled life among the Canaanites) of how to worship Yahweh in a place dominated by paganism and foreign deities. It is to the everlasting credit of those exiles from Judah that they were not swallowed up in the morass of Babylonian culture as the North Israelites had been after deportation by the Assyrians. The question of how she kept her identity as a people and her hope for restoration must be answered in a word, "faith". Bright says:

One marvels that Israel was not sucked down into the vortex of history along with the other little nations of Western Asia, to lose forever her identity as a people. And if one asks why she was not, the answer surely lies in her faith: the faith that called her into being in the first place proved sufficient even for this.⁸

Two elements of that faith must be noted if an adequate understanding of what sustained the Israelite people through those dark days is to be gained. One is the ministry of the great prophets, the other the gradual crystalization and elevation of the authority of the sacred library of writings, especially the Torah.⁹

B. The Preservation of Faith through the Preservation of the Tradition

The book of Deuteronomy had predicted the tragedy of the exile but in the process had given prophetic expression to the spiritual

purification of the surviving remnant for the great task of the future, that of making Yahweh's salvation-ways known to all men:

And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord shall drive you ... But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.¹⁰

Brokenness must precede the building up, the old must be purged before the new could flourish (Jeremiah 1:10). Through all the darkness of that destruction of old national theology and national false security, the voice of the prophets had been heard in the Land. They had given and were still giving theological explanation for what had taken place. As Anderson well says:

The great prophets had paved the way for the new expression of Israel's faith by insisting that Yahweh was not bound to the Temple of Jerusalem. In Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, he insisted that even in a far away land, where there was no Yahweh temple, men could have access to God through prayer. (Jer. 29:12-14).¹¹

The prophets had constantly predicted Yahweh's righteous judgment upon his wayward flock, but they also promised ultimate restoration and the accomplishment of Yahweh's purposes. As Bailey and Kent put it:

The disasters that had fallen upon their nation were the means by which God was purifying them for a great spiritual task, and that task was to make God and his service known to all men. Religion became the chief end and occupation of life for many of the Jews, the true Israel became a nation of priests, the state became a church, Israelitism became Judaism.¹²

It was, first of all, the prophets who "had presided over the tragedy,

particularly Jeremiah and Ezekiel "who provided Israel with "staying power."¹³ After the fall of Jerusalem, these prophets turned from denunciation of sin and promise of judgment to preaching a new day for Israel of forgiveness and restoration.

Though the prophetic ministries of Jeremiah and Ezekiel overlapped each other for about seven years, Ezekiel's call to ministry coming in the fifth year of the Exile of Jehoiachin (Ezekiel 1:1) and therefore about 592 B.C.,¹⁴ it is in some ways helpful to think of one as succeeding the other. If Jeremiah was the prophet of the pre-Exile, the preparer of the way of coming judgment, Ezekiel was "the Master Mind of the Exile", the man who proclaimed a future for Israel.¹⁵ This is an oversimplification because both prophets preached on both sides of the fall of Jerusalem and final deportation to Babylon. Ezekiel thundered judgment in his earlier oracles, as did Jeremiah, but with a relish that Jeremiah never knew (Ezekiel 7:5-9):

In his commission to be a prophet, Ezekiel received a hardness, hard as a rock against the "rebellious house" of Israel (ch.3:9). But in contrast to his older contemporary, Jeremiah (Jer. 8:18; 9:1; 20:14-18), he never wavers from this attitude.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the prophet's whole hearted acceptance of God's judgment was his conviction, manifest through his writings, that the judgment of God is just.¹⁶

But Ezekiel also introduced the themes of the mercy and salvation of God to the remnant of the Exile in a manner surpassing even that of Jeremiah in some measure. Ezekiel was told to have done

with Jeremiah's old line: the "fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." (Ezekiel 18:2 cf. Jer. 31:29). From this time on, men should die for their own sins. But God would also forgive and save them from their sins - national and individual. God made Ezekiel a "watch man" to stand in the breach (Ezekiel 33:1-20), and one who was to bear suffering for his own people (Ezekiel 21:6), concepts that are basic to the New Testament theology of forgiveness. Jeremiah had prepared the ground for the Exile, Ezekiel cultivated it and planted therein the prophetic seed of survival and restoration:

In his view the whole nation from prince and high priest down to the humblest Levite should exist for the worship of God. Feasts and holy days, procession and sacrifices were all outlined, with the Sabbath as the crowning day of all the week. It was Ezekiel who found the practical means by which a people who had ceased to exist as a state could still survive as a church. The Judaism of the next four centuries was the creation largely of this genius.¹⁷

So it was the ministries of these great prophets, particularly of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, together with the later ministry of Second Isaiah, that provided much of the fire and impetus which kept Israel's hopes alive through the Exile and gave to the nation a badly needed re-interpretation of theology, thereby enabling her to keep her faith in the over-all faithfulness of Yahweh:

Though heeded by few in their lifetime, these prophets perhaps did more than all others to save Israel from extinction. By ruthlessly demolishing false hope, by announcing the calamity as Yahweh's sovereign and righteous judgment, they gave the tragedy explanation in advance in terms of faith, and thereby prevented it from destroying faith. Though it certainly swept many

from their religious moorings, and plunged others into numb despair, sincere Israelites were driven to the searching of their own hearts and to penitence.¹⁸

God was watching over his word "to perform it."

While the prophets were keeping the faith alive with their vivid and timely proclamations of how Yahweh was handling the nation's destiny, they were also preparing the way for the rise of a new community which slowly emerged out of the ashes of the former national cultic community.¹⁹ This new community found its organizing center in the venerated traditions and writings of the fathers and the prophets which were slowly but surely gathered, compiled, preserved in writing, and elevated to the level of sacred Scripture. One great and abiding result of the Josianic reform was the final recension of that body of historical writings which are known as the "Deuteronomic historical corpus" (the Biblical books of Joshua to II Kings).²⁰ F. F. Bruce points out that this historical Corpus was "by no means composed at this time out of whole cloth."²¹ He feels that most of the materials had existed in written form for many years, some of them being contemporary with the periods covered in their contents. He adds his belief that their being called "The Former Prophets" in the Hebrew Bible gives a clue to the time of their recension.²² Bruce feels that the compilers were members of the prophetic guilds because the materials contain a record of Yahweh's dealings with Israel from a prophetic view-point. He feels that some time during the reign of Josiah and after the

discovery of Deuteronomy in the Temple, the records, up to the account of Josiah's Passover (II Kings 23:23) were published, the rest of II Kings being added as appendices and completed about 562 B.C.²³

Albright says the Deuteronomic kernel found in the Temple was supplemented by other historical collections, to which was added "a running theological commentary which pointed out the close relationship between evil-doing and divine retribution."²⁴ He feels that the work was probably completed after Josiah's death in 609, and re-edited about 560 B.C.²⁵ Bright thinks the Corpus was composed "shortly before the fall of the state" and "re-edited, added to (cf. II Kings 25:27-30), and adapted to the situation of the exiles."²⁶ About the same time, says Bright, the so-called "Priestly Code" of the cultic laws, was codified, and perhaps the Priestly narrative (P) of the Pentateuch composed, and added. This happened according to Bright, most likely in the Exile.²⁷

The technical detail of the process of inscripturation is not so important to our purpose as the fact that during the exilic days keen minds were alive to the necessity of preserving the traditions and laws of Israel's religion. Bailey and Kent say that "the work of these unknown editors changed a book of history into a Bible."²⁸ The Jews of the exile gradually learned that their hope for the future depended on their obedience to the will of God, as revealed

in the Law, the writings, and the prophets, but especially in the Torah.

Ezekiel was followed by a long line of teachers known as soferim (scribes), under whom the Torah came to occupy a central place in the religious life of the people. The school took the place of the Temple, the teacher, or scribe, that of the sacrificing priest, the religious observances - particularly the Sabbath, prayer, and fasting - that of the sacrificial rites.²⁹

It was during these exilic days also, that the foundations of the Synagogue were laid as a center for worship and instruction.³⁰

It is not known whether synagogues were actually organized, but the principles for which they later existed gradually became part of Jewish thinking during the exilic age.

Moreover, during this period Jews undoubtedly came together in small groups... to be instructed in their scriptural traditions and to worship informally ... There is no evidence, however, that there were any organized local assemblies. All that can be safely said is that the later synagogues, which came to be scattered throughout the countries of the Dispersion, arose in response to a need that was first experienced during the Exile, when the Jews were separated from their land and their Temple.³¹

Through these developments the Law of Moses, particularly (the Torah) was "elevated" as Bright maintains, to the point "where it became the organizing principle of religion."³² In the post-Exilic era, it was Ezra the "scribe" who with Nehemiah, the former cup-bearer of Artaxerxes, gave this movement for the elevation of the Torah its greatest boost. On the Hebrew New Year's Day, ca. 444 B.C., Ezra read the Torah in the presence of Nehemiah and the people gathered in the Temple Court (Nehemiah ch.8).

The reading was followed by a covenant renewal ceremony (Nehemiah 9). The Torah had long been read publicly in Israel. But as Epstein points out:

What was novel was the exposition that accompanied the reading. Ezra's aim was to put the Torah in the position of supreme authority and to win the people as never before to the recognition and acceptance of its rule.³³

Ezra's efforts led to the Torah's becoming accessible to all classes and conditions of Jewish people. To be sure the history of Ezra's dealings with the Torah represents only one step in a long slow process of its elevation and establishment as the norm of all Jewish life, but Bright's thesis receives substantial backing from these words of Epstein, an expert on the history of Judaism, as he discusses the contribution of Ezra and his contemporaries:

As a result of Ezra's efforts the Torah, instead of being the exclusive monopoly of a class, became accessible to all who desired to know it and in time was established sovereign in the state. Slowly but surely the Torah became the final source of every Jewish norm and practice, rule and custom, in all departments of life-religious, moral, political, social, economic, and domestic. This enthronement of the Torah in the mind and heart of the people was of far-reaching effect on the religion and history of the Jewish people. It saved Judaism from becoming a mere priestly religion, concerned only with matters of ritual and religious practice, and made it one embracing all life and action. At the same time it provided a safeguard against that heathen accommodation, which had brought about the disappearance of the ten tribes and the destruction of the first Hebrew State, and thus ensured the purity of the national religion and the survival of Judaism.³⁴

The effort necessary to prove Bright's additional point that Josiah's promulgation of the written law, at the same time that it marked the first step in the process which elevated the law was

also the first step "in the concomitant process whereby the prophetic movement, its word rendered progressively superfluous, ultimately came to an end,"³⁵ is beyond the scope and ability of this study. Jeremiah had complained that a people so proudly possessing Yahweh's written word turned a deaf ear to the prophetic word (Jeremiah 8:8ff). It seems logical that the same thing should have happened as the Torah became more and more the motivating principle of national existence after the Exile. Without the prophetic activity as we have said, the Jewish nation doubtless would not have survived long enough for the elevation of the Torah and other holy writings to effect the changes that did result in the birth of a new Covenant nation. God watched over his word to perform it.

NOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

1. Bright, op. cit. p. 304.
2. Ibid., pp. 305, 309.
3. Ibid., p. 304.
4. Jeremiah 44: 17-19.
5. Bright, op. cit., p. 306.
6. Ibid., p. 311 ff.
7. Anderson, op. cit., p. 377.
8. Bright, op. cit., p. 328.
9. Anderson, op. cit., pp. 378-399; Bright, op. cit., pp. 329 ff.
10. Deuteronomy 4:27, 29.
11. Anderson, op. cit., p. 378.
12. Bailey and Kent, op. cit., p. 260
13. Bright, op. cit., p. 329
14. Ibid. See Chronological Chart VI.
15. Bailey and Kent, op. cit., p. 264.
16. Paul J. and Elizabeth R. Achtemeier "The Overwhelming Vision:
Studies in the Book of Ezekiel," Crossroads,
Vol. XV, No. 2, (January-March, 1965), p. 42.
17. Bailey and Kent, op. cit., p. 264.
18. Bright, op. cit., p. 317
19. Ibid., p. 330.

20. Ibid.
21. Bruce, op. cit., p. 79.
22. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
23. Ibid.
24. William Foxwell Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 82.
25. Ibid.
26. Bright, op. cit., p. 330.
27. Ibid., p. 331.
28. Bailey and Kent, op. cit., p. 265.
29. Isidore Epstein, Judaism A Historical Presentation, (Baltimore: Penquin Books, 1960), p. 79.
30. Ibid.; Cf. Bailey and Kent, op. cit., p. 265-266.
31. Anderson, op. cit., p. 379.
32. Bright, op. cit., p. 302.
33. Epstein, op. cit., p. 84.
34. Ibid., p. 85.

CONCLUSION

The curtain has fallen on the drama of good King Josiah and Jeremiah, the prophet of God. But the critics continue to subject every line and every scene to the withering light of critical analysis.

We have previously referred to the Josianic reform as "a case of too little too late." As we reflect further on the whole historical process, we begin to feel that this is a correct analysis only of the reform's short-term history. Politically Josiah's efforts to restore the Davidic Kingdom were doomed to failure because the rising star of a new Babylon was not destined to be extinguished before it bathed much of the Middle East in its all-conquering light, including the Kingdom of Judah.

Religiously Josiah's efforts were a case of too little too late, partly because of his untimely death which also meant the reformation's premature demise, and partly because religious syncretism was too deeply entrenched in the life of Judah. Yet, in spite of the emphasis on the externals of religion which followed in the wake of reform, and which Jeremiah deplored, we cannot possibly suggest that Josiah's reform should never have happened. Worship must of necessity involve ritual and symbol. The external cannot be avoided, and Josiah's reform efforts accomplished a great deal of purging away of the dross of a corrupted faith.

If nothing else, a pattern for true worship was established and idolatry's eventual banishment from the realm made sure and certain. This was a very important preparation for life in Exile.

More significant was the rediscovery of Mosaic Law which gave the reform direction, and gave the people a sense of what public morality and ethics were intended to be under God.

And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it.

These are the words of II Chronicles 34:31,32. The king's own personal commitment was a challenge to his people, a memory which lived on during the trying days of the Exile.

A renewed knowledge of the law also brought divine undergirding to a great outburst of contemporary prophetic utterance (Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Huldah, Ezekiel, Nahum). These prophets were deeply stirred by concern for pure religion, and Josiah, in turn, was influenced by their uncompromising proclamation of Yahweh's demands.

From the darkened wings of the now-abandoned stage echoes of more important long-range results emerge. These results cannot be separated from the element of heilsgeschichte which may be over-looked by students of this era in Israel's history. Looking back on it all from this vantage point, it seems fortuitous that Israel lost the Temple and gained the Law. Professor's Bright's theory of the

elevation of the Law "to the point where it became the organizing principle of religion" appears to be validated by the events of the Exile and beyond. We have not been able to carry through the study to the point of validating Davidson's sweeping declaration that "Pharisaism and Deuteronomy came into the world the same day." Yet one has the impression that this is what happened in the long-term process of Israel's history. The prophetic word survived until the time of Malachi, with great prophetic voices, such as that of the so-called "Second Isaiah", still to be heard from. But it was the Torah that survived the long stillness of the Inter-biblical period when the voice of the prophet was no longer heard in the land. And, just as in the days following the discovery of the scroll of Deuteronomy, while some men misinterpreted God's word and drifted into legalism, there were always the successors of the prophets, such as John the Baptist and old Anna, who were able to read between the lines and hear the true word of God.

We continue to affirm that God, through all of this human-history was "watching over his word to perform it." One has the feeling the Josiah's reform had to precede the Exile, that all things were working together for an over-arching good. It was not by chance that the Law was discovered in the Temple just a few years before God's judgment was to fall, and Israel removed from the contaminating environment of Canaan.

The two streams of law and inward grace repeatedly diverged and

converged; for God was at work through it all, establishing the eternal steadfastness of his word. But he was establishing it by writing it upon the fleshly tables of human hearts. Then, in the fullness of time, came the Saviour who denounced self-righteous legalism and gave the world a New Covenant in His blood. "God was watching over his word to perform it."

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