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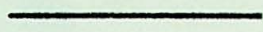
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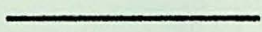
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LIFE AND DEATH
IN THE PROPHETS



A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology



by
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CHAPTER I

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Israel was a prize possession of God. Throughout her history this people was never to forget that she stood in a special relationship with Him because He had great plans and purposes for her. This status as a chosen people was proclaimed and maintained in the Word brought through God's chosen messengers, the prophets.

Although this people believed that they were special in the plan of God, death nevertheless came and took also them out of this world into an existence which was unknown to them. During this life they experienced griefs and sadnesses. Laughter often ceased and joy was driven away. Grief and sadness were felt particularly when death came. The prophet had to explain why God sent this grief and the destiny of the dead person remained in His hands.

The problem of life and death reached into the social, political, and spiritual life of the people and the nation. Because the nation was considered a corporate personality, the same end which came to the individual could come to the nation also. The prophets, therefore, had to interpret Yahweh's actions toward Israel as a people. Assured and convinced that their message came from God and was beyond question, they insisted that God's purposes had to be fulfilled, and if the nation would not be warned and take

appropriate action, God's punishment would come. Although God's judgment would mean curtailed home rule, a nation decimated by warfare, and a land uninhabited because of exile, yet there would never be a final end to this nation. There was always the promise of survival or the revival of a remnant, even though Judah and Ephraim to all appearances were dead. This conviction of national revival also became the basis of the assurance that the body in the grave will rise again. It was stressed that in this resurrection the righteous and the holy will live again.

The study of the teachings of the prophets concerning life and death is of benefit to the Christian of the New Testament era. The same problems vex him in his daily life. Grief at times appears to overcome joys. Catastrophes ruin prosperity. Death takes away life. Political maneuvering in the world raises the question of its relationship with the intent of our God in the heavens. The Christian faith, however, confidently assures the believer that God's will is always done and that even the loss of physical life is not the final chapter, the absolute end of man. He will rise to everlasting life.

Since this faith is built upon and refers to many figures and types of the Old Testament, this study of the teachings of the life and death theme seeks to gain an understanding of the knowledge and teaching regarding death and the rising to life again as set forth in the Old

Testament prophetic writings which are dated from the eighth century B.C. and onward. As spokesmen of God, the prophets were the forerunners to the New Testament apostles and the ministers which Christ gave to His Church. In bringing the divine message to Israel and applying this Word to the lives of the people, this commission may be described in the New Testament injunction: "preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2).

While it is true that the Word which the prophets delivered to the people concerned itself mainly with life in this world, it also brought hope and comfort. Their promise of deliverance and help in danger was as sure as was the word of warning or destruction. Since the Church of the New Testament also has a Word of comfort and deliverance for those in the New Age, it is worth the effort to note the basis of the hope delivered by the prophets and to compare it with God's later revelation in the new covenant.

As the title indicates, this study is limited to the writings of the prophets and does not include the Wisdom Literature or the Psalms. No attempt is made, furthermore, to depict the beliefs pertaining to life or death in the religions of the neighboring nations. The extra-canonical writings of the intertestamental period are also left out of consideration. All of these sources are left untapped,

not because they are unimportant or irrelevant, but merely in order to concentrate on the teaching on life and death as it is presented in this segment of the Old Testament message.

This study seeks to demonstrate that life for the prophets means that God has given a gift to man whereby He is to serve Him. When man dies his God-given ability to function ceases. It is not a final end for man, for he continues to exist in the nether world, Sheol.

Furthermore, because God's intent for man is harmony with Him, the prophets state that man is already dead when he conducts his affairs outside of the covenant. At this point the prophets call upon man to repent so that he might live. Life is made conditional upon man's repentance. The nation is viewed frequently as a corporate personality, and all that applies to the individual applies to the collective community. When the nation is in a state of death, it is placed in the chamber of death--the exile is called Sheol. Israel's prophets maintain that Yahweh could and would return the nation to the former position of life in the presence of God. They declare that the hope for restoration is God's grace, not man's obedience.

Finally, the God who can restore the dead nation to life can also restore the dead body of man. The later writings of the prophets express this hope and ultimately proclaim it as a future event. The answer to the questions

of the future may not be complete, but there can be no doubt that God intends it for His righteous ones. The concern for the righteous prevails both in the return from exile and resurrection from the dead. The wicked ones are more or less dormant until Daniel declares that they, too, shall rise, but to shame.

The English Bible passages quoted are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, Thomas Nelson and Sons, publishers. The references to the Hebrew passages are from the Biblia Hebraica, edited by Rudolf Kittel. The Konkordanz zum Hebraischen Alten Testament by Gerhard Lisowsky was used in selecting those passages in the prophets where חַיִּים and חַיָּה are used. Robert Martin-Achard's book, From Death to Life, is possibly the closest work which corresponds with the study of this thesis. He does, however, refer to the entire Old Testament to determine the development of the doctrine of the resurrection, as well as summarizes the influence of the thoughts of the after life which neighboring religions had on the thought forms of Israel.

CHAPTER II

PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION REVEALS THAT PHYSICAL LIFE COMES FROM YAHWEH, AND DEATH IS THE END OF MAN'S EARTHLY EXISTENCE

Life is not an abstract idea for the Israelite, nor for the prophet who speaks to the people concerning life. The common term for "life" is חַיָּוִת . There are other terms and descriptions which refer to life, but this verb חָיָה with its derivatives must be the initial word to study in order to understand the meaning of life as the prophets reveal Yahweh's message to Israel. Gesenius maintains that the original idea of the word is "breathing," "inasmuch as the life of the animate beings is discerned by their breathing" ¹ Martin-Achard quotes Michaeli in order to point out that the verb חָיָה , to live, "seems in the Semitic languages originally to have the sense of muscular contraction" ² "To live," then, seems to have a functional rather than an abstract meaning. The Israelite knows life as it functions in man. Life is an activating force.

The Israelite sees life as it shows itself in man.

¹William Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, translated by Samuel Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 273.

²Robert Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, translated by John Penney Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 5.

He recognizes that its source is outside of man. Many times the prophets accept certain truths to be commonly accepted knowledge. Rather than say in a specific sentence that life finds its source in Yahweh, the prophets merely go on to speak of the manner in which Yahweh speaks of Himself as the Source and Giver of life. The prophet Malachi, however, includes the explicit statement in his: "Has not the one God made . . . the spirit of life?"³ (Mal. 2:15).

The writings of the prophets emphasize that Yahweh is the source of life by pointing to the great acts of Yahweh to show that He has life within Himself. He is the living God (Is. 34:4,17). Hezekiah sends his officers of state to Isaiah to point out the words of mockery which Rabshekah, representative of the king of Assyria, has spoken. The inference is that if "the living God" has heard the words He will do something about the blasphemy. Hezekiah furthermore appeals to the fact that Yahweh is the "living God" as he brings the prayer to the creating God enthroned above the cherubim (Is. 37:15-17). The Assyrians have defeated other nations in battles and laid waste their lands "and

³This is the translation of the Revised Standard Version, The Holy Bible (New York, Toronto, Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946 and 1952), p. 996. The Hebrew text is obscure. The Biblia Hebraica, edited by Rud. Kittel (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), Editio Decima Emendata, p. 974, in the critical apparatus suggests the reading יְהוָה לֵאמֹר rather than the term יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ . The Biblia Hebraica suggests a possible reading of יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ also.

have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they were destroyed" (Is. 37:19). Hezekiah's plea for help goes out because Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the 'Elohim.

Jeremiah also uses the term "living God," and in a strikingly similar way. He also speaks of the living God, 'Elohim, the God of Israel, in contrast to the idols (Jer. 10:1-10). Rudolph itemizes these distinctions which Jeremiah would make in these ten verses between the idols and the living God: The idols cannot move by themselves, but Yahweh is the God of life. The idols are made of perishable products, but Yahweh is the eternal king. Where life and strength exists Yahweh is present. The earth and its people fall in fear before Yahweh's wrath, but no one stands in awe before the idol. Since Yahweh is the God of life and has created the heaven and the earth, it should therefore be recognized that He continually brings new things to pass, for example, the rain and the winds.⁴ Yahweh's being means that He can exert a force in this world. Life is not an abstract concept because Yahweh is not abstract. He gives to man the ability to move. Jeremiah also speaks of the "burden" of the Lord which the nation carries because "you pervert the words of the

⁴Wilhelm Rudolph, Jeremia, in Handbuch Zum Alten Testament, edited by Otto Eissfeldt (First Series; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1947), p. 64.

living God" (Jer. 23:36).

The writing prophets also emphasize that Yahweh is the living God when they introduce the threats and the promises with the oath formula. Often the message written is in direct discourse as Yahweh gives His Word to the prophet to deliver to the people. This common form of Yahweh speaking of Himself is אֲנִי יְהוָה . The oath occurs thirteen times in the prophecy of Ezekiel,⁵ far more than any other prophet. The form is also used in Jer. 22:24; 46:18; Is. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9. The more common oath formula for Jeremiah is אֲנִי יְהוָה (Jer. 4:2; 5:2; 12:6; 16:14; 16:15; 23:7,8; 38:16). אֲנִי יְהוָה is the form used in Jer. 44:26.

Cooke⁶ points out that Ezekiel introduces the Word of Yahweh in this way because he would impress the people with the reality of their God and His resentment against sin. The ever recurring oath in the warnings of Ezekiel is to remind the Children of Israel of the nearness of Yahweh.⁷ He will perform that which He has promised, and His oath must make the people realize this. At the same time, this

⁵G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936; reprinted in 1960), p. 60.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Walther Eichrodt, Der Prophet Hesekiel, Chapters 1-18, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1959), Teilband 22/1, p. 32.

certainty of the presence of Yahweh must give them the assurance that the promises of blessings will also be fulfilled.

When the prophets emphasize Israel's faith in the living God they reiterate a belief and confidence that found early expression in Israel. In opposition to this view Köhler maintains that the term "the living God" in its variations is of late origin⁸ and is intended to combat the idea that Yahweh has no life and no power. The contention is that the expression is coined by prophets who seek to lift the spirits of a people depressed under the siege of their city or in the despondency of the exile. This disheartened people is questioning the activities, capabilities, and powers of Yahweh.

However, Israel maintains already at Mt. Sinai that they will be consumed if they hear the voice of "the living God speaking out of the midst of fire" (Deut. 5:26; Hebrew verse 23). The youth David is insulted because Goliath, "the uncircumcised Philistine," "defies the army of the living God" (1 Sam. 17:26,36). Again, delivered from the hands of his enemy Saul, David sings in the Song of Deliverance, "The Lord lives," $\text{יְיָ \text{חַי}}$ (2 Sam. 22:47).⁹ The

⁸Ludwig Köhler, Old Testament Theology, translated from the German by A. S. Todd (Third Revised Edition; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 53.

⁹The subject of dating these writings cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say that the terms are used by persons in

earlier history of Israel gives evidence that the faith in Yahweh also expressed this belief that He had life within Himself. He could act on His own behalf, as well as in the deliverance of His people.

Fully realizing the importance of water in a land that knows the drought of a long period of time and the dryness of the desert, Jeremiah utters his deep dismay because the people of Israel have forsaken the Lord. This means eventually that the nation must dry up and die, for the Lord is "the fountain of living water" (Jer. 17:18). Water is necessary for life. He who has life within Himself gives life to His people as a fountain gives living waters. Life is that within Him which makes Him move and makes Him different from the idols. Yahweh has not kept life for Himself only, nor has He stored it within Himself. The aspects of life and the powers which are now in man, which make him act and function as man, are given to him by Yahweh.

Yahweh has made man, that is, given him flesh, breath, $\pi\upsilon\psi\grave{\iota}$, and spirit, $\pi\grave{\iota}\rho$. God the Lord, who calls Israel in righteousness, takes the nation by the hand and gives a covenant to her, delivers her from bondage and heals her diseases, is the same God the Lord who made the heaven and the earth and "gives breath-- $\pi\upsilon\psi\grave{\iota}$ --to the people who walk upon it, and spirit-- $\pi\grave{\iota}\rho$ --to those who walk in it"

an earlier period of history than the writing prophets.

(Is. 42:5). Breath and spirit are two terms which describe the aspects of man's existence which make him live. They come from Yahweh. Yahweh reminds Israel that at one time He was angry because of their sins, but He will not always "strive" with them. He assures them of the power which is His to restore them. After all, "for from me proceeds the spirit, and I have made the breath of life" (Is. 57:16). The powers made by Yahweh and placed in man are the רוח and the נפש, spirit and breath. Zechariah reminds Israel that it is the Lord who "formed the spirit of man within him," chapter twelve, verse one. The prophets speak the same message concerning physical life. The aspects of man's existence and life come from Yahweh. These prophets do not, however, spend a lot of time trying to prove this. It is common knowledge and the common faith of all of Israel. They mention these truths in order to verify the message which they deliver from the Word of Yahweh. It is the same Yahweh who has been the source of life who will bring to pass the events which the prophets foretell.

A third aspect which Yahweh places into man is the נפש. This, too, comes to man from Yahweh. Zedekiah swears by the Lord "who makes our souls" (Jer. 38:16).

In order to bring these three aspects of man's life into operation, Yahweh applies His Spirit to man. Yahweh is and has a רוח, a Spirit. This is the force which makes man function. The Lord of hosts will be the spirit of

justice, judgment, and strength in man¹⁰ (Is. 28:6). It will be the "Spirit of the Lord which will rest upon" the "stump of Jesse and the Spirit will be a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2). The nation will be reanimated because the Spirit of Yahweh will blow in the Valley of the Dry Bones, and these bones will come to life once again (Ezek. 37:5). Yahweh enters into man with His Spirit and gives Him power to move and to use his faculties and senses as they are intended to be used.

Once Yahweh has given life He does not turn His back on the living, animated flesh and expect it to continue by itself. The life which Yahweh gives is also sustained by Him. Malachi appeals for faithfulness in marriage because Yahweh has witnessed the covenant made between "you and the wife of your youth" (Mal. 2:14). This plea should be meaningful, for "Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life?" (Mal. 2:15). Yahweh sustains life in a variety of ways and under differing needs. He does so by bringing comfort to those who are dismayed, as is evidenced by Hezekiah's plea to Isaiah that possibly the living Lord will do something about the blasphemy which Rabshekah is speaking outside the walls of Jerusalem (Is. 37:4). Because of the words of Rabshekah all the

¹⁰ Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 150.

people are disturbed. Isaiah then receives the message from Yahweh that he can speak confidently to the king and the people because Rabshekah and the King of Assyria will return to the homeland without entering Jerusalem (Is. 37:30-35). Jeremiah brings the assurance of Yahweh to Israel as He declares that Israel should "not be dismayed (תַּתַּר, be shattered, broken, dismayed) at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them" (Jer. 10:2). Israel is not to be overcome with doubt or fear if nations seemingly are led by idols made from trees. Yahweh will be victorious, He will sustain them, He will keep Israel, for Yahweh is the living God, the everlasting King, the One who formed Israel and made Israel His inheritance (Jer. 10:10-16). Yahweh keeps alive the spirit of life in Israel as He assures this people that He is supreme over every invading and ruling man, for man is but grass (Is. 51:12-16). Yahweh sustains life when it becomes weak or is in danger of collapsing. The prophets draw on the ordinary experiences of life to lead the people and nation to a closer relationship with Yahweh and a fuller living of the life which He expects of them. Thus they use the figures of the vineyard and the shepherd (Is. 5:1,2; 40:11). Without Yahweh's goodness and personal care no person could live. Because He is Israel's God, He will keep the people alive.

Life is activity, it is movement. The flesh of man,

אֱשֶׁר, becomes active, it has life within it, אִי יִי. ¹¹

This active, physical life of man is controlled by the previously mentioned aspects of life. These are given by God and are to control man's way of living. O. A. Piper points out the relationship between the Giver of life and man. Life is basically the same in all that moves on the face of the earth because God is the source. But this does not mean that because God's nature is life and He gives life to creatures that man or any other creature partakes of the divine nature (Is. 31:3 and Jer. 25:31). But it does mean that by God's grace man is able to communicate with His Maker.¹² Man is made to function according to precepts and plans of Yahweh. In order to do this, Yahweh placed אֶשְׁרָה, אִי, and אִי יִי into man.

Man has breath, אֶשְׁרָה, in order to function. Of the prophets, the term is used only by Isaiah, and once by Daniel. It is Yahweh who has given "breath" to people on the earth. Therefore breath is global. This aspect of life is universal. In respect to that which makes man live and function in a physical way one nation does not differ from another. The breath of man is seen as it comes from

¹¹E. E. Ellis, "Life," in The New Bible Dictionary, edited by J. D. Douglas, et al. (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962), p. 735.

¹²O. A. Piper, "Life," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), K-Q, 125.

his nostrils (Is. 2:22). Regarding this passage Hertrich remarks that without the breath of the nostril man is nothing.

Beim letzten Advent Gottes wird das offenbar werden, was doch schon in der Gegenwart gilt, dass der Mensch nicht Gott ist. In seiner Nase ist 'nur ein Hauch'. Dies Wort drückt die ganze Nichtigkeit menschlichen Wesens aus. (Vgl. 1. Mose 2,7; 3,19; Hiob 27,3; 34,14; Ps. 104,29.) Nur aus Gottes Gnade lebt er; denn Gott kann seinen Odem dem Menschen wieder entziehen. Dann ist sein Leben zu Ende.¹³

Daniel sees the vision of the last days and suggests that the strength which makes it possible for him to function and serve is leaving him because there is no נְשֻׁמָּה, breath, in him (Dan. 10:17). A parallel thought is expressed in Joshua 10:40 when Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country, and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kinds; he left none remaining but utterly destroyed all that breathed, כִּי־לֹא־נְשָׁמָה־בָּרְאִיתָ.

The term נְשֻׁמָּה is not used parallel with נְשֻׁמָּה in the writings of the prophets, but it does occur in Deut. 20:16; Joshua 11:11,14; 1 Kings 15:29. The term רֵיחַ usually designates a wind, breath, force outside of man, while נְשֻׁמָּה is that quiet breath which comes from man, and when it fails, life is gone.

The second aspect of man's existence is that which is

¹³Volkmar Hertrich, Der Prophet Jesaja, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Volkmar Hertrich and Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1950), XVII, 42-43.

described by the term שֵׁנֶפֶט , the soul, which acts in response to circumstances and situations which confront him. No single general definition can be given of the שֵׁנֶפֶט , for it is used in a variety of ways. Its varied use shows that man is a motivated creature, and the cause and reason for his actions are just as varied. This gift of Yahweh, the שֵׁנֶפֶט , prompts man to act in the body and flesh. When judgment comes from Yahweh it is not merely judgment meted out to the body, רִשְׁפָּת , but the very inward being of man will be destroyed, the שֵׁנֶפֶט , for the "Lord will destroy, both soul and body" (Is. 10:18). The destruction of the King of Assyria, his warriors and his land, will be complete, as when Yahweh destroys man, his body and the aspect of life.

This שֵׁנֶפֶט is described as life itself, that which is the "motor impulse"¹⁴ of man, and this applies not only to his physical being, but also psychically. Without שֵׁנֶפֶט the body of the flesh would not function. It is "the vitality that animates the body and it is inconceivable that it should exist independently outside the body."¹⁵ It is not considered an independent element of man. In this meaning שֵׁנֶפֶט , life, is used 171 times in the Old

¹⁴Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, translated from the Dutch by S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 202.

¹⁵Ibid.

Testament, and refers to life in animals as well as man.¹⁶ Illustrations of this usage in the prophets can be seen in Jer. 4:30; 11:21; 19:7,9; Ezek. 33:5; Amos 2:14,15; Is. 55:3.

At times **אִנְךָ** is used as a pronoun, and means the man himself. This usage is evident in Is. 43:4 where Yahweh assures Israel of His redemption, and He says that people will be given in exchange "for you,"¹⁷ **לְאִסְרֵי תַחַת נְפֹשֶׁךָ**. The object of Yahweh's love is Israel as a nation, and it would seem that **אִנְךָ** should be translated "you." Similar use occurs in Is. 46:2, "but themselves-- **נְפֹשֶׁיךָ** --go into captivity." Jeremiah uses **אִנְךָ** as a pronoun when he warns King Zedekiah that the withdrawal of the Chaldean army will not be permanent, but it will return; therefore "Do not deceive yourselves," **נְפֹשֶׁיךָ תִּשְׁאָר** (Jer. 37:9). The term **אִנְךָ** might mean the indefinite one of a group as Ezekiel illustrates that judgment might come to any one person if the watchman is remiss in sounding the trumpet of warning, "the sword comes, and takes any one of them" **וְנִפְּצָה מֵאִתְּךָ אֶת אֶחָד מֵהֵם** (Ezek. 33:6).

As a motivating force for the body of man the term **אִנְךָ** means the seat of appetites. The dogs are described

¹⁶William Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, edited by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), root **אִנְךָ**, 3c, p. 659.

¹⁷The Revised Standard Version of the Bible translates "peoples in exchange for your life," Is. 43:4.

as "having a mighty appetite," עֵינַי נְהַשֵּׁת (Is. 56:11). Of Israel in the restoration, Jeremiah promises "his desire shall be satisfied," $\text{וְנִשְׂבַע נְהַשֵּׁתוֹ}$ (Jer. 50:19). In the day of the famine, pestilence, and sword the Children of Israel will not be able to "satisfy their hunger," $\text{וְנִשְׂבַע נְהַשֵּׁתוֹ}$ לֹא יִשְׂבַּעוּ (Ezek. 7:19).

The נְהַשֵּׁת also receives forces which lead it to action. The passions of man explain many of his actions. Again, as a motivating force of the body, the נְהַשֵּׁת in man is listed as his emotion or passion. The judgment and remembrance of Yahweh is "the desire of our soul," $\text{תִּפְתָּח נְהַשֵּׁתוֹ}$ (Is. 26:8). In the time of heat $\text{בְּגֵאוֹת נְהַשֵּׁתוֹ}$ ¹⁸ the wild ass runs over the desert searching to have passions satisfied (Jer. 2:24). Israel's sins against Yahweh were punished by Yahweh when He permitted the foreign powers to rule over her. In these instances Israel was delivered "to the greed of the enemies," $\text{בְּנִשְׂבָּת שְׂנֵאוֹתֶיהָ}$ (Ezek. 16:27). Hosea laments that the desire to sin in Israel increases as the nation increases, "they are greedy for their iniquity," $\text{וְנִשְׂבָּתוּ לְעֵצָם וְנִשְׂבָּתוּ לְעֵצָם}$ (Hos. 4:8).

In the mind of the Israelite the נְהַשֵּׁת is vital to the life of the individual. It is the force which puts the body in motion.¹⁹ It is the appetite which gives a desire

¹⁸The critical apparatus of Biblia Hebraica suggests correcting the Masoretic text, נְהַשֵּׁתוֹ for נְהַשֵּׁת .

¹⁹Portions of Old Testament writings make it necessary

which needs to be fulfilled. It is the passion for that which is not godly which leads to sin. At the same time it is a gift of God which gives to man an individual trait and personality, "die persönliche Erscheinungsform des Geistes in Menschen," as König describes it.²⁰ The שֵׁנַי of the individual makes him act and respond in a certain way at a given moment. Life, therefore, for the Israelite is not simply existence. It is an active and operative force in man which leads him to act.²¹ It "denotes the potency on which life rests."²² The prophets are more concerned with how man puts this operative force into his daily activity than they are with the manner in which he receives it. It does come from Yahweh. This is commonly accepted knowledge. What man does with it, how it controls, and often rules him, this is the problem of the prophets.

to qualify this statement. The Old Testament speaks of the living man as a living "soul" and the dead man as a dead "soul," Num. 6:6; Lev. 21:11; Num. 19:13. See also Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions, translated from the French by John McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961), p. 56 as well as Johs. Pedersen, Israel Its Life and Culture (Copenhagen: Branner Og Korch, 1926 and London: Oxford University Press, 1954), I, 180.

²⁰Edward König, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Chr. Belsersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), p. 224.

²¹Martin-Achard, p. 5.

²²Rudolf Bultmann, "The Concept of Life in the OT," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited in

The make-up and function of the רוח in man is just as difficult to determine and define as the נפש. The prophets designate the רוח as the Spirit of Yahweh, or the wind, or breath which functions outside of man in each case it has an influence upon man. It is the רוח which breathes on man, and man becomes a living being (Ezek. 37:9). Snaith summarizes the meaning of רוח by saying that except for the Wisdom Literature, the more usual idea of רוח "is of the controlling ruach being other than the man, as if controlling him and dominating him from outside."²³

When the prophets speak of the רוח in man they seem to refer to an attitude or an inclination toward something or someone. Ezekiel speaks of the "foolish prophets who will follow their own spirit--רוחם--and have seen nothing" (Ezek. 13:3). Hosea sees the same deceit which plagues the prophets when he says "the man of the spirit--רוח איש--is mad" (Hos. 9:7). There is a spirit within man which can be in rebellion against Yahweh, for Isaiah warns of those who "make a league but not of my spirit," רוח (Is. 30:1).

The רוח is also mentioned as the seat of emotions. In Is. 26:9 it is used parallel with נפש as the righteous

English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II, 849.

²³Snaith, p. 149.

are compelled to say: "My soul-- שׁוֹפָר --yearns for thee in the night, my spirit-- רוּחִי --within me earnestly seeks thee."

The רוּח is the living, breathing being which is operative in the flesh. This is a gift of God, formed by God within man. In the prophecy of Isaiah the writer places רוּח parallel with נְשָׁמָה . Yahweh "gives breath to the people upon it (that is, the earth He created), and the spirit to those who walk in it" (Is. 42:5). This same combination of terms occurs in Is. 47:16.

The Israelite does not think of these aspects of שׁוֹפָר , נְשָׁמָה , and רוּח as material parts of man's being. Such an idea would mean that the study of being and function would be in the area of anthropology. At the same time, these aspects in themselves are not purely spiritual. Each one is a vital force which manifests itself in the actions of the flesh. These aspects do not exist by themselves. When the vital force is separated from the body, the function of earthly life no longer exists. Daniel maintains that the absence of breath keeps him from performing the function of talking (Dan. 10:17). The soul leaves at death (Jer. 15:9). There seems to be no emphasis by the prophets that the soul, or any other aspect, continues an individual or separate existence after death comes to a man.²⁴

²⁴Heidel does not agree that the Old Testament is

Life for the Israelite is oriented toward this earth. The good things of life, the full life, are described in terms of this earth. It is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who gives the good life. It comes from His goodness, and is a sign of favor shown to His faithful and righteous people.

Jeremiah recognizes the plot of the men of Anathoth to put him to death. He seeks evidence from God which will vindicate his actions. He cries to God to bring vengeance upon his accusers (Jer. 11:20). He wants life to continue, and this continuance in life is a blessing of the Creator. The promise of a long life as a condition in the age of the restoration illustrates the desire of man to live (Is. 66:22). While man lives, he looks for peace. The covenant with Levi was a covenant of peace, and the priests were faithful to Yahweh in order to keep this peace (Mal. 2:5). The remnant of Israel that has returned to build again the temple of Jerusalem will enjoy the blessings of peace as a sign of the favor of life from Yahweh (Zech. 8:12). At the same time, prosperity, another physical term, shall be the blessing of life (Zech. 8:12). The desolate cities shall

silent about man's being a body and soul. He quotes from Gen. 35:8, Rachel's soul departed at death; 1 Kings 17:21, Elijah prayed that the soul of the widow's son be restored; Jonah prays disappointedly that since Nineveh was not destroyed, to "save face" it is better that he die, that is, have his soul taken from him, Jonah 4:3; the preacher declares the spirit returns to God, Eccl. 12:7. Likewise he makes reference to Ps. 104:29 and 146:4. Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 143.

come to life again as the exiles return from Babylon, and the sign of life shall be that "My cities shall again overflow with prosperity," says the Lord of hosts (Zech. 1:17). Yahweh intends for the people of His covenant to live a full life, and this life is measured by the gifts which He bestows upon them.

Man's experience has been that life, activity, ceases at some time. The moving force is separated from man's body, his flesh. The prophets explain this removal of life as Yahweh's control over man. Man's life is in His power.

The opposite to life is death. The physical recognition of death was the stoppage of breath, movement, and communication.²⁵ Each of these has a bearing on the individual significance of death as opposed to life. The prophets see death as Yahweh's judgment against sin. Direct reference to this judgment of Yahweh is possibly limited to Is. 53:8 in the writings of the prophets. The Servant led to the slaughter like a lamb is "by oppression and judgment . . . taken away." This judgment is the means of the great act of the vicarious death of the Servant. It comes because of the transgression of the people, and this transgression is against Yahweh. He inflicts judgment. Cheyne maintains that "'Judgment' = sentence, as in

²⁵E. Jacob, "Death," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), A-D, 802.

'judgment of death.'"²⁶

Although the special reference to judgment is lacking, Ezekiel describes death as a token of Yahweh's anger. When Yahweh brings punishment against the disobedient people, He declares, "Thus will I spend my fury upon them" (Ezek. 6:12). Yahweh is a jealous God. He will not stand idly by and permit Israel to commit the abominations at the altars of the idols (Ezek. 6:9,10). There will be no pity, no sparing those who have defiled the sanctuary of Yahweh, but "thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend my fury upon them" (Ezek. 5:13). Death is the fulness of Yahweh's wrath,

תִּפְּוּ. "The prophet is possessed by the idea that the fall of Jerusalem is a token of Jahweh's anger, equally pitiless and just. Only complete destruction will satisfy."²⁷ In the wake of sin and in the face of Yahweh's wrath none can maintain his life.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel become specific as they point out how Yahweh will bring about the death. The sword, pestilence, and famine themes describe Yahweh's way of punishing sin. Ezekiel declares that Yahweh will use these means to

²⁶T. K. Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah (Fifth Edition, revised; London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1889), II, 47.

²⁷Cooke, p. 61.

bring about judgment (Ezek. 7:15; 6:12; 5:12). Jeremiah uses the same or a similar formula eighteen times. The taking away of life by such force is an act of judgment.

Although the prophets see the wrath of God at work in punishing the nation, there are those times when they suddenly remind Israel in the midst of threats that Yahweh does have a day of grace also. This is a reminder that "if God should put no restraint upon His wrath, the consequences would be the entire destruction of human life, which was His creative act at first."²⁸ Such a restricting passage occurs in Is. 57:16: "For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry." Israel must know that even as Yahweh gives life, He can extend it, or remove it.

The experience of man is that death comes to all men. Position in life, rulership among the nations, political leadership, none of these exempts anyone from passing through the gateway of death. Death is inevitable. The death of a king is reported as a course which everyone must follow (Is. 38:1). The members of the king's court die, and such a death may be the time for a special utterance by the prophet (Ezek. 11:13), but the death itself is in the course of events. There are those instances when the death of an individual is specifically stated to be the

²⁸Franz Delitsch, The Prophecies of Isaiah, I, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by James Martin (Fourth Series; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), XIV, 380.

judgment of Yahweh for evil. Jeremiah predicts the death of Hananiah the prophet because he "uttered rebellion against the Lord" and within the space of a year the prophet died (Jer. 28:16-17).

Death comes to all, and as it reaches out to all men it is described as "never satisfied" (Hab. 2:5). It is an insatiable monster.²⁹ Death is the great equalizer of men. The proud and pompous ruler upon the earth becomes as the nations he has subjugated on the earth (Is. 14:3-10). The judgment of Yahweh reaches out to the greatest earthly rulers and in death strips them of power. In the case of a great rebellion against Yahweh He strips the king of the opportunity for an honorable burial which fellow monarchs might experience. Although the earthly reign made it possible for the great rebel against God to tyrannize the earth, yet when death comes "the dead body is trodden under foot. You will not be joined with them in burial" (Is. 14:12-20). God's judgment against one who seeks to dethrone Yahweh and make himself "like the Most High" (Is. 14:14), includes this that the king will be despised by his own people and he will not receive the burial of honor and respect.

Death is abhorred, life is desired, because man sees death as the inability of the flesh to act and function. In Israel life is oriented to this earth, it is understood

²⁹Ellis, p. 736.

to exist in that environment where man works and acts together with his fellowman and with his God. Death is the end of all such activity (Is. 38:18). After Hezekiah recovers from the sickness which at the first was to bring an end to his life, he says: "I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living; I shall look upon man no more among the inhabitants of the world" (Is. 38:11). Praise to Yahweh is the delight of every pious Israelite. This praise is given in the congregation of the people. In death the person is outside this cultic sphere where relationship with Yahweh is maintained.³⁰ The succeeding generations of Israel received the sacred injunction to relay to generations yet to come the great faithfulness of Yahweh. This faithfulness brought forth the songs of thanksgiving to Yahweh (Is. 38:19). The grave was to be shunned, death was lamented, because here the mouth of man is silenced. The glory of Yahweh and His gracious acts could then no longer be related to the children now living and yet to be born.

Death is also viewed as the means whereby Yahweh puts an end to oppression. This also means that the body and the intellect which functioned are suddenly brought to an end of activity. The king of Assyria will have his rule

³⁰Gerhardt von Rad, "Death in the OT," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited in English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II, 847.

come to an end and his productive land and forest will be laid waste. The strength of the king and the nation will be "as when a sick man wastes away" (Is. 10:18). Jeremiah prays for an end to the activity of evil men when he cries for vengeance against the men of Anathoth who are seeking his life (Jer. 11:20). In death the oppressor loses power and he is unable to continue his persecution of the child of God. Death is the loss of that power within the body which is animated by soul, spirit, and breath.

When a body comes to death, the body is discarded. It is placed in the family grave or burial place. Although it may be buried in honor, it still can wield no power. The bodies of many who fall in the day of vengeance might remain in the open field and be food for animal or bird (Jer. 34:20; also Ezek. 39:11-16). King Jehoiakim sent his officers into Egypt to bring back the faithful prophet Uriah, and put him to death. His dead body was cast into the burial place of the common people (Jer. 26:23). Jeremiah speaks of the dead body as a $\pi\text{בִּלְיָ}$, a carcass, corpse, something that has dropped down, languished, faded. A carcass is something which is inert, flabby.³¹ Those who come to the abode of the dead are designated as רְפָאִים , weak ones, shades, ghosts (Is. 14:9; 26:14).

Death, then, makes man vanish. He is absent from the

³¹Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon, p. 615, root: $\pi\text{בִּלְיָ}$.

community, His activity is lacking in the community. His energyless body is cast into the burial place. He is absent.

Death is essentially absence, separation, disappearance; the dead man is absent par excellence, the vanished man. The world of the perished is the world where absence rules, where the presence of an absolute absence reigns. This is undubitably the most unendurable characteristic of Sheol, the most mournful consequence of death, that which the believing Israelite contemplates with least equanimity, for then it truly appears as a curse on a People whose life, in community as well as individually, is meaningless apart from the presence of the Living God.³²

In death Yahweh removes the treasures and the pleasures of the earth. Here again there is a kind of separation which takes place. Man is separated from all the blessings which come to him in life. For this reason man seeks to cling to life.

When a person dies he goes into Sheol.³³ The meaning of Sheol can be gained only as each individual text is studied. The purpose of the writer must be understood as he speaks of Sheol. Is it a condition or is it a place? Sheol, in some instances, denotes the subterranean spirit world.³⁴ This is the apparent meaning in Is. 14:15 when surprise is registered in Sheol among those already come to the depths of the Pit when the proud "Day Star, son of Dawn" is brought down into Sheol. Amos vividly declares

³²Martin-Achard, p. 42.

³³Other terms the prophets use for the abode, condition, or place of the dead are שְׁאוֹל and בְּוֹר.

³⁴Heidel, p. 173.

that there is no place of escape when Yahweh comes in judgment. Men may dig into Sheol, but will find that Yahweh's power extends here also, and will bring judgment. Yahweh will also reach anyone who tries to climb to the heavens in an effort to go beyond the reach of Yahweh. Cripps compares this passage of "going down into Sheol" with Is. 5:14, and identifies it with "the subterranean dwelling place of the spirits of the dead."³⁵

Sheol is also designated as the burial place of the body, the grave. It is in Sheol that the King of Assyria is placed, and "maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your covering" (Is. 14:11). Sheol is the place where bodily decay takes place. Other passages are not quite as plain. The well-known passage of Hezekiah's prayer in Isaiah thirty-eight speaks of the silence of Sheol, the place where praise is no longer offered to Yahweh (verse 18). It would seem that שְׁאוֹל and בְּוֹר are parallels here, and Hezekiah is speaking of the grave with its absence of praise, its complete silence.

In Ezekiel thirty-two the prophet declares that the day of God's judgment will strike all nations. He describes the great funeral that takes place as Yahweh shows His power and authority over all the mighty men and nations of the earth.

³⁵Richard S. Cripps, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos (Great Britain: SPCK, 1955), p. 257.

Each of the terms designating the place of deposit for dead bodies is used in the chapter, **בֹּר**, **קֶבֶר**, and **שְׁאוֹל**. The grave serves in judgment against those who are uncircumcised, that is, those who do not place their faith and confidence in Yahweh, the heathen.

Heidel maintains that this passage of Ezekiel speaks of the grave, not the nether-world. He bases his contention on the fact that the swords of the slain are laid with the bodies in the grave; they are not taken to the spirit-world.³⁶ Ellison makes the statement that "the weapons in v. 27 are as much shadow weapons as everything else in Sheol."³⁷

Ezekiel speaks of Sheol one other time in this chapter. He describes the mighty chiefs who "shall speak of them . . . out of the midst of Sheol" (verse 21). Isaiah's prophecy gives the "shades" in Sheol the ability to speak (Is. 14:9). This is a different concept of death than that picture of cold, silent forms lying motionless in the graves. In this figurative description of Sheol, Ezekiel seems to include more than the idea of a grave. Different treatment is accorded the nations as they occupy various parts of the grave. The nations mentioned in judgment have "spread

³⁶Heidel, p. 175.

³⁷H. L. Ellison, Ezekiel: The Man and His Message (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 115.

terror in the land of the living" (Ezek. 32:23-27). The prophecy recorded earlier, but given on the first day of the twelfth month of the twelfth year declares that the king of Babylon will destroy the Pharaoh of Egypt, its people and its land (Ezek. 32:1-16). The prophecy on the fifteenth day of the first month of the twelfth year (Ezek. 32:17) tells of the aftermath of the conquest and the slaughter. The ones killed in battle are in the depository for the dead, the grave and the netherworld.

Each one is buried in shame, for they "went down uncircumcised" (Ezek. 32:24,25,26,29,30). This term uncircumcised is not a mere physical designation but identifies the heathen who did not acknowledge Yahweh as Lord. Others are in the same judgment with Egypt now, though they are not mentioned in the earlier prophecy of the chapter. However, Assyria has its place assigned "in the uttermost parts of the Pit," בְּיַרְכֵתֵי־בֹר (verse 23), while Elam is placed "into the nether world," אֶרֶץ תַּחַת יוֹת (verse 24). Yet all those who are slain by the sword go down to the Pit, בֹּר (verses 24,25,29,30). Meshach and Tubal are exceptions. They do not find a place in the Pit, nor do they lie down in Sheol with the mighty men of old, but they are "slain with the sword" (verses 26,27).

Though the language is poetic, and therefore difficult to interpret, there seems to be a stress on the continuing judgment. Not only is the violent death--they are all slain

by the sword--a judgment of Yahweh, but each receives consequences of his earthly actions and attitudes also in the afterlife. The positive statement of suffering in the other world is not yet specified as Daniel does later. Because this is judgment, there would be no thought expressed of the martyr theme. The judgment, however, does point to the current belief that man continues in some existence after this life, and he can be dealt with in a manner in keeping with his earthly life.

The poetic description of the judgment of man in an afterlife has presented problems to interpreters. A stalemate arises in arriving at a positive statement of the purpose of Sheol. The fluid use of the term Sheol as a place, or possibly a condition, is a part of the problem. However, this question has met with various answers: Was Sheol a place of punishment? Was it a depository for the "uncircumcised" only, or was it a place to which all the dead were consigned? Heidel points out that "there is no passage which proves that She'ôl was ever employed as a designation for the gathering-place of the departed spirits³⁸ of the

³⁸See the opposite to this stated in Theo. Laetsch, The Minor Prophets (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), pp. 103-104. Commenting on Hos. 13:14 he states: "In Biblical usage Sheol is that state into which all men, even the believing children of God, enter at the moment of death If there were no Gospel of redemption to die, to enter Sheol, would mean to be cast together with death and 'hell' (Hades, the Greek term for Sheol) into the lake of fire, the second death."

godly."³⁹ He refers to Ps. 49:14-15 to support the statement that Sheol can refer to the abode of the souls of the wicked only:

Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home. But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.

Death is the inevitable end of all men on this earth. Everyone exists after this earth. God does not ransom the righteous from death, but He will redeem him from the underground abode of the spirits.⁴⁰

This view is opposed by Gaster who observes that "Nowhere in the OT is the abode of the dead regarded as a place of punishment or torment."⁴¹ Brown, on the other hand, commenting on the passage of Hos. 6:14, states that "She  l is the dark, cavernous abode of the departed, here personified as a power of destruction; cf. Ps. xviii.5; cxvi.30."⁴² Such general statements concerning the purpose of Sheol in Yahweh's plan of death and punishment could possibly be challenged by a number of passages which could

³⁹Heidel, p. 186.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 184-185.

⁴¹T. H. Gaster, "Dead, Abode of the," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Buttrick, et al. (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), A-D, 788.

⁴²Sydney L. Brown, The Book of Hosea, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock and D. C. Simpson (London: Methuen & Co. LTD., 1932), pp. 115-116.

be cited to prove otherwise.

The condition of the body in Sheol can be traced to some extent. The dead are deprived of power to praise, work, molest, wage war, exercise authority. These deprivations of the body are illustrated by passages previously quoted. In this condition, without power, authority, or kingdom, the powerful in the nations as well as all who come into the condition of death, are weak ones, רַב־כֹּחַ אֵינֶם .

Death and the subsequent entrance into Sheol, signifying either the grave or the netherworld, was not annihilation in the thought of the Jewish people. There was a continuing existence, undefined though it may be.⁴³ When the prophet foretells that God will bring an end to the arrogance of the Babylonian tyrant, he uses the awesome picture of Sheol. There is sufficient consciousness in the shades, רַב־כֹּחַ אֵינֶם , that they are roused, עוֹרֵר , when he enters. There is the transmission of thought, $\text{כֻּלָּם יַעֲזֹבוּ וְיִאמְרוּ אֵלַיָּךְ}$, "all of them will speak and say to you" (Is. 14:9,10). This poetic description of the fall of the king of Babylon relies on some popular concepts of Sheol. The consciousness of those in Sheol, however, did not affect the affairs of the earth. Although Abraham continues in existence, though long dead, he does not know us, and Israel, Jacob's new name, does not acknowledge us

⁴³Vriezen, p. 203.

who remain on the earth (Is. 63:16).

Further evidence that Israel's belief could not admit that a person lived on this earth for a time and then be completely annihilated can be seen in the warning of the prophets against necromancy.⁴⁴ The commandment against it implies the thought that the dead exist. Isaiah maintains that persons should "consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?" (Is. 8:18). Mediums and wizards were still operating in Israel at this comparatively late date in spite of the fact that there must have been knowledge of early commandments recorded in Deut. 18:11-14. Prior to the entrance into the Land of Promise Israel was forbidden to follow the practice of divination, a common practice of the people living in the land Israel will soon possess. Contemporary with Isaiah, the prophet Micah utters the word of the Lord which promises "And I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more soothsayers" (Micah 5:12). This warning may not necessarily refer to the art of consulting the dead, but it refers to the practice of calling forth supernatural forces to intervene in earthly life.

Israel shall be called "the sons of the living God" (Hos. 1:10). This means that the God of Israel is the

⁴⁴H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press LTD., 1956), p. 156.

eternal, efficient, and true God.⁴⁵ The faith of Israel would not admit that Yahweh is powerless in the realm of the dead. Although the entire concept of the way of death causes many a pious Hebrew to lament,⁴⁶ and once dead,

there can be no return to former conditions in the "land of the living," . . . nor indeed any fellowship with Yahweh--the Giver of Life. . . . In fact, for the most part it is a still and silent "land of forgetfulness," which even at its best is but a pale and gloomy reflection of the world of⁴⁷ light and life which is Yahweh's special sphere,

the writing prophets of Israel do not admit to the defeat of Yahweh in the face of death. These voices speaking the Word of Yahweh have the message of hope to the nation which must first go into exile as judgment for its sin, but will be restored and brought back as a nation once again. In this knowledge of the restored nation lies the seed which sprouts forth in the full bloom of the revelation of the resurrection life of the individual body. The concept of death which is the cause of lament will be removed by the "progressive history of salvation."⁴⁸ Yahweh will cause the body taken in death to rise again. The knowledge of this glory which Yahweh has in store for

⁴⁵Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon, p. 309.

⁴⁶Martin-Achard, p. 41.

⁴⁷Aubrey R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949), pp. 93-94.

⁴⁸Delitsch, p. 121.

man must come through the revelation of Yahweh's purpose for man as established in the Covenant relationship.

PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION REVEALS THAT THE FULNESS OF LIFE IS LIVED IN COMPLETE HARMONY WITH YAHWEH, AND DEATH, A SEPARATING FORCE, FOLLOWS WHEN THIS HARMONY IS BROKEN

The prophets are primarily concerned with the nation of Israel. Their message, purposes, predictions and pleas urge her to repent, that is, to return to such relationships with God as existed aforesaid. A prime concern of the prophetic prophets is to save a nation that is on the verge of ruin and "death." Just as a body taken in death lies dormant and desolate in the decay of the tomb, so Israel as a nation is about to be deprived of life. Her land is in danger of reverting to desert conditions. Her cities will not experience traffic and marketing, for the people will be gone. The houses that know the joy and laughter of life will be silent. The nation has life, just as man has life. The united social, political, and religious activity constitutes the life of the nation. It remains in motion as the people fulfill the national responsibilities. While the individual in the nation is seen as a part of it, the message of the prophets is directed essentially to the nation.

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CHAPTER III

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The prophets are primarily concerned with the nation of Israel. Their message, summons, predictions and pleas urge her to repent, that is, to return to such relationships with God as existed aforetime. A prime concern of the preexilic prophets is to save a nation that is on the verge of ruin and "death." Just as a body taken in death lies dormant and desolate in the decay of the tomb, so Israel as a nation is about to be deprived of life. Her land is in danger of reverting to desert conditions. Her cities will not experience traffic and marketing, for the people will be gone. The houses that know the joy and laughter of life will be silent. The nation has life, just as man has life. The united social, political, and religious activity constitutes the life of the nation. It remains in motion as the people fulfill the national responsibilities. While the individual in the nation is seen as a part of it, the message of the prophets is directed essentially to the nation.

The life of Israel as a nation was threatened at various times. Because of her advantageous location which gave opportunity to control the trade routes between African

and Asian business centers, the powerful nations to the north, east, and south often coveted control over Israel. Hence Israel was continually struggling for her existence, for her "life." During these times of invasion, or even the blockade of Jerusalem itself, the prophets urge a complete trust and confidence in Yahweh's power and will to preserve her from falling under foreign rule. Isaiah warns King Hezekiah not to rely on the help of the Egyptians, but to have confidence in the help which Yahweh gives and which alone can keep the nation alive. He will demonstrate that power by overthrowing Sennacherib as the Assyrians threaten to take Jerusalem and all the land of Judah. God's promise of help will not fail:

The Lord of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand, that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountain trample him under foot; and his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder." This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back? (Is. 14:24-27).

Israel should not trust in her own prowess and skill. The world conditions show that "the nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away" (Is. 17:13).

The prophets, however, are concerned because the overthrow of this nation is imminent. They want to make plain the cause of this threat to the land and to its independence.

Such a subjection will not take place merely because Israel is exposed to the political greed and lust of conquest of other nations. She will lose her independence, be ruled and taxed by foreign powers, and even be carried into captivity only because she had broken off a relationship with Yahweh which He had established when He made her a nation. Because Israel had sinned, the concern of the preexilic prophets was to call back Israel to a life in and with Yahweh, separated from the alliances with neighboring nations and purified of their horrible heathen practices. Social evils had to be overcome by showing mercy and steadfast love toward the unfortunate in her midst. The call of the prophets to Israel is: Repent. Return to former ways.

To seek help from Yahweh meant to seek Him out and walk in His ways. If they were to live in conformity with Yahweh, they needed to know what this way of life involved and meant on their part. Any impending devastation can be avoided, Amos says, if Israel will "Seek me and live" (Amos 5:4). There can be no security in national shrines or in superficial ritual. Rather, Israel must come to know Yahweh, know what His way is, and to follow in that way.

This way of knowledge of Yahweh will be the source of power for Israel. Nothing has changed as far as God is concerned. The source of deliverance, Hosea reminds Israel, is the same as that which delivered her "from the land of

Egypt; . . . and besides me there is no savior" (Hos. 13:4). Zephaniah shows the nation that the knowledge of Yahweh's purpose and presence casts out concern for the future, for "the King of Israel, the Lord is in your midst; you shall fear evil no more" (Zeph. 3:15). Isaiah assures them that if they leave the earthly and cling to Yahweh they shall not be dismayed. "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40:31).

If the Children of Israel refuse to use God's power available to them, it will be used against them. Yahweh contrasts His promise of help and strength with the threat of judgment against this nation if it will not place trust and confidence in Him. Deliverance has been and will continue to be of the Lord. Israel refused divine help when she placed trust in implements of warfare by saying "'No! We will speed upon horses,' therefore you shall speed away; and 'We will ride upon swift steeds,' therefore your pursuers shall be swift" (Is. 30:16). God threatened judgment also when Israel forgot the dangers of the wilderness and enjoyed the prosperity of the promised land. She relied upon her own resources, and God will show how helpless Israel is without Him.

So I will be to them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk beside the way. I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will tear open their

breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rend them (Hos. 13:7,8).

Pride makes man stand by himself, yet the prophets teach that "God's fellowship is man's highest privilege."¹ The prophets repeatedly spoke scathingly of Israel's sins and transgressions, and warned of impending judgment, but they still wanted to make "clear from many passages that the enjoyment of God's fellowship was believed to be still open to man."² Such a life of fellowship challenges the inmost desires and feelings of man. When man comes to complete trust in Yahweh's power and help it,

wins from man the venture of faith--to leave all earthly security and cling to God's Word alone, which invites him to forget himself in a love of the whole heart and soul. Here are revealed the riches of a spiritual and moral world, which show themselves independent of all earthly goods and can be experienced in living reality as the true supreme value.³

This life is not lived in isolation, nor is it a mere theory, but is put into practice as each person lives in fellowship with his neighbor. The attitude of each person toward his neighbor shows whether fellowship with Yahweh exists. No person can afford to react negatively to the message of the prophets, or consider it unimportant because now "the issues

¹H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press LTD., 1956), p. 82.

²Ibid., p. 81.

³Walther Eichrodt, Man in the Old Testament, in Studies in Biblical Theology, edited by C. F. D. Moule, et al., translated by K. and R. Smith (London: SCM Press, 1951; reprint 1961), IV, 48.

of the nation are truly as large as life or death."⁴ It is not a matter of individual life but corporate personality. Amos urges the nation to "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said" (Amos 5:14). Seeking good equals seeking God,⁵ and seeking God equals living the life of God's order, and living the life of God's order means that there is fellowship with God. The nation cannot exist apart from its communion with God.

Israel's response to Yahweh is vital because He made her a nation. Many figures and descriptions are used to illustrate Israel's origins and Yahweh's deeds. God found her, He maintains, "like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your fathers" (Hos. 9:10). "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them" (Hos. 11:1,3). In later years Jeremiah acknowledges that Yahweh reminded Israel of her dependence upon Him in the formative years, "Have you not just now called to me, 'My Father, thou art the friend of my

⁴John Marsh, Amos and Micah, in the Torch Bible Commentaries, edited by David L. Edwards, John Marsh, and Allan Richardson (London: SCM Press LTD., 1959), p. 55.

⁵Roy L. Honeycutt, Amos and His Message (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), p. 101.

youth'" (Jer. 3:4). God will restore Israel, the chosen people, because "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born. . . . Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? . . . Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord" (Jer. 31:9,20).

Yahweh chose Israel because of His elective love $\text{יְהוָה} \text{בְּחַסְדּוֹ}$. It is unmerited. There is nothing within Israel that would prompt Yahweh to shower such love upon her.

Because of this elective love of Yahweh, He made Israel to live as a nation. Ezekiel describes the birth of national Israel as brought about by Yahweh's powerful Word. Israel's beginnings were of the very smallest kind. Her chance of surviving as a nation was zero because she was a despised nation. Then, according to Ezekiel, chapter sixteen, Yahweh saw the infant wallowing in its own blood, and kept it alive. According to the same prophet, God Himself steps into the pathway of Israel as the Dispenser of life, and with the creating Word revives this child which was almost dead.⁶

The consensus of several commentators of this passage is that Yahweh is saying to Israel that she has suffered much, but in spite of it she will continue to live. Keil

⁶Walther Eichrodt, Der Prophet Hesekiel, Chapters 1-18, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1959), Teilband 22/1, p. 122.

states that he prefers the translation "'In thy blood live,' that is, lying in thy blood in which thou wouldst inevitably bleed to death, yet thou shalt live."⁷ Bewer believes that "live" here means that Israel should "continue to live in spite of exposure and neglect."⁸ Cooke, on the other hand, admits that "live might also have the sense recover, revive, as from sickness or likelihood of death, e.g., Is. 38^{9.21}. The rendering in spite of thy blood is possible, e.g., Lev. 26²⁷, Is. 47⁹, but less appropriate."⁹ Cooke would prefer to explain "in thy blood" to mean live as you are for a period of time, "with thy blood upon thee continue in life; for live in this sense cp. 2 S. 12²²."¹⁰ In this case, the traveler who comes upon the foundling child originally would come back at a later date and see the grown "child." Now for a period of time, Israel would merely be thrown on the field to grow as a flower is thrown out to grow. "Live in thy blood," according to Cooke,

⁷Carl Friedrich Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel, in Biblical Commentaries on the Old Testament, edited by C. F. Keil and F. Delitsch, translated from the German by James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), I, 200.

⁸Julius A. Bewer, The Prophets in the King James Version and Critical Notes (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1955), p. 367.

⁹G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936; reprinted 1960), p. 163.

¹⁰Ibid.

would mean to live as an unkempt, unwashed ragamuffin.

Textual difficulties abound in this passage. The critical apparatus of Rudolf Kittel in Biblia Hebraica points out that the plural pronominal ending בְּדַמַּיִם should be changed to the singular, בְּדַמַּי .¹¹ The Septuagint reading is $\text{Ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος σου ζῶῆ}$, and thus suggests that ב and ד were confused.¹² The Biblia Hebraica repeats $\text{וְאָמַרְתִּי בְּדַמַּיִם לְךָ אֶחָדָּךְ}$ in this verse. Cooke,¹³ Bertholet,¹⁴ Eichrodt,¹⁵ and Bewer¹⁶ strike the second statement as a dittograph, and appeal to the Septuagint, which also omits the repetition. Regarding this duplication Cooke points out, that

U ingeniously finds a significance in the repetition: "I said to you, by the blood of circumcision I will take pity on you; and I said to you, By the blood of the Passover I will deliver you"; cp. U v. 23: 21:14.

¹¹Biblia Hebraica, edited by Rudolf Kittel (Tenth Edition; Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), Ezek. 16:6, p. 830.

¹²Septuaginta, edited by Alfred Rahlfs (Editio Sexta; Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1959), II, Ezek. 16:6, p. 792.

¹³Cooke, p. 166.

¹⁴Alfred Bertholet, Das Buch Hesekiel, in Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Karl Marti (Leipzig: Verlag Von J. C. B. Mohr, 1897), XII, 79.

¹⁵Eichrodt, Hesekiel, p. 117, n. 5.

¹⁶Bewer, p. 367.

¹⁷Cooke, p. 166.

This interpretation appears forced. The command to circumcise was given to Abraham as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:13-14). Moses reiterates the covenant stipulation of circumcision when he commands that no "uncircumcised person shall eat of" the passover (Ex. 12:48). The blood of circumcision is of no special significance. Also, the blood of the passover is only a sign on the doorpost of the Hebrew house in Egypt so that the angel of death pass over that house (Ex. 12:22-23). It is not the means of deliverance. It would seem that the repetition should be considered a dittograph. Eichrodt credits the priestly scribes with the dittograph and suggests that it follows the order of the creation section of Genesis one.¹⁸

Although the text may cause linguistic difficulties, the basic purpose cannot be misunderstood. Yahweh is reminding Israel of her beginnings. There was little in her infancy which suggested that she should succeed as a nation. Yahweh took her to Himself, made her what she is. Now Israel rebels against the Lord her God. Israel had received from Yahweh the Word of power, the Word which would make her to live. The imperative "live" means more than merely to exist as any other nation. Yahweh's redemptive purpose is to be fulfilled in her. She should live up to expectations. She should have standards which should govern

¹⁸Eichrodt, Hesekiel, p. 117, n. 5.

her conduct. The fulness of life, designed by this elective love, is described in the expressions of beauty, splendor, and plenty which are given to the growing, developing, maturing nation of Israel (Ezek. 16:9-14). As Eichrodt points out, Israel's history, care, and purpose is climaxed by the fact that Yahweh took her from among the heathen nations and made her what she is.

so ist doch die Absicht des Gleichnisses deutlich: Die Gottesstadt und mit ihr das Gottesvolk verdanken schon ihre nackte Existence einem Gnadenakt, der durch keinerlei Vorzug oder Leistung auf seiten des also Begnadigten begründet war. Ja, dieser Ursprung aus heidnischem Blute steht in merkwürdigem Gegensatz zu dem Dogma Abrahamskindschaft, durch das man sonst in Israel seine Sonderart nachzuweisen suchte, und setzt schon im Wesen des erwählten Volkes eine ursprüngliche Neigung zum Heidentum voraus.¹⁹

Yahweh drew this nation still closer to Himself. "I plighted my troth to you and entered into covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine" (Ezek. 16:8). The marriage bond becomes a figure for the Yahweh-Israel covenant. Prominent in the use of this figure is God's command to Hosea to marry a harlot (Hos. 1-3). The woman as the man's wife is required not to "play the harlot, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you" (Hos. 3:3). The result of the marriage is that Yahweh expected the nation to be faithful and loyal to Him, just as He is faithful to her. He does not bring her into existence and then cast

¹⁹Ibid., p. 122.

her out to provide for herself. He provided her with the needs and luxuries of life. In love He continues to watch over her.

Yahweh chose Israel to be His nation because of elective love, אֲבִיבִי, and now He continues to provide for her in steadfast love, רַחֲמֵי.²⁰ This is His motivation in His dealing with her. This is His attitude when He speaks of her as "my people," עַמִּי. Hosea assures Israel that Yahweh has lived up to steadfast love and continues to love Israel, even though she has gone after paramours and is an adulteress (Hos. 3:1). Although Ezekiel does not use the word רַחֲמֵי in the sixteenth chapter, the description of His continued care for Israel shows His steadfast love.

Israel will live the fulness of life if she on her part also responds to Him with רַחֲמֵי and shows forth the same loving kindness toward her fellowman. Israel thought that her duties to God were discharged by mere performance of outward acts of worship at the temple or at some other shrine. Her relationship with Yahweh is not maintained by the mechanics of sacrificing animals, much less when they are not of the best (Mal. 1:8), but it also involves a life

²⁰ Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 94-95. Here Snaith shows the difference between the אֲבִיבִי, election love and רַחֲמֵי, covenant love. The רַחֲמֵי is conditional upon there being a covenant. Without a covenant there is no רַחֲמֵי. The election love, אֲבִיבִי, is not conditioned by covenant.

of loving service and consideration toward the oppressed and unfortunate in her midst.

When the prophets insist that Israel is to have loving kindness toward Yahweh, it means that she is to be faithful to Him, to have a true knowledge of Him, to acknowledge Him in true worship, and to live according to His commands. Hosea deplores the fact that

There is no faithfulness or kindness (תִּדְבָר), no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder (Hos. 4:2).

Because of oppression and deceit the land is languishing away, it is losing life, לֹא חַיָּה (Hos. 4:3). Isaiah also pictures the land as dead, languishing, $\text{כִּי מָוֶת וְלֹא חַיָּה}$, because of broken covenants, deceit, and disregard for man (Is. 33:8,9). Hosea emphasizes the need for steadfast love as man's true life before Yahweh. "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6). Isaiah also defines the proper life in the covenant with God. According to the word of the Lord mere offerings or the outward observances of festival days do not constitute acceptable worship. Yahweh will not be attentive to it, unless the people are ready to shun evil and observe those standards of social justice which show loving kindness toward the neighbor (Is. 1:10-17). The Temple Sermon of Jeremiah calls people to repentance. It involves the giving up of superstitious beliefs regarding

the temple as a talisman for their safety and dealing justly with the unfortunate and the oppressed. Israel is to lead a life of responsibility as it is defined in the terms of the covenant (Jer. 7:3-7).

Amos states the condition of life in the succinct statement: "Seek me and live" (Amos 5:4). Marsh explains that

The word translated "seek" originally meant to ask for an oracle from some diviner, and then to offer worship and obedience to God. Amos contrasts the two meanings: "Offer me true worship and holy obedience and you shall have life of superabundant quality." But true worship leading to real life cannot be found if you go seeking oracles at Bethel, Gilgal, Beer-sheba, where false priests, prophets, and diviners pretend to know and speak my will, but really know nothing of me, being like yourselves, sinful sinners of a sinful society.²¹

According to Honeycutt the entire problem rests in this, that men do not know how or where to seek God.

This was not just a problem of Amos' day. Throughout the prophetic era the prophets continually fought against the idea that God could be identified with the ritual and traditions of the ancient places and ways of worship (cf. Hos. 5:1 ff; Is. 1:12 ff; Jer. 7:1 ff; Ezek. 40-48), wherein the entire religious structure was viewed as restored along different lines from the traditional.²²

To remain alive as a nation Israel needed to find God once again, the God of the covenant who was now obscured by a false trust in mere ritual and relegated to a corner of the temple.

²¹Marsh, p. 53.

²²Honeycutt, p. 95.

Israel's searching for Yahweh shall not be in vain. In it they will find life, the life which is the full, the most complete life. It will lead to the right and proper conduct. It will result in the joys and satisfactions and blessings which Yahweh holds out to man and to the nation in the promise of the covenant bond.

It is evident that the injunction to "live" is not confined to mere length of days on earth (Amos 5:4). Amos does not simply mean that an effort should be made to avoid the devastation described in verses one to three of this chapter: fallen Israel, forsaken in land and in city. He is concerned with the moral strength which shows itself in

a positive healthy ordering of both private and public life in conformity with God's righteous will, which is the only full and satisfying life for men and states, a life which is related not only to the passing phases of the temporal, but also to the abiding realities of the eternal world.²³

Baur likewise maintains that "life" here means living in the community with the greatest blessings of God upon it.²⁴ The "ostentatious piety" which accompanied the worship at the favorite shrines led the people of Israel to forget the weightier matters of the law.²⁵ It was nothing more than

²³ Marsh, pp. 53-54.

²⁴ Gustav Baur, Der Prophet Amos (Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung, 1847), p. 344.

²⁵ Otto J. Baab, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949), p. 102.

self-glorification and therefore a hindrance to living the life in the covenant relationship. The people were to have a true knowledge of God once again, of His being, His holiness, and His intended plan of life for Israel. Then life in covenant would result.

Pusey maintains that the promise of life in Amos 5:4 is the assurance

"And ye shall live," first by the life of the body, escaping the enemy; then by the life of grace now, and the life of glory hereafter, as in that of the Psalmist, your heart shall live who seek God.²⁶

Such a wide and extended meaning seems to be beyond the intent of Amos. In his concern for the nation he is trying to lead the people back to the true worship of Yahweh because of the majesty of Him who controls the heavens, the sea, and the earth (Amos 5:8). Impious attitudes bring judgment upon the nation. Obedience to the covenant and reverence toward Yahweh will keep the nation alive.

The fifth chapter of the Book of Amos lists moral acts toward the neighbor which are in keeping with God's expectations. Only as Israel seeks good, hates evil, lives honestly, and acts in righteousness can she claim: "The Lord is with us."²⁷ The fulfilling of Yahweh's will is the "outward way of life by which the people of God as a whole

²⁶E. B. Pusey, Hosea, in The Minor Prophets (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Publishers, 1888), I, 289.

²⁷Theo. Laetsch, The Minor Prophets (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 162.

acquire a perceptible character through the steady obedience of each individual."²⁸ The extent to which Israel fulfills the moral requirements will measure its association with God.

In the Temple Sermon (Jer. 7:5-12) Jeremiah also declares that the fellowship with Yahweh is established by fulfilling the requirements of true worship. An outward appearance at the temple is not enough, but must involve social justice and true concern for the people in the community. Life, for Israel, is lived within the orbit of the law. The person in the right relationship with Yahweh will observe it by not committing adultery, swearing falsely, or hurting his neighbor in any way.

Köhler points out that the law of Yahweh is the direction for life. Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah emphatically state that the Children of Israel broke this law, and in doing so they rejected God. Israel spurned the good.

One sees from these passages, to which many more could be added, that the law as God's claim that must be obeyed is something which is constantly recurring. According to the Old Testament revelation there is no life without God's law.²⁹

²⁸Walter Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, in Old Testament Library, translated by J. A. Baker (London: SCM Press LTD., 1961), I, 417.

²⁹Ludwig Köhler, Old Testament Theology, translated from the German by A. S. Todd (Third Revised Edition; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 207. The passages to which he refers are: Hos. 4:6; 8:1; Is. 1:10; 5:24; 30:9; Jer. 9:13; 16:11.

Yahweh intends for man to live within the sphere of His covenant. When life is in harmony with its demands it is characterized by righteousness, **קִדְּוָה**. Such a life will be established in the new covenant and the new Israel after the days of judgment are over. In the days when darkness will give way to light and men's hearts shall again be lifted up with joy, the Child to be born will govern and rule over men in justice and righteousness,

וְיָשִׁיב עֵינָיו וְיִשְׁפָּט מִן הַטֵּל (Is. 9:2,6,7). This Child, springing from the "stump of Jesse," will judge the poor with righteousness and faithfulness, the girdles which shall encircle the waist and loins, **קִדְּוָה** and **אֱמֻנָה** (Is. 11:1,4,5). In this kingdom the Torah of the Lord shall proceed out of Mount Zion and rule the hearts of men. Wars shall cease and instruments of destruction will be made into useful tools for harvest (Is. 2:3,4). The longing for this new kingdom under the new covenant is further aroused by the promise that "steadfast love," **רַחֲמֵי**, shall come from the throne, "faithfulness," **אֱמֻנָה**, will be the mark of Him who occupies the tent of David, "justice," **מִשְׁפָּט**, will be the desire of Him who renders judgment, and "righteousness," **קִדְּוָה**, will come forth from Him who is on the throne (Is. 16:5). These standards shall govern Him who rules in the New Age and they should direct the life of those who are ruled.

Jeremiah envisions the day when Yahweh will do away

with all evil and deceit, and there will be the king who "shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jer. 23:5). Righteousness and faithfulness and steadfast love are the qualities of life which Yahweh intended for His covenant people. Added to the assurance of a life of peace and security is the promise that Yahweh will also send shepherds who will care for them. This means the true knowledge of God will return (Jer. 23:3-4). By the righteous rule of the King of the New Age the people will be lead to a righteous way of life also. Porteous comments on such an involvement in life which reaches beyond mere commands and law when he says

if we are to appreciate the significance of the acts of God on behalf of Israel, we must recognize that a series is not complete without that act of God within Israel's life which created a response, however³⁰ imperfect and partial that response may have been.

When Israel responds to Yahweh's steadfast love, righteousness, and holiness, she will bring a truer worship to God and more just social action in the community. The result will be holiness.

The essential aspect of holiness is that of power, but of power in the service of a God who uses all things to make his kingdom triumph. As soon as Yahweh takes possession of holiness--holiness does not take possession of Yahweh--the power of holiness no more consists in prohibition, in the limitation of the sacred sphere, but in the power which

³⁰Norman W. Porteous, "The Old Testament and Some Theological Thought-Forms," in Scottish Journal of Theology, VII (March 1954), 165.

communicates itself in order to bestow life. This subjection of holiness to Yahweh was so complete that very often Yahweh is defined as the holy one, the term holy being synonymous with the divine (Is. 40.25; Hos. 11.9).³¹

Israel was to be an imitator of Yahweh's holiness. Then she would live.

When Yahweh establishes His covenant with Israel, its promises and threats are conditioned by the response on the part of the people. When the covenant is broken by Israel she has forfeited her right to live.

Therefore the prophets threaten Israel with the exile, desolation of the land, and chaos and disorder. When Yahweh's love for His people is spurned, "Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me" (Hos. 11:5). Yahweh despises the feasts and the solemn assemblies of worship, the burnt offerings and peace offerings because Israel's insincerity is demonstrated by the worship of idols. "Therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts" (Amos 5:27). When Israel did not return to Yahweh, Jeremiah is instructed to bring the message of the domination of Nebuchadnezzar by walking through the streets of Jerusalem with the oxen's yoke on his shoulders. He advises King Zedekiah to surrender (Jer. 27:1-11). The

³¹Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 87.

same prophet threatens that anyone who continues to rebel against Yahweh and will not submit to His judgment shall die by the sword, famine, or pestilence; but he who surrenders to the Chaldean shall have his life as a prize of war (Jer. 21:9). Life is lost when Yahweh must bring Israel to such judgment. She will not rule herself. The exile is viewed as the death of the nation. When Yahweh takes life from the nation He may also remove the breath of life from the individual man. Death nationally or individually is Yahweh's punishment for spiritual and moral rebellion.

God looked for the fulfillment of the covenant as Israel's response to His gracious acts, not as the tyrannical demands of a despot. When the prophets kept referring to the judgments and statutes of Yahweh and Israel's obligations to keep them, they were continuing instruction "by which God made the Israelites aware of their final destination as human beings."³² The fellowship involved in Yahweh's claim that this nation shall be my people meant that harmony existed between them. Their destiny as the nation to whom the heathen would come to learn of Yahweh is based on Yahweh's promises, but He looks to Israel to be willing co-workers with Him. As God's possession, Israel

³²O. A. Piper, "Life," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), K-Q, 125.

could communicate with Him. This privilege was contingent upon their response. The destiny of being in fellowship with God, of communicating with Him, and working out His divine purpose all could come to an end if the threatened judgment became permanent.

The welcome cry which comes to a nation under threat of judgment offers life instead of the death of the nation. Such a call comes from Yahweh in the Prophecy of Isaiah: "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live" (Is. 55:3). The means whereby Yahweh offers the life is the Word from the prophet. It nourishes the life of the soul, the life of the individual. The destiny of Israel is determined by the inward desires and emotions of the people. If the Word of God influences them to do His Will, the people and nation will live. The way "to live" again is to seek the Lord, to forsake the wickedness, and to return unto the Lord (Is. 55:6). When Isaiah directs Israel to listen to the Lord he follows the principle set up in Deuteronomy: "that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3). Man is taught to walk in the pathways of the Lord by the Word of the Lord (Is. 2:3). In the latter days, when men shall hurry to the place of God's dwelling, they shall be taught by the law of the Lord, and this will bring them to the right path of life. The Word

nourishes life. When the days of restoration come and the desolate land becomes fruitful again, the capacities of life shall be restored, the spiritual capabilities will return, the deaf shall hear, the blind shall see, and the meek shall obtain new joy, for they "shall hear the words of a book" (Is. 29:18). The Word will bring the life which Yahweh intended for man.

The Word of God is pictured as a life-giving water. A people who knew the dangers and hardships of drought would understand this figure. Everyone that thirsts is to come to the waters (Is. 55:1). The waters spoken of in Ezek. 47:1 have their source in the temple, the habitation of Yahweh, and flow over the land. Wherever the water is, there life is swarming in the water. The source of this water is the temple and signifies it is the Word of God which nourishes the earth.

Further evidence of the nurturing power of the Word lies in the threat that the Word shall be withheld from an obstinate nation which will not return to the Lord. The withholding of the Word will be as a famine in the land (Amos 8:11). The withdrawal of the Word of the Lord will make man wander about without direction for life. If the Word is withdrawn the means of life in the presence of God is lacking. To those critics who maintain that this verse is a later interpolation, Edghill declares that they are

singularly unconvincing. . . . As a matter of fact the verses telling of Jahveh's abandonment of His people form a most appropriate and impressive climax to the oracle of ruin.

Jeremiah warns, however, that the hearer of the Word must be sure it is the right Word, the true Word. Lying words will not suffice, will not deliver, will not nourish a man. False prophets in Jerusalem are trying to convince the people that doom, judgment, and exile will pass by the city. Jeremiah warns that the falsehoods of these prophets will not turn aside the coming armies of the enemy. The nation must give heed to the Word of Yahweh as the only source of Life. It teaches the right pathways to walk and the right course to follow to keep men alive (Jer. 27:12-15).

Just as the loss or pouring out of the aspects which motivate man takes away the life of the body, so separation from the covenant, the refusal to act according to its terms and to respond to Yahweh's goodness removes the people from Yahweh. When the harmony with God is broken, death occurs. The land of promise is no longer inhabited and its fruits are no longer produced in abundance.

The death of a people separated from the God of the Covenant comes because of sin, which is described by several terms. The people are guilty of $\int iy$, iniquity,

³³Ernest A. Edghill, The Book of Amos, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1914), XXVII, 84.

guilt. The verb $\pi\lambda\gamma$ basically means to bend or twist. The physical meaning is illustrated in Is. 24:1 "and he will twist ($\pi\lambda\gamma$) its surface." The warped inner state of man is demonstrated by the false confidence in self, in the instruments of war, in the fortification of the city wall, and the water supply held in reserve rather than looking to Yahweh for help and protection (Is. 22:8-14).

In Ephraim the people sinned by missing the mark or going wrong, $\aleph\upsilon\pi$. They loved the ritual of sacrifice in which they participated, but they did not remember the object of worship. They go through the motions, but they "miss, go wrong," when they come to their altars and worship (Hos. 8:11). Because of this there is no fellowship with Yahweh in worship.

Israel also committed sin by rebelling, $\aleph\psi\delta$, against Yahweh. The Word of Yahweh was with them, but they scorned it. In opposition to it they heeded the lying words, they indulged in the idolatrous practices because they enjoyed them, and they trusted in all manner of insecurities rather than in God. The people in exile recognize their revolt against God as they reason why they are where they are: "Our transgressions (revolts-- $\aleph\psi\delta$) and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them" (Ezek. 33:10).

The prophets warn Israel that her sins and rebellions will not only be dealt with on the day of Yahweh's judgment, but they now already affect her existence as a nation. They

point out that Israel actually has broken harmony with God herself and brought about separation from Him. The promises of covenant help do not apply when Israel breaks it by not responding to Yahweh's deeds of "steadfast love,"

תִּוּן. As a result, says Isaiah, Israel is forsaken by Yahweh:

The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear (Is. 59:1,2).

Israel shuts herself off from Yahweh's deliverance by breaking the harmony and not living within the orbit of Yahweh's covenant: "they have brought evil upon themselves" (Is. 3:9). When Israel persistently provokes Yahweh, the time comes when even intercession on her behalf will not be heard by Him (Jer. 7:16,19). He will inflict the punishment which the people deserve because of their sin (Ezek. 22:31). In Yahweh's judgment on Israel, she loses her life. "Wherever sin shows itself, it destroys communion with God and delivers man to himself or evil forces."³⁴

Life in the covenant relationship also expects a complete surrender of life in faith, love, confidence and obedience. Such a life is non-existent when Israel seeks her hope and purpose of existence on another level or

³⁴Jacob, p. 281.

trusts in another force. Thereby she has rejected the Word of Yahweh which gives life (Is. 5:24). The result is death. Life cannot be restored by the mere offering of an animal in sacrifice. Israel can avoid death only if she again lives by His Word and imitates Yahweh's actions and attitudes.

its essence (the breach of covenant) is revealed as a deliberate turning away of man from his God, which leads to inner estrangement and to the total destruction of the faithfulness which is reflected in the pictures of marriage and betrothal, of the place of a son and the duty of the vassal. So the whole strength and grandeur of this inner change is illuminated: its demonic spell permits none who have come under it any hope of return, its rampant canker spares no one or class of society and irremediably corrupts the whole history of the nation, leaving death as the only way of escape. Every moralistic weakening of a sin as an isolated deviation from the norm is made impossible. What happens is that the destiny of human life and being takes a false direction, in which every member of the nation without exception, is involved.³⁵

When the covenanted relationship between Yahweh and His people is strained or disrupted, the life of Israel is broken.³⁶ There is an alienation and separation of the spirit of man from God. All the ingredients of spiritual death are present, although the prophets do not expressly use this abstract term.

Under the circumstances in which the supreme loss is the loss of God through unfaith and disloyalty, the

³⁵ Eichrodt, Man in the Old Testament, p. 68.

³⁶ John P. Milton, God's Covenant of Blessing (Rock Island: Augustana Press, 1961), pp. 154-155.

only kind of death that counts is the death of faith and the power to respond to the Creator in love and righteous living.³⁷

Israel is dead because she lacks the power to respond to Yahweh.

When Israel broke the harmony of the covenant, her separation from Yahweh resulted in judgment. He often uses forces of destruction which bring about the death of man as an individual. Israel often treated the warnings of punishment with scorn or indifference. She may carelessly declare that today we enjoy ourselves, for tomorrow we die, but Isaiah maintains: "Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you till you die, says the Lord of hosts" (Is. 22:12-14). Physical death comes as a consequence of the demand of God's holiness for unexpiated sin. Delitsch maintains that "the verb temūthūn (ye shall die) is written absolutely, and therefore is all the more dreadful."³⁸

Here is the solemn warning "that the life which leaves God out of account finally reaches a point at which its world goes to pieces about it."³⁹ The earth, staggering

³⁷Baab, pp. 212-213.

³⁸Franz Delitsch, The Prophecies of Isaiah, I, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by James Martin (Fourth Series; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), XIV, 397.

³⁹R. B. Y. Scott, "The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39," in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), V, 291.

like a drunken man, falls and it will not rise again because "its transgression lies heavy upon it" (Is. 24:20). Jeremiah calls upon the nation of Israel to give up its proud attitude and give glory to God lest it become like a wanderer in the mountain who stumbles and falls when deep darkness surrounds him (Jer. 13:16).

The judgment of death is carried out upon the nation by external forces. In the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel we are told that death is brought about by means of pestilence, sword, or famine. Those who are spared such a death shall be taken into exile (Jer. 15:2). The end of the nation comes as individuals are put to death by force. Even if some of the greatest intercessors of Israel were to stand before God, Moses or Samuel, God still would not hear the prayer, He would not save the people (Jer. 15:1). The destruction brought by famine, sword, and disease is inexorably the result of sin.⁴⁰ When God will spend His fury upon Israel in the form of pestilence, sword, and famine (Ezek. 6:12), the nations around Israel will rejoice over the judgment against her. But by means of these instruments of His wrath Yahweh will also punish the nation which opposes Him and His purposes. No nation shall be exempt from knowing Him as Lord. When

⁴⁰H. Cunliffe-Jones, The Book of Jeremiah, in Torch Bible Commentaries, edited by John Marsh and Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press, LTD., 1960), p. 239.

Egypt fails to recognize the authority and will of Yahweh she, too, stands under the judgment of punishment by force (Jer. 43:11). The life of all the world is in the hands of Yahweh. As death strikes nations, and as earthly kings rise and fall in power, all should recognize Yahweh's power. As the Lord of history Yahweh controls the life of the covenant people and the heathen nations. He brings them into existence and power and delivers them over to death, the loss of power. By causing their death Yahweh demonstrates that He rules the world. Therefore He can give the Chaldeans dominion over all the nations.⁴¹ All of this power and might is His as the Creator of the world (Jer. 27:13).⁴²

The prophets describe the death of Israel and the end of her national life in a variety of figures. Isaiah pictures Israel as a vineyard planted by the Lord. But when it only yielded wild grapes, Yahweh destroyed it by taking away the protective hedge and the guarding wall. He withheld His care and the weeds overran it and overcame it. He did not send rain upon it to help it grow. The death of the vineyard results from Yahweh's withdrawal (Is. 5:1-6). Jeremiah proclaims the death of the nation of Israel as he walks through the streets of Jerusalem carrying the yoke

⁴¹Bertholet, p. 67.

⁴²Wilhelm Rudolph, Jeremia, in Handbuch Zum Alten Testament, edited by Otto Eissfeldt (First Series; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1947), XII, 149.

on his shoulders (Jer. 27:1-11). He exclaims loudly that Israel must succumb to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The king of Israel will lose his throne.

The passage of Hos. 13:14 is regarded by many commentators as a similar threat of punishment. Martin-Achard lists the names of W. R. Harper, K. Marti, E. Reuss, A. Baumgartner, and W. von Baudissin⁴³ who maintain that

Hos. XIII. 14 does no more than ratify the irrevocable sentence pronounced upon Ephraim. The prophet has to announce not an extraordinary deliverance, but an unprecedented calamity: night will definitely fall on Samaria.⁴⁴

Other interpreters find in this passage a promise of redemption. St. Paul quotes it in 1 Cor. 15:55: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Stamm regards it as speaking of the deliverance from death because the verbs שָׁנָא and אָטַף are in parallel position. "Beide Verben meinen dort Erlösung vom Tode. . . ."⁴⁵ The difference in meaning arises from variant readings proposed by scholars: אָטַף, "I will be your plagues," or אָטַף, "where are your plagues?" In either case the passage declares that Yahweh has complete control over death, whether

⁴³ Robert Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, translated by John Penney Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 91.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Johann Jakob Stamm, Erlösung und Vergeben im Alten Testament (Bern: A. Francke A.-G., Verlag, n.d.), p. 31.

He uses it as His instrument to bring about punishment to a nation or whether He declares that He has power to bring the soul from Sheol. The nation that must sink into the extinction of death before His mighty judgment can also look to Him for rebirth and deliverance as a nation. At the same time a verbal declaration is emerging which expresses Yahweh's power over the netherworld.

The prophets must warn those who scorn the thought of death as a punishment and hold in contempt their proclamation of the judgment of death against the nation. These scoffers boast that they have made a pact, a covenant, with Sheol and destruction, therefore the "overwhelming scourge" will not affect them. They prefer to believe the lies which do not speak of judgment (Is. 28:14-15). Isaiah warns that lies are false comforters. Yahweh will judge in justice. Amos, too, must confront the scoffers with this truth: "All sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Evil shall not overtake or meet us'" (Amos 9:10).

At the same time the prophets call upon the nation of Israel to live under the rule of God. A "deep moral tone was injected into Israel's notion of her place as a chosen people which she was never allowed to forget, however much she might try."⁴⁶ When Israel walks according to the law

⁴⁶John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), pp. 28-29.

of God as a covenant nation, she lives. God's blessings rest upon her, her life is lived in the presence of God. On the other hand, if Israel does not live, or respond to Yahweh's goodness, by showing steadfast love, holiness, righteousness and faithfulness, she will lose her national independence. The judgment of death follows her own choice of death. If Israel refuses to repent her doom is sealed. Yahweh will bring the nation to an end because it does not fulfill His purpose.

Isaiah proclaims that Yahweh seeks to grasp the sinner who seems to be sinking into death and restore him to health. He says: "He who is bowed down shall speedily be released; he shall not die and go down to the Pit, neither shall his bread fail" (Is. 51:14). Therefore Yahweh still regards Israel as "my people."

According to Jeremiah, on the other hand, the nation is beyond restoration or reform. The nation is so hardened in sin that the prophet is no longer to intercede for her. Yahweh, however, will deliver Jeremiah from the grasp of the wicked nation (Jer. 15:1,2,21). "The whole fabric of the nation's life was worthless for the end of God's kingdom,"⁴⁷ and therefore the state and state religion had to be done away. Life with Yahweh will continue in exile (Jer. 27:12), from which Yahweh can bring forth another nation in covenant

⁴⁷John Skinner, Prophecy and Religion (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), p. 268.

(Jer. 31:28). In Jeremiah's view Israel is still organized into the one body. Sin, the broken covenant, is a national problem. Every person is touched by the sin which comes into her corporate life. The message of Jeremiah is addressed to the nation; after her death she will be restored.

Ezekiel expects a speedy death to come to the sinner. God will bring this end to a disobedient people. "This is the culmination of the relationship between the natural process of life and the Word of God."⁴⁸ Life is given to Israel and to the individual as a gift of grace. It can only be kept as God gives life and the power of life through the Word which He brings to the people through the prophets. Life means welfare and happiness in the presence of Yahweh. It consists in earthly felicity and is combined with spiritual blessedness. Man loses it when he becomes separated from Yahweh and His Word.

⁴⁸Gerhardt von Rad, "Death in the OT," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited in English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II, 845.

CHAPTER IV

A PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION OF EZEKIEL TEACHES THAT THE PERSONAL FULFILLMENT BY MAN OF YAHWEH'S COVENANT IS LIFE AND LIVING OUTSIDE OF THIS COVENANT IS DEATH

The prophecy of Ezekiel merits special attention in this study on the meaning of life and death in the writings of the prophets. The word "to live," חַיָּה , in the Qal form and its cognate word חַי , occurs two hundred and four times in the Old Testament. Ezekiel uses it forty-three times. The term occurs ten times in Ezek. 33:10-20, and in six instances, in the emphatic form חַיָּהּ חַיָּהּ . This compares, according to Zimmerli's counting, with seven examples in Is. 1-39 and one time in Is. 40-66; Jeremiah uses the term nine times; Amos, three times; Hosea, one time; Habakkuk, one time; Zech. 1-8, one time, and Zech. 9-14, two times.¹ Special notice should therefore be taken of the way in which Ezekiel speaks of life.

In some of Ezekiel's prophetic utterances the condition of life or death is associated with a person's relationship with Yahweh. The prophets before him lay more stress on the bond of the covenant which ties the community together. Normally the accent is on the accumulated guilt

¹Walter Zimmerli, "'Leben' und 'Tod' im Buche des Propheten Ezechiel," Theologische Zeitschrift, VI (November-December 1957), 494.

of the entire nation. Zimmerli suggests that Ezekiel's approach differs from the others because he is among the exiles, those who are "far from Yahweh" (Ezek. 11:15). He stands apart from the other prophets whose message is understood and interpreted in cult theology. Zimmerli identifies such cult prophets who call upon the people to be "upright in soul," and promise that "the righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4) as well as the one who promises life to him who "inclines the ear" and "will come to Yahweh" (Is. 55:3). Proximity to Yahweh, that is, closeness to His temple, is impossible for those who are in Tel-abib. However, conformity to God's law is possible in the foreign land because Ezekiel serves as the "Späher und Warner den Weg zum Gehorsam und damit zum <Leben> zu weisen."²

As shown in the previous chapter, numerous examples can be cited which illustrate the earlier prophets' concern for the welfare of the nation. They remind Israel that from the days of Yahweh's tender care she began to sin against Him and failed to bring forth the responses of steadfast love and pure worship. It is for this reason that ultimately Yahweh brings reproach to the nation. It is because of accumulated guilt from the days of the fathers that judgment ultimately strikes the nation.

²Ibid., p. 505.

In the writings of these preexilic prophets we also hear that the people periodically challenge the just and right acts of Yahweh toward Israel. Behind these complaints lies the thought: Why should the present generation be held responsible for the sins of the fathers? Isaiah hears the complaint of the people: "My way is hid from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God" (Is. 40:27). To such a cry Yahweh responds with the promise "But you, Israel, . . . I have chosen you and not cast you off" (Is. 41:8,9). Jeremiah begins with the insistent charge that Israel from her youth had committed harlotries of every kind. As the cry to return to the Lord is ignored, Jeremiah speaks of Yahweh's coming judgment because of the sins and infidelities of the generations then living. Yahweh's actions of the past will be forgotten and the password will be: The imminent calamity is coming because of present sins (Jer. 16:14-15).

God's judgmental acts will not destroy the entire nation. The assurance is given that Yahweh will still be the God of mercy, for a "remnant" will some day return to possess the land. The threat of total judgment is to vindicate the glory of Yahweh. However, in the midst of this word of doom the prophets also hold out an avenue of escape whereby the nation will continue. Amos already speaks with certainty that the land laid waste in judgment will again be inhabited, for a remnant will be left which will be

called by the name of the Lord, and they shall return and plant vineyards (Amos 9:11-15). The promise of the survivors becomes the word of hope for Israel, now in danger of becoming as Sodom and Gomorrah (Is. 1:9). Those who constitute the remnant of Israel will be faithful to the Lord; they will be holy (Is. 4:3) and they will trust in the Lord rather than in the powers of earthly nations (Is. 10:20). Jeremiah continues the theme of the remnant that shall return to restore the land and nation to its place with Yahweh (Jer. 15:11; 23:3; 31:7).

Although Ezekiel also warns of the nation in judgment because of accumulated guilt, for instance in chapter sixteen, and he also speaks of the remnant which shall return (Ezek. 28:25,26), his distinctive thought is the answer to the challenge of the people that they are suffering unjustly because they are bearing the blame and punishment of former generations. In a number of passages he confronts the nation to tell them that because they are bearing personal guilt and punishment, Yahweh is acting justly and righteously. Everything He does is based on the individual's response to His covenant, and that determines whether he is righteous or not in His sight.

Ezekiel 3:16-21

This section of Ezekiel's prophecy is similar to chapter 33:7-9. Some commentators believe that it is out

of place so early in the prophecy and that it was inserted by a later editor.³ The text does show disturbances. Cooke calls attention to the reasons which prompt him to regard this passage less original than the one in chapter 33:7-9:

The Masoretic text has a space (piskā), to show that the context is interrupted at this point. Vv. 16⁵-21¹, which repeat, sometimes verbatim the language of 33^{7,29}, and add nothing essential to the thought, have been inserted here with the object, it would seem, of stating at the outset a conception of the prophet's task which was not realized till a later stage. . . . The sequence betrays a disturbance of the original narrative; Ez. normally writes אֵלֹהִים . . . אֱלֹהֵי 26¹ and five times.

The Masoretic text reads אֵלֹהֵי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלֵי לְאֹמֶר
(Ezek. 33:1; 3:16).

It is possible, however, that these verses from chapter three occur early in the prophecy to establish the prophetic office of Ezekiel among the exiles of Tel-abib, on the banks of the river Chebar (Ezek. 3:15). They expand and develop the same thought, expressed more briefly in chapter 33:7-9, in order to impress the hearer and reader from the very beginning with the determination of Yahweh to deal justly and firmly with Israel. He is not the source of evil, but if a person is warned by the watchman of Israel

³G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936; reprinted 1960), p. 44.

⁴Ibid., pp. 44-45.

and he does not heed this warning, he will surely die (Ezek. 3:18). The opposing behaviors of life are righteousness, צִדְקָה, and injustice, unrighteousness, עוֹל. Because the exiles claim that Yahweh is not just in His acts toward them, Ezekiel points out that man's unrighteousness and failure to respond to Yahweh is the cause of death.

When the man who has been acting in a righteous manner no longer does so Yahweh will place a stumbling block, מִכְשׁוֹל, before him (Ezek. 3:20). This does not mean that Yahweh sets out to bring man to fall. The offense is

everything that God puts in the way of the sinner, in order that the sin, which is germinating in his soul, may come forth to the light, and ripen to maturity. God, indeed, neither causes sin, nor desires the death of the sinner; and in this sense He does not tempt to evil (James i.13), but He guides and places the sinner in relations in life in which he must come to a decision for or against what is good and divine, and either suppress the sinful lusts of his heart, or burst the barriers which are opposed to their satisfaction. If he does not do the former, but the latter, evil gains within him more and more strength, so that he becomes the servant of sin, and finally reaches a point where conversion is impossible.⁵

The stumbling blocks which Yahweh places in the path of Israel, according to Ezekiel, are silver and gold, the money which satisfies no need in a siege (Ezek. 7:19) and the idols which are their incitements to sin, מִכְשׁוֹל יְצֻנָם (Ezek. 14:3).

⁵ Carl Friedrich Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel, in Biblical Commentaries on the Old Testament, edited by C. F. Keil and F. Delitsch, translated from the German by James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), I, 60.

The righteousness which God demands is a consistent course of action and demands the sum total of a moral life.⁶ A man who has been righteous but turns to evil should recognize the stumbling block which Yahweh places before him as a call to overcome any temptation to depart from the covenant. If he is "tried and found wanting" the former righteousness will not be remembered. If he is not roused from his unrighteousness he shall die. It proves that that quality which controls life is already departed from him.

The verses of this chapter also charge the prophet with a grave responsibility. Yahweh will require the blood of the person who dies in his sin at the hand of the prophet if he does not warn the wayward man (Ezek. 3:20). The person who has received a message and then fails to deliver it, is guilty of as deadly a sin as the murderer who sheds blood. The lexicon edited by Brown, Driver, and Briggs states that Yahweh's threat $\text{וְיִדְמוּ אֶת דַּמְּךָ בְּיָדֶיךָ}$, "his blood I will require at your hand" means that He will "exact an equivalent, or penalty."⁷ Yahweh will take vengeance on him.⁸ The similarity of the penalty here with

⁶ Alfred Bertholet, Das Buch Hesekiel, in Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Karl Marti (Leipzig: Verlag Von J. C. B. Mohr, 1897), XII, 21.

⁷ William Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, edited by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 135.

⁸ Keil, I, 59.

that imposed upon a murderer can be illustrated by David's announcement that he requires, $\omega\rho\eta$, the blood of a murderer (2 Sam. 4:11). Just as Yahweh gives His Word to sustain the life of the nation, so He is concerned about the destiny of the individual.⁹

Ezekiel 18:2-32

The prophet introduces his vital concern in Ezek. 3:16-21. In chapter eighteen he treats the problem more fully. The meaning of life and death, however, remains the same.

Fulfilling his office of prophet in the midst of the exiles in Tel-abib, Ezekiel hears the complaint that God is unjust. It is made in response to his message to the "rebellious house" of Israel that the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took her king because he made and broke the covenant between these nations (Ezek. 17:15-16). This unrighteousness is the cause of the present state of affairs and brought about the exile in Babylon as well as the continuing crises in the homeland.

The people of Tel-abib, like every impenitent sinner, seek to transfer their guilt to others and to maintain that they are suffering the consequences of other people's sins.

⁹Gerhardt von Rad, "Death in the OT," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited in English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II, 845.

They do not recognize the exile as their chastisement or punishment from God.¹⁰ Their refusal to admit their guilt expresses itself in their complaint against God. He must correct the faulty notion that they are suffering for the sins of Manasseh or of any other generation. Their false idea must swiftly be replaced if the people are not to fall into a state of hardening against the Word of God. Believing themselves to be unjustly punished, they feel justified in asking: Why bother with our own moral struggle? By justifying themselves they become fatalistic and sink into despair. Above all, they are challenging the justice of God.¹¹ They are saying: "The way of the Lord is not just" (Ezek. 18:25,29).

This attitude is apparent from their use of the proverb which evidently is popular in Jerusalem as well as Tel-abib: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2). The same statement is evidently heard on the streets of Jerusalem for Jeremiah takes note of it (Jer. 31:30). Although Hyatt maintains that "it is not probable that vss. 29-30 are from Jeremiah"¹² he nevertheless states that

¹⁰Keil, I, 246-247.

¹¹Cooke, p. 194.

¹²James P. Hyatt, "The Book of Jeremiah," in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), V, 1036.

the saying expresses vividly the ancient Hebrew belief in collective responsibility, and must have been widely used as an explanation of the tragedy of the Babylonian exile.¹³

In his attempt to tear away the blindness which makes it impossible for the present generation to see its own personal responsibility and sin, Ezekiel emphasizes the concept of personal responsibility. The individual person must recognize his own relationship with God and should not seek to hide himself in the mass of community. The old proverb must be abandoned as lacking in usefulness and meaning (Ezek. 18:3).

Ezekiel must therefore forcefully impress that God did not only make the Israelite nation His possession, but everyone is God's own. God stands in a personal relationship with each soul, **נְפֹשׁוֹתָם**. He claims the entire being of man of each generation as His own.¹⁴ He deals with each individual on the basis of the responsibility placed on him. "Behold, all souls are mine . . . the soul that sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). "He is righteous, he shall surely live" (verse 9). Yahweh renders the judgment to the person, not the nation.

This verdict does not apply automatically nor is judgment carried out immediately. The sinner does not die at

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Bertholet, p. 96.

once. Physical death is the experience of every man, whether he be righteous or wicked. Furthermore, the self-righteous among the Israelites would not admit to sin, and therefore Ezekiel explains to them the meaning of righteousness and the promises that in righteousness there is life.

A man is righteous if he does what is lawful and right,

וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִהְיֶה צַדִּיק וְנָשָׂא מִשְׁפָּט וַיִּצְדֵּק
 וְיָשָׁר וְיָצַד וְיִשְׁמַר מִצְוֹתַי וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְעֹלֹתִים

(Ezek. 18:5). To be righteous is to walk in the paths which Yahweh has prescribed in the covenant and its law. The statutes of Yahweh, מִצְוֹתַי, and ordinances, שְׁפָטִים, are found in the covenant code of the Book of Exodus. Ezekiel gives these same statutes as the requirements of life.¹⁵

The life of righteousness involves a number of religious duties to God and man: avoidance of idolatry, refusing to eat on sacred heights or sacrificing to idols, not looking to the idols as objects of trust, and not offering supplications to them. The moral obligations to the neighbor include the avoidance of adultery, oppression, taking by usury, or stealing (Ezek. 18:5-8). Stated positively, a righteous life toward the neighbor includes sharing food and clothing with the needy (Ezek. 18:16). When in everything justice guides the relationship of a man to man¹⁶ and a person walks in the statutes of Yahweh,

¹⁵Zimmerli, p. 499.

¹⁶Keil, I, 250-251.

then this man is righteous, and Yahweh gives him life. He is emphatic about this: $\text{יָקִיּוּם יְהוָה יִחְיֶה}$ (Ezek. 18:9). It may be that these exiles expected their relationship with Yahweh to be maintained by His divine power because of the national origins of Israel. This is not enough. The correct view is that the consolation that they are God's possession (Ex. 19:5-6) and that they individually belong to God (Ezek. 18:4) is conditioned by their fulfillment of the prescribed statutes. The gift of life is a religious reality, a course of existence, not merely a national heritage. Ezekiel seeks to make this fact plain.

In commenting on the announcement of righteousness to anyone who keeps the commandments of worship and honor of God, Zimmerli¹⁷ refers to a dissertation by R. Rendtorf pertaining to the laws of the Priestly writings and a formula labeled by G. von Rad as the "deklaratorische Formel." He points out that these two men find a similarity in the statement of life in Ezek. 18:9 and the pronouncement "he is clean" in the leprosy or health laws of Israel recorded in Lev. 13. Note these similarities: verse three: וְגַלְגַּל ; verse six: טָהוֹר הוּא ; verse twenty-two: וְגַלְגַּל הוּא . In verses eleven and fifteen the declaration טָהוֹר הוּא , "he is unclean," is placed opposite the proclamation in verses thirteen and sixteen טָהוֹר הוּא , "he is clean."

¹⁷Zimmerli, p. 499.

Then von Rad calls attention to the similarity of the formula $\text{וְיָדָעְתָּ אֲנִי כִּי יָשָׁרָה$, "he is righteous" (Ezek. 18:9), with the health law formula. As the priest in the temple announces physical cleanness to one who at one time had leprosy, so this "formula of declaration" grants the temple priest the right to declare moral holiness to one who has kept the law of Yahweh.¹⁸ The cleansed leper was permitted to live again in the community of people. So the declaration of righteousness was an assurance that a person lived in the presence of Yahweh. Yahweh demands a life in the wholeness of fellowship with Him. If a person lives in this way, the promise of life comes to him.

The person who does not live according to the statutes and commandments of Yahweh shall die. This is the threatening word which the prophet of Yahweh must pronounce upon a stubborn and self-righteous people. God will not bring a judgment based on the actions of another person, much less another generation. The individual is held responsible for each statute of God. This insistence is God's right in view of His ownership of all persons. If a person does not walk in the ordinances of the law "he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself" (Ezek. 18:13). Instead of living a life which is righteous the man who breaks Yahweh's laws does "abominable things," תּוֹעֲבוֹת

¹⁸ Ibid., 500.

(Ezek. 18:13). These consist not merely of idolatrous practices but also sins against the neighbor. He oppresses his fellow man by robbery, and he does not provide for the needs of the poor; he commits adultery, steals, charges interest. This man shall not live (Ezek. 18:10-13). He is not in fellowship with Yahweh.

A comparison of chapter eighteen with chapter twenty shows that the people in Babylon did not recognize that they were guilty of the same sins as their forefathers. Therefore, in pronouncing judgment upon the exiles Yahweh is not acting unjustly. He charged the fathers of past generations with the same sins because He gave to each generation identical statutes and ordinances (Ezek. 18:13 and 20:12). Therefore He declares that "as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord God" (Ezek. 20:36). Already in the wilderness He declared that He would spend His anger against His rebellious people (Ezek. 20:21) by scattering them among the nations (verse 23). They would receive "statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live" (Ezek. 20:23). They would be exposed to the horrors of child-sacrifice (verse 26). Only the rebels in the wilderness, however, were denied the privilege of entering the promised land (verse 37). Yahweh did not destroy the whole nation (verse 17).

Yahweh's present judgment against the individual in the exile, therefore, is not something unprecedented but has a close parallel in His judgment of the nation of old. The first sin of this present generation is idolatry just as it was of the desert generation. Spiritual life has its source in God. Separated from this source in worship means that life weakens and disappears in all spheres. Misconduct in human relationships results, and this is death. It may be that eventually physical death is the means whereby He brings judgment, but this physical death is not the immediate punishment.

Zimmerli points to another similarity between the eighteenth and twentieth chapters of Ezekiel. In each chapter three generations are mentioned. In chapter twenty these are the Children of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of promise (Ezek. 20:5,18,28). Three successive generations are also described in the parallel thought of Ezek. 18:5-18: a righteous man, a righteous man with a wicked son, and a wicked son with a righteous son.

Dann wird diese These in einiger an die drei Geschichtsphasen von Kapitel 20 gemahnenden Dreigenerationenfolge abgewandelt: Der Gerechte, des Gerechten ungerechter Sohn, des Ungerechten gerechter Sohn. Und an der Norm des Gottesrechtes wird eines jeden Verhalten gemessen und dann wird jeden der knappe Satz des priesterlichen Gottesentscheides formuliert: Gerecht ist er, leben, leben soll er. -- Sterben, sterben soll er. -- Leben, leben soll er. Das ist der erste Einbruch in die Mauer des Fatalismus: Nein, nicht der

Sohn für den Vater! Eine jede Generation büßt ihre Schuld, erntet ihren Lohn.¹⁹

The people in Babylon can be confident that Yahweh's actions are just. He guarantees judgment against personal guilt.

God's messengers do not only deliver a message of destruction; therefore the people of the exile can also look to Ezekiel's promise of hope. This is an assurance that they will be delivered from the "death" of the exile and return to the homeland. To live, then, would be "to enjoy the future restoration."²⁰ Physical death is an event which comes to everyone at some time. It is "God's judgment upon the proud spirit of man. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die!'"²¹ The promise to live is only for those who live in keeping with Yahweh's precepts; all others "have no share in it."²² The result of man's defiant attitude toward Yahweh's statutes is sin. God's judgment because of sin "produces death by denying to man the fulfillment of his spiritual needs, the fulfillment of which depends upon humble submission and complete

¹⁹Walter Zimmerli, "Das Gotteswort Des Ezechiel," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, XLVIII (1951), 257.

²⁰Cooke, p. 197.

²¹Otto J. Baab, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949), p. 213.

²²Cooke, p. 197.

obedience to his Creator."²³ The "spiritual need" for the Israelite would be supplied by the symbol of Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem, the temple. The restored life in communion with Yahweh is open to that righteous man who will walk in the statutes and ordinances of Yahweh.

In commenting on the statement "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4), Keil suggests that "'Death' . . . denotes the complete destruction with which transgressors are threatened by the law, as in Deut. xxx.15."²⁴ Gaebelin also insists that Ezekiel speaks of physical death. "Physical death would come upon him (the one who will not live in harmony with the divine statutes) and he would be cut off in judgment."²⁵ The context of Ezek. 18, however, does not seem to support this interpretation. A man is not only declared free from his father's sin, but is assured that he can also be free of his own past guilt if repentance takes place within his heart.

But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does that which is lawful and right he shall surely live; he shall not die (Ezek. 18:21).

The possibility of renewal to life through repentance would seem to militate against the idea that death here refers to

²³Baob, p. 213.

²⁴Keil, I, 249.

²⁵Arno C. Gaebelin, The Prophet Ezekiel (New York: "Our Hope" Publication Office, 1918), p. 126.

a physical destruction where every avenue of escape is shut off. If this were the meaning of death in this chapter, then the promise of life to the wicked who repent would refer to a restoration in an afterlife, to a life in the presence of God later on. Therefore it appears that the assurance which Ezekiel gives to man refers to life in the presence of Yahweh here on earth.

In the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel it is repeatedly made clear that a person can live only when he avoids sin.²⁶ Eichrodt believes that Yahweh is revealing a new situation of life with Himself when He speaks of His desire that man should live, and not die (Ezek. 18:23). It involves the remnant that will return to the land of Israel after the exile.²⁷ He compares this thought of life with the promise of peace which He gave to Israel in Jer. 29:10-14. Then Israel will seek Yahweh and find Him and He will hear and help. He will restore all that Israel lost. In this way the exiles are drawn together in the promise of a condition which is new to them.

Snaith understands the promise of life to refer to the remnant which will return in all sincerity and loyal

²⁶Zimmerli, "'Leben' und 'Tod'," p. 495.

²⁷Walter Eichrodt, Der Prophet Hesekiel, Chapters 1-18, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1959), Teilband 22/1, p. 153.

obedience to the law because Ezekiel refers to a "new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. 18:31) which Israel will get for herself.²⁸ Ellison suggests that this life for the remnant will stretch "on into the Messianic age in which death is to be abolished."²⁹ God will make a way for unrepentant Israel to return. Ezekiel shares the hope of the New Covenant expressed by Jeremiah (chapter 31:33). Not everyone will share in it, but only the remnant.

In summarizing chapter eighteen, we find that Ezekiel assures the exiles of Tel-abib that Yahweh is a just God. He deals with men as "individuals responsible for their conduct."³⁰ The sins of others cannot affect their relationship with Yahweh. They do not forfeit blessedness because of another person's sins, nor do they gain blessedness by another person's righteousness. The past life cannot be the permanent criterion for judgment, for a person who changes his attitude and action toward Yahweh's laws can also change God's resultant action toward him. Life is given to a wicked person who repents, just as death is the end of the righteous person who turns to wickedness.

²⁸Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 122.

²⁹H. L. Ellison, Ezekiel: The Man and His Message (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 73.

³⁰Cooke, p. 195.

The exiles have good cause to dismiss the fatalistic, pessimistic attitude which prompted them to question the wisdom of living righteously if they were going to suffer for the sins of their parents anyway. Ezekiel assures them that Yahweh looks to their personal lives, and He desires to see the good, for He finds no pleasure in the death of any person. Therefore He pleads repeatedly, turn from the wickedness so that you might live. For those in exile, life might mean that Yahweh will restore them to the homeland and to the worship in the temple. The deportation will be over. The assurance that Yahweh wishes for man His blessing, not his death, is the high point of Ezekiel's theology, according to Bertholet.³¹ Finally, Yahweh will give to those who return the new heart which will know the way of the Lord, and will walk in it. Ezekiel has a just answer for Israel. Yahweh's actions toward Israel cannot be questioned. He seeks the final good for everyone. He promises life.

Ezekiel 33:1-20

The third section of the Book of Ezekiel which describes the moral quality of man as the factor which binds the individual with his God is chapter 33:1-20. This pericope is strategically located. It binds several sections of

³¹Bertholet, p. 99.

the Book of Ezekiel together. Chronologically chapter thirty-three can be linked with Ezek. 24:27. Here the mouth of the prophet is struck with dumbness. It is opened again by the Lord when the escapee from Jerusalem comes to the exiles and announces that Jerusalem has fallen to the enemy (Ezek. 33:22).

The subject matter of this chapter is also similar to the sections from Ezekiel three and eighteen and is therefore considered by a number of commentators not to be original with Ezekiel, but the work of the editor who inserted this material at this point merely as a bridge between major divisions. Concerning this chapter Howie observes: "It consists of three doublets (33:1-9=3:19-21; 33:10-19=ch. 18; 33:23-29=11:14-21), together with a personal note about the prophet (33:30-33)."³²

If this explanation is accepted, Ezekiel would have no special purpose in proclaiming the message of the chapter in its present context. It is true that the subject matter closely resembles the other listed sections of the prophecy. The basic concepts of life and death remain the same. Life is that life lived in the presence of Yahweh, and death is the removal of the presence with the blessings

³²C. G. Howie, "Ezekiel," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), E-J, 207.

and benedictions. That which is ethically right is not only required for life, but is life which resembles God and shares in His power. The prophet stresses the $\text{בְּחַיֵּי ה'$ and אֲרָאָה (Ezek. 33:16). Then Yahweh emphatically declares: $\text{אֲרָאָה אֶת־יְהוָה}$, he shall surely live. The prophet's first concern for righteousness is theocentric, not socio-centric. The full capacity of life is lived before God.

The message concerning righteousness and wickedness, life and death, also has the same purpose in this chapter as those previously discussed. It is intended to counteract the charge that Yahweh is unjust (Ezek. 18:25; 33:17). Chapter eighteen approaches the matter because of fatalism. In chapter thirty-three, however, the distinctive feature deals with despairing children of the exile: "Thus have you said: Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" (Ezek. 33:10). The community of the covenant people is dissolved. The monarchy is gone. The outlook for the safety of Jerusalem is grave.³³ The overthrow of Jerusalem means that Yahweh has abandoned the city. No life is possible without the presence of Yahweh. The fear prominent in the thought of the people, separated from

³³This would be true if this is in chronological order with verse 21. If the fall of the city was already known, then the reason for despair would be even more apparent.

Yahweh and the temple, is that just as the nation has wasted away, so also as individuals they are wasting away, **וְיָשׁוּבֵם**.

Ezekiel now seeks to counteract this despair by declaring that Yahweh who brought Israel to life in the covenant can bring her back from death, from wasting away. Therefore the familiar lesson already voiced in chapter eighteen is repeated. The call to repentance rises once more in the message of Ezekiel to show the people of Israel that the God who gave life, and took it away when the people went against His covenant law, can restore the national and individual life. Cooke speaks of the emotional plea to return (Ezek. 33:11) as "characteristic of Second Isaiah,"³⁴ yet the truth remains that "Penitence, testified by restitution and change of conduct, cancels past sin and secures 'life'."³⁵ Repentance effectively restores life by bringing the individual into the presence of Yahweh. Life in the presence of Yahweh, under His watchful and gracious eyes, can be regained fully by this nation, or any individual who will return in moral conduct to the sphere of Yahweh's statutes and ordinances.

Ezekiel thirty-three introduces that section of the prophecy which concentrates on the promise of the return

³⁴Cooke, p. 365.

³⁵Ibid., p. 366.

to God's statutes. Because Yahweh has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. 33:11), He wants to restore this nation and the people to life again. False shepherds have been misleading the flock of Israel. This will cease, and Yahweh will save the flock by giving them a new, faithful shepherd (Ezek. 34:7,22,23). Yahweh holds out life to the despairing exiles in the vision of the dead bones (Ezek. 37) and the promise to overcome evil in the day of the restoration (Ezek. 38-39).

In developing this message in the following chapters, Ezekiel must first restore the hope of the exiles that Yahweh can and will do it. He reminds them that the promise of life comes from Yahweh who originally gave it. Yahweh chooses a man of the prophets to deliver this message in Ezek. 33:7 as he did in chapter 3:17. He again holds the prophet responsible to deliver it. Failure to do so will indict him as a murderer (Ezek. 33:8; 3:20). This identification of the watchman as the mouthpiece of Yahweh gives surety to the message and stands in contrast with the warnings against false prophets and prophetesses who hunt down souls and lead them to death (Ezek. 13:18) and make them food for animals. The claim that they speak the word of the Lord is a "lying divination" (Ezek. 13:7). Already before the final destruction of Jerusalem Ezekiel is God's true spokesman of life. His word can ward off this catastrophe (Ezek. 18). When Jerusalem is finally

destroyed the promise still sounds forth that Yahweh can give life again to nation or individual. There is cause for hope and no need to despair (Ezek. 33:1-20).

The deep inner reflection of the prophets is shared by Ezekiel. The latter, however, sees the function to be something more than that of a "motivator or herald" of "dismal laws," but rather in his proclamation he declares that this office is committed to all "caretakers and attendants" of life, under penalty, who are to speak to the life of the individuals.³⁶ Ezekiel stresses prophetic responsibility thus:

If I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hands (Ezek. 33:8; 3:18).

³⁶ Zimmerli, "'Leben' und 'Tod'," p. 503.

CHAPTER V

PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION EMPHASIZES THAT YAHWEH OVERCOMES NATIONAL AND PHYSICAL DEATH

National Death

God scattered His people into foreign lands because they would not live in righteousness and justice. Yahweh's power and authority will also be evident when He restores the nation to life again. He uses the heathen nations as a pawn, His instruments, to bring chastisement upon Israel. When this is completed Israel's place of glory will be restored among the nations of the earth.¹

Habakkuk declares that He will bring the fierce Chaldeans to judgment in the earth. The reference is to Chaldean victories in the Near East after Nabopolassar came to power in 612 B.C. He protests that God permits a ruthless nation, whose only claim to right is its might, to swallow up nations more righteous than itself (Hab. 1:13). At the same time he confesses that the destruction which the Chaldeans bring will neither be complete nor permanent for Israel. He bases his conviction on the eternal Being of God. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God,

¹Arno C. Gaebelen, The Prophet Ezekiel (New York: "Our Hope" Publication Office, 1918), p. 113.

my Holy One? We shall not die" (Hab. 1:12). The pure and holy God permits the Chaldeans to come to power only to chastise the people. Even then this conquering nation is in His power and control (Hab. 1:12-15).

Any thought that Yahweh would make a final and complete end of His people without saving a remnant is out of harmony with Israel's faith. Yahweh could not be the God of universal rule if other nations and their gods could overcome Him. He could not be the God of steadfast love and great mercy. Even when Israel as a nation is overthrown Yahweh is in control. He gives life and He brings death.

Hosea

Hosea points to the devastations and destructions of war which will ultimately lead to the end of the Northern Kingdom. It is a torn and bruised nation as a result of the Syro-Ephraimitish war of 735 B.C. He sees spiritual unfaithfulness as the cause of judgment. Its eventual climax will be the carrying away of people in captivity. At this moment no one will be able to rescue the nation. Yahweh, however, promises that He will return to the nation when the people "acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress they seek me" (Hos. 5:15). The people must acknowledge all sins which separate them from Yahweh and pray for deliverance that she may "live before

him" (Hos. 6:1-2). The description of the judgment coming to the nation and its removal are given in terms of "death and resurrection."² Israel is torn, stricken, and in need of reviving. These are terms of weakness and death. On the other hand, the Lord will restore life by healing, binding, and reviving, climaxed by the raising up which Yahweh will bring about. The Piel form of פָּרַח means to revive, refresh,³ and is used in a similar meaning when Hannah declares that Yahweh can make those who are dead alive again (1 Sam. 2:6). The same order of killing and making alive occurs in Deut. 32:39.

The terms of tearing away and living before Him (Hos. 6:1-2) are equivalent to the thought that death is the removal of God's presence and life is God's watching over the individual.⁴ In their confession the people of the Northern Kingdom are to acknowledge that they have departed from the Lord through their misdeeds.⁵ More

²Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 310.

³Aubrey R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1949), p. 99.

⁴Robert Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, translated by John Penney Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 75.

⁵Sydney L. Brown, The Book of Hosea, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock and D. C. Simpson (London: Methuen and Co., LTD., 1932), p. 55.

important now is the confidence that Yahweh will hear them and come to them (Hos. 6:3).⁶

Many commentators regard the prayer in Hos. 6:1-3 as a request that Yahweh restore Ephraim to political power. Martin-Achard lists several men who believe the restoration of life, the raising up and the living before God, refers to such a national resurrection.⁷ Rowley,⁸ Brown,⁹ and Jacob¹⁰ can also be added to the list of those who favor this interpretation.

Hosea does not look for a hope that will eliminate disaster. His statements of Yahweh's judgments are as severe as those of Amos. He does, however, promise a new beginning beyond judgment. Through repentance the nation can be revived again by God's showers (Hos. 6:3). Although he calls upon Israel to "press on to know the Lord" (Hos. 6:3), he nevertheless maintains that the restoration is a deed of God's grace born in His great love for Ephraim. Yahweh does not execute His fierce anger by bringing utter destruction upon the nation (Hos. 11:8,9).

⁶Martin-Achard, p. 78.

⁷Ibid., pp. 80-81.

⁸H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1956), p. 164.

⁹Brown, p. 56.

¹⁰Jacob, p. 309.

When He turns back His anger from them He makes them grow as the flowers of the field (Hos. 14:4-6).

Jeremiah

Jeremiah gives promise that the nation will be restored again after it has been destroyed because of the disobedience to Yahweh's laws and statutes. It will live in a new covenant which Yahweh will establish with the house of Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31). No longer will Israel be tempted to excuse the breaking of the old covenant by quoting the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31:29). When new hearts are given to Israel, with the law written into them, then right conduct will also be fulfilled in their lives (Jer. 31:31-34).

Jeremiah's hope for the nation and its new life will be realized on this earth after the return to their own land, "not in some transcendental life beyond this life and beyond history as we know it"¹¹ (Jer. 31:16-20). In this new life the covenant relationship will be established and fulfilled: "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33).

Through Yahweh's forgiveness the people will experience

¹¹J. Philip Hyatt, Jeremiah, Prophet of Courage and Hope (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 105.

fellowship with God, expressed in the promise that they shall "know the Lord" (Jer. 31:34). The person who recognizes that God controls world history and He sees and works for His faithful ones is truly living the true life. Jeremiah's concern at this moment is the spiritual resurrection of the nation. His experience was that the people viewed the Mosaic law, the basis of the Josianic reform, as rules to be obeyed in rituals. The recreated heart, energized by God's loving forgiveness, would recognize the covenant as the way of life.

Ezekiel

A third major chapter which speaks of the restoration of Israel as a nation is Ezekiel thirty-seven. Here Israel is pictured as a dead, lifeless nation of dried bones scattered in the valley. Keil points out that when the bones are described as dried up, that is, the marrow or vital sap has gone out of them, it means the people's hope that this nation shall rise again has perished and they lament: "it is all over with us."¹² In the midst of the despair which settled upon the exiles in Babylon Yahweh challenges the prophet: "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezek. 37:3).

¹²Carl Friedrich Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel, in Biblical Commentaries on the Old Testament, edited by C. F. Keil and F. Delitsch, translated from the German by James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), II, 63.

Ezekiel sees the people experiencing death in life.¹³ He replies: "Lord God, thou knowest." He expresses the faith that Yahweh can bring all things to pass even in the case of the nation which seems to be lifeless. The present situation need not always remain.¹⁴ With God all things are possible.

Yahweh shows how the change can take place. He will cause the breath, the $\pi\text{ו}\text{ל}$, to come upon the slain, and these will live (Ezek. 37:9). In the vision the prophet sees the bones rise and stand once again. Sinews and skin and breath return (Ezek. 37:8-10). The $\pi\text{ו}\text{ל}$ of Yahweh is the active force which places life within man, and now because of $\pi\text{ו}\text{ל}$ man lives. He can function again.

The regained power of life means also that Israel will live within the sphere of Yahweh's will and pleasure. Another spirit, $\pi\text{ו}\text{ל}$, is given to the resurrected nation. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live" (Ezek. 37:14). The "divine energy" first gives the gift of life, and then, when the nation has power to function, the further gift of the Spirit of Yahweh is promised which will enable it to live according to Yahweh's will.¹⁵ The

¹³ Sheldon H. Blank, Prophetic Faith in Isaiah (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958), p. 99.

¹⁴ Alfred Bertholet, Das Buch Hesekiel, in Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Karl Marti (Leipzig: Verlag Von J. C. B. Mohr, 1897), XII, 183.

¹⁵ G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on

relationship with Yahweh will change and Israel's purpose in life "will urge it to entirely different acts."¹⁶

Ezekiel, as Jeremiah had also done, promises a spiritual resurrection. He has mentioned it already in the passage

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Such scholars as Keil,¹⁷ Bertholet,¹⁸ Cooke,¹⁹ and Martin-Achard²⁰ agree that the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones refers to the return of Israel from exile in Babylon. Their interpretation is based on the explanation offered in verse eleven: "These bones are the whole house of Israel." God's will and purpose for Israel is clear: He will intervene on behalf of His people and will make them a holy nation again.²¹

the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936; reprinted in 1960), p. 400.

¹⁶Johs. Pedersen, Israel Its Life and Culture (Copenhagen: Branner Og Korch, 1926; Photoreprint London: Oxford University Press, 1954), I, 105.

¹⁷Keil, p. 126.

¹⁸Bertholet, p. 184.

¹⁹Cooke, p. 397.

²⁰Martin-Achard, p. 99.

²¹Because the change of figure from the battleground to the graveyard may lead to a literal interpretation of

Although the source of help for Israel is always Yahweh, the emphasis changes in the prophecy of Ezekiel. This change is discernible after the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem has reached the exiles. Ezekiel thirty-three stresses the need of Israel to repent.²² Yahweh's blessings and benedictions and gift of life will come to the people if they will return to the Lord, if they will live the righteous life according to the statutes and ordinances of Yahweh. In chapter thirty-seven, however, this condition is no longer mentioned. The restoration of the nation will be a gift of Yahweh. He will call upon the four winds to bring breath (Ezek. 37:9) into the bones which He has made alive and covered with skin, flesh and sinews (Ezek. 37:5,6). It will be Yahweh who places His Spirit in them and gives them life governed by the moral conduct established by Him (Ezek. 37:14). Israel will have her own king to rule over her again (Ezek. 37:21-22). The united nation symbolizes Yahweh's protection as well as the single worship of God. The entire nation shall be God's people, implying all the protection and care that God gives His own. The emphasis of this chapter is on the

the entire chapter, i.e., physical resurrection, Martin-Achard suggests that verse 12 may be a gloss by the prophet himself, or a later interpreter. Martin-Achard, p. 98.

²²Supra, p. 96.

power of Yahweh to bring the dead bones to life as He demonstrated it in creation (Ps. 33:9) and in His sovereign guidance of history. The prophet confidently writes this vision to declare that Yahweh will make His creative power operative again. Ezekiel also maintains that God controls the inward being of man. His Spirit is a light which permeates the spiritual darkness just as the first light penetrated the chaotic darkness according to Is. 9:2.²³

Isaiah

Isaiah also brings this unrestricted promise of God's grace to a lamenting nation. Zimmerli draws this comparison: just as Eli consoles the lamenting Hannah with the promise of the son, so "deutero-Isaiah" gives an unconditional promise to Israel that God will not forsake her. As He chose Israel, so He will gather her from the four corners of the earth and will continue to strengthen, help, and uphold her with His victorious hand (Is. 41:8-10).²⁴ Yahweh will not continue to strive and contend with her, but will heal her and dwell in her midst (Is. 57:15-18).

²³Volkmar Hertrich, Der Prophet Jesaia, in Das Alte Testament Deutsch, edited by Volkmar Hertrich and Artur Weiser (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1950), XVII, 163.

²⁴Walter Zimmerli, "'Leben' und 'Tod' im Buche des Propheten Ezechiel," Theologische Zeitschrift, VI (November-December 1957), 495.

Delitsch points out that the same compassion and grace which prompted God to work in her midst at the beginning, will also move Him now.²⁵ Pieper warns that the mere psychic concept of חַיִּים as a principle of life should not be overemphasized (Is. 57:15) because the Lord intends to bring comfort, strength, and hope to the sorrowing hearts even as He promises to restore life.²⁶

In summary, each of these prophets tell of earthly and spiritual blessings which will come to the revived nation. The promise of renewal will not be fulfilled in a land beyond the present experiences. The gifts of life include the length of days (Is. 65:20), confident trust in Yahweh (Is. 57:13), the prosperity of restored fortunes and planted vineyards (Amos 9:13-15), conformity to Yahweh's law by a people that truly "knows" this law and responds to it (Jer. 31:31-34), and the healing of every hurtful wound and the shelter under Yahweh's protecting care (Hos. 14:4-7). The new life is pictured as a time of joy under Yahweh's blessing. The same promises of earthly experiences are given over a long period of time. They are

²⁵ Franz Delitsch, The Prophecies of Isaiah, II, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated by James Martin (Fourth Series; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), XV, 380.

²⁶ August Pieper, Kommentar über den zweiten Teil des Propheten Jesaias (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1919), pp. 492-493.

the same in the time of the dangers of the eighth century, before the fall of north Israel (Is. 9:2), as well as during the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century (Zech. 10:7). Joy is possible only in the presence of God. The most painful proof of mankind's deviation from that which God intended is the silence of the voice of mirth, the voice of the bride and bridegroom, and the voice of gladness in the streets of Jerusalem (Jer. 7:34). This life will be returned.

Physical Resurrection

A few passages of the prophets specifically speak of the resurrection of the body from the dead and confidently declare that man's body shall not remain in the grave, but shall rise again. Israel's history also records events that support the hope of the continuing life, for it tells of Elijah (2 Kings 2:9) and Enoch (Gen. 5:24) who were taken from this earth without dying. Furthermore, dead persons had been restored to life by earlier prophets. Elijah, for example, brought breath back into the widow's son and presented him alive to his mother (1 Kings 17:23). In this instance, working through His prophet, Yahweh had showed His power over death.

Von Rad, however, minimizes the importance of these narratives.

Yet there does not develop out of it a speculative conception of resurrection and eternal life. It is rather that individual believers whose faith is under

particular strain have recourse to this as one of the possibilities which may be expected from Yahweh. The particular point at issue was the righteousness of Yahweh, and therefore the definitive fulfillment of His covenant promise which had to come after death.²⁷

In these passages the historians are more interested in the power of Yahweh as He brings life to man again or takes a righteous man to heaven without passing through death rather than intending to bring hope and confidence to man.

Vriezen also regards these resurrections and translations of man from earth to heaven as unimportant in forming a belief in the life after death. In the first place he appeals to the fact that in the case of Enoch and Elijah God takes man to heaven as he exists on earth. Body and soul are involved in his being taken into heaven. In the second place, the prophets make no reference to these transfigurations of man.²⁸

In several passages previously²⁹ quoted the interpretations offered have stated that the prophets were foretelling the restoration of the nation. Other scholars recognize the possibility that here already the bodily

²⁷Gerhardt von Rad, "Death in the OT," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated from the German and edited in English by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II, 848.

²⁸Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, translated from the Dutch by S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 204.

²⁹Hab. 1:12-15; Hos. 6:1-3; Ezek. 37.

resurrection is presented as a defined belief, or at least that the passages lead to the belief in the resurrection.

In the text of Hab. 1:12-15 Jacob recognizes the basis of the belief that death is not final destruction because man is in communion with God.

To see God, at least in this text, is to share in his life, and, as God himself does not die (Hab. 1:12 according to the original text uncorrected by the Massoretes), for the believer communion with God makes death, if ³⁰not nonexistent, at least powerless to destroy life.

Jacob thus finds in this text, with the translation that God shall not die, a significant parallel with Ps. 16 and Job 19:26. Together they declare that Sheol has no power over the dead because the righteous shall see God. They will be in communion with God, even though these passages say nothing of the soul of man, nor life as a reward, nor even the resurrection of the body. Life and death are both in Yahweh's power. He can reach out to man and comfort him with His presence even though the body goes to its place of lifelessness.

Regarding Hos. 6:1-3 the Targum declares that this passage refers to the resurrection of the body and comments "He will cause us to live again on the Day of Consolation appointed for the dead, on the Day of Resurrection He will make us stand up."³¹ Some Church Fathers speak of this

³⁰Jacob, p. 309.

³¹Martin-Achard, p. 86, n. 2.

passage as referring to a personal resurrection.³² Pusey³³ maintains that the mention of the two and three days before revival and raising refer to the time the Body of Christ lay in the tomb. This passage, therefore, is a certain promise of our own resurrection. The context (the Syro-Ephraimitish War) as well as the reference to national judgment, however, favors the interpretation that Israel is looking to the overthrow of the nations which are oppressing her and her own emergence. This confidence in Yahweh's power to overthrow an enemy is but one short step from a stated hope that the body in the grave shall rise to life again.

Although Martin-Achard states that he believes Ezekiel thirty-seven referred to national restoration, he nevertheless insists that the idea of the bodily resurrection cannot be eliminated. He agrees with Bertholet that the imagery of this chapter certainly suggests that the thought of the resurrection must have been present. Nötscher also believes "that the question of the resurrection of the dead must already have been a subject of controversy in the time of the prophet Ezekiel."³⁴

³²Brown, p. 56.

³³E. B. Pusey, Hosea, in The Minor Prophets (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Publishers, 1888), I, 63.

³⁴Martin-Achard, p. 99.

Jacob, too, refers to three clues which suggest that the teaching of the resurrection of the dead might be included in Ezekiel thirty-seven. In the first place, the question which Yahweh addresses to the prophet concerning the ability of the bones to live again has no explanation unless there is some thought of the resurrection of the dead. Because of God's power to bring the dead to life, the idea of the restoration of the nation was not to be questioned. Secondly, the dead are called the ד'לגתן (Ezek. 37:9), those who have been killed. In Daniel's prophecy, too, those who have been put to death, the martyrs, will be the ones who will benefit first from the resurrection. Finally, the picture of the dry bones in the field is changed to the opening of the graves and the dead coming forth. This change of locale is significant to Jacob. At any rate, he holds that the idea of the resurrection of the dead made some headway in thought between the time of Hosea and Ezekiel.³⁵

Cooke also agrees that at least "the narrative must have produced a powerful effect on men's minds, and contributed towards the growth of such a belief as we meet in Is. 26¹⁹ and Dan. 12."³⁶

Jerome believes that the doctrine of the resurrection

³⁵Jacob, p. 310.

³⁶Cooke, p. 397.

of the dead was firmly believed already at the time of Ezekiel. His conviction is based on the fact that, although chapter thirty-seven does foretell the return of the nation, yet

the similitude of a resurrection would never have been employed to exhibit the restoration of the Israelitish people, if that resurrection had been a delusion, and it had not been believed that it would really take place; because no one confirms uncertain things by means of things which have no existence.³⁷

Kliefoth maintains that this chapter refers to the resurrection of the dead alone.³⁸

Two passages in the prophets are often cited as specific references to a bodily resurrection: Is. 26:19-21 and Dan. 12:2,3. James Barr adds Is. 53:8-12 to this grouping.³⁹

Regarding Barr's suggestion, Snaith mentions that the passage of Is. 53:8-12 can be made to refer to

life after death, if it is first assumed that the servant is an individual, if an emended text such as that of Duham is used, and if the reader forgets to remember that death and resurrection are figures for the Exile and Return.⁴⁰

³⁷This quotation of Jerome is in Keil, pp. 123-124.

³⁸For Kliefoth's view see Bertholet, p. 184.

³⁹James Barr, "Life," in Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (Revised edition by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 584.

⁴⁰Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 89-90, n. 1, near end.

Martin-Achard, however, recognizes that a new life is proclaimed to the Servant. It is based on his labors and is the reward of his obedience. Resurrection is connected with retribution.⁴¹ In His concern for justice Yahweh promises a glorious future to the Servant who will make "himself an offering for sin" (Is. 53:10). In spite of these conclusions Martin-Achard does not identify the Servant and does not think that the passage speaks of the resurrection in specific terms.

Blank believes that the Servant referred to in this passage is the people of Israel. He points out that prophetic thought does not as yet include bodily resurrection, but there is knowledge and belief in the national restoration. He insists that the loss of political dependence is referred to when the Lord oppresses and bruises the Servant (Is. 53:8-10) rather than a personal demotion.⁴² Blank disregards the fact that the prophets do not speak of Israel as a substitute for another. Her sins and her punishments are her own. The Servant, however, is "stricken for the transgressions of my people" (Is. 53:8). "He shall bear their iniquities" (Is. 53:11). "He made intercession for the transgressors" (Is. 53:12).

The text presents difficulties of various kinds. One

⁴¹Martin-Achard, p. 117.

⁴²Blank, pp. 99-100.

is the change of suffix endings. At times it is difficult to determine the speaker and the relation of the servant to the speaker. Pieper rejects all changes of the Masoretic text which others suggest and points out that the death penalty must stand, for it is in this way the Servant, an individual, is the Substitute for the transgressor: "'von der Missetat meines Volks ward ihm der Todesstreich' stehen sollte."⁴³ God brought on the striking and smiting against the Servant, and the $\text{וְיָשִׁיבֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ is the ethical ground for His eventual death (Is. 53:8). The Servant dies because of a judicial sentence, not as the result of disease, as Duhm suggests.⁴⁴ He is not merely chastised with sickness⁴⁵ nor is He taken to God in the same fashion as Enoch and Elijah. The grave of the Servant is referred to in verse nine. Cheyne also points to verse twelve: "he poured out his soul to death," as meaning His lifeblood, to signify that He died.⁴⁶

⁴³Pieper, p. 410.

⁴⁴Christopher R. North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah (Second edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 125.

⁴⁵It is admitted in most cases that the text is corrupt. The translation of the Vulgate, posuerit, suggests the translation "he shall make," rather than "thou shalt make," וְיָשִׁיבֵנוּ . The LXX has καθαρίσθαι , "It pleased the Lord to cleanse him of his sickness." See Martin-Achard, p. 111.

⁴⁶T. K. Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah (Fifth edition, revised; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1889), II, 53.

The Targum presents a strange mixture as it identifies the servant with the Messiah, but the sufferings are those of the Jewish people at the hand of Gentile oppressors.⁴⁷

Although the resurrection of the Servant is not specifically stated, this is understood from such expressions as

he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied he shall divide the spoil with the strong (Is. 53:10,11,12).

At the end of the Song, the Servant is no longer in the grave. He is alive, just as He was at the beginning. This reversal in thought cannot be explained otherwise except that Yahweh has restored life to the martyr. The Servant must be identified with an individual when this passage is explained as a resurrection passage.

Chapters twenty-four to twenty-seven of the Book of Isaiah are referred to as the "Isaiah Apocalypse." North summarizes the section by pointing out that no clear historical background can be identified. It is usually considered among the latest of Old Testament writings. Such elements of Apocalypticism as pseudonymity and symbolism are absent, but it is definitely eschatological.⁴⁸

⁴⁷F. F. Bruce, The Books and the Parchments (Revised edition: Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963), p. 145.

⁴⁸Christopher R. North, "Isaiah," in The Interpreter's

The resurrection of the dead is stated as a certainty in Is. 26:19: "Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!" Resurrection is promised to the righteous only. The heathen oppressors will find their end in the death which comes upon them (Is. 26:14). Delitsch identifies these dead of Israel as "The confessors of Jehovah" who "are awakened in their graves to form one glorious church with those who are still in the body."⁴⁹ The poet sees the hand of God moving upon the face of the land, even though it is unpopulated. Deliverance is coming from Him. God's faithful ones will come back. The miracle proclaims Yahweh's power over death. The land may hold the graves of the fallen, but God will call out to the dead in their graves: "O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!" Already in Is. 25:8 the prophet has stated belief in immortality: "He will swallow up death forever." Now he tells how it will be achieved and places all his faith and love in God's power in this announcement.⁵⁰ Jacob notes

Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), E-J, 737.

⁴⁹Delitsch, I, 452.

⁵⁰R. B. Y. Scott and G. G. D. Kilpatrick, "The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39," in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), V, 310.

that the term "light" in verse nineteen is a symbol of Yahweh Himself in its wider sense. He fertilizes the earth with the dew of light, and this is the power which will open up graves and cause the shades to rise.⁵¹

This passage seems to limit the resurrection to the godly dead, especially when studied together with verse fourteen. It speaks of the ungodly lords who oppressed Israel. They will not rise from the graves. Heidel, however, points out that the entire context of verse nineteen would include the universal resurrection. The resurrection of the wicked is implied in Is. 26:21: "the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her, and will no more cover her slain." When the Lord comes in judgment the earth will bring forth those innocently slain who will testify against their murderers. By implication, then, the wicked dead as well as the wicked living, will come to trial.⁵²

Some commentators hesitate to recognize Is. 26:19 as a resurrection passage. Scott leaves the way open for the possibility that this entire passage refers to the restoration of "the life and fortunes of the nation, as in Ezekiel's vision (ch. 37) of the valley of dry bones."⁵³

⁵¹Jacob, p. 313.

⁵²Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 219-220.

⁵³Scott and Kilpatrick, p. 309.

He does state that the "literal resurrection is the more probable meaning."⁵⁴ Wade maintains without reservation that the "dead bodies" are those Jews cut off from the community life who are living in exile. They are figuratively dead and buried in foreign lands. The resurrection is the restoration of national existence. He maintains that verse fourteen states that powerful nations shall lose control over Israel. He also appeals to the picture language in the renewal passages of Hosea and Ezekiel and maintains that the language here is the same.⁵⁵

The other passage which speaks of the resurrection of the dead is Dan. 12:2,3:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

The resurrection from the dead will be all inclusive. "The many" is to designate the whole, the great number which will rise from the dead. Heidel⁵⁶ recognizes the grammatical possibility that the preposition ל of Dan. 12:2 can be regarded as either partitive or explicative. He, as well

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵G. W. Wade, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock and D. C. Simpson (Second revised edition; London: Methuen & Co. LTD., 1929), XX, 170-171.

⁵⁶Heidel, p. 221.

as Leupold,⁵⁷ prefers "the part for the whole" meaning because of the quote of Jesus in John 5:28-29:

for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.

Life after death does exist for both the good and the evil.⁵⁸

Martin-Achard⁵⁹ and Thomson⁶⁰ date this passage from the Book of Daniel in the second century before Christ at the time of the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. The writer seeks to establish the justice of Yahweh by declaring that the righteous shall rise again. In his concern for the godly he promises that they will rise to shine with the brightness of the stars of the firmament (Dan. 12:3). God will not permit those who fall in battle waged for His holy cause to be consigned to a Sheol which is also occupied by other dead ones. Therefore the new thought is introduced at this time that the afterlife of the righteous will be glorious, shining, and brilliant.

The same writer also points out that just as the

⁵⁷H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1949), pp. 529-530.

⁵⁸C. Lattey, The Book of Daniel (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Limited, 1948), p. 112.

⁵⁹Martin-Achard, p. 138.

⁶⁰J. E. H. Thomson, Daniel, in The Pulpit Commentary, edited by H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1950), XIII, 335.

righteous cannot be left in the normal condition of life after death, so also the oppressors cannot be consigned to an existence which only deprives them of their power in the netherworld. They must be punished in a positive way⁶¹ and come to shame. The announcement of the possibility of punishment and blessing after death stresses the martyr theme of this passage. The martyrs dying in the days of oppression and persecution at the hand of Antiochus Epiphanes can nevertheless see their cause prosper and be victorious in the belief and hope that they themselves will rise again from the dead.

Bewer says that the writer is speaking of a partial resurrection in order to satisfy the hopes and desires of a people passing through the oppression and death at the hands of Antiochus. This resurrection announced and taught here "will be the reward of those who died for their faith at the hands of Antiochus. Apostates will waken to shame."⁶²

Young also believes Daniel is speaking of a partial resurrection, but he identifies the conditions described in Dan. 11:40-12:3 with the age of Antichrist, a period of persecution when many will fall.⁶³

⁶¹Martin-Achard, p. 142.

⁶²Julius A. Bewer, The Prophets in the King James Version and Critical Notes (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1955), p. 662.

⁶³Edward J. Young, "Daniel," in The New Bible Commentary,

Scripture at this point is not speaking of a general resurrection, but rather is setting forth the thought that the salvation which is to occur at this time will not be limited to those who are alive but will extend also to those who had lost their lives.⁶⁴

He believes the Book of Daniel is a "product of the exile and was written by Daniel himself."⁶⁵ He would date prophetic proclamation of the sixth century with promising rewards in the resurrection.

To interpret this passage of Dan. 12:2,3 as promise of a partial resurrection seems to narrow the meaning and the comfort. Jews had died as martyrs in other days, for other holy causes, as well as a single persecution which might come at a future time. If this promise referred to a partial resurrection, it might be "precarious comfort" for the times under consideration⁶⁶ whether these times be the Antiochan persecution or the days of Antichrist. The promise of resurrection needed to be given as a continuing word of Yahweh, for many Jewish people had suffered martyrdom in the search for freedom and release from oppression.

Barnes sees the vision as that of the angel viewing

edited by F. Davidson, A. M. Stibbs, and E. F. Kevan (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 681.

⁶⁴Edward J. Young, The Prophecy of Daniel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 256.

⁶⁵Young, "Daniel," p. 668.

⁶⁶Leupold, pp. 529-530.

a vast general resurrection from the dust; so much so that the mind would be interested mainly in the contemplation of the great hosts who would thus come forth. Thus understood, the language might, of itself, apply either to a general rousing of the Hebrew people in the time of the Maccabees, or to⁶⁷ a general resurrection of the dead in the last day.

It would appear that no distinction of resurrections occurred in the mind of the author.

It should be noted that a parallel exists between Daniel twelve and Isaiah twenty-six. The dead lying in the dust have suffered from oppressors. The corpses in each case are in the dust, שֹׁכְנֵי צָפָר, dwellers in the dust (Is. 26:19), and רַבִּים מִיִּשְׁנֵי אֲדָמַת-צָפָר, sleepers of the ground of dust (Dan. 12:2). If each of these writings is recognized as of late, at least postexilic, origin, Old Testament teaching of life has made a full cycle. Man's origin came from the dust of the ground, the earth, אֶת-הָאָדָמָה עָפָר (Gen. 2:7). He returns to the dust of the earth. In a mysterious, but divine way, Mother earth must give up man for a high and noble purpose. Nothing can keep Yahweh's power from acting when He desires to bring man into being or to reward him for his wise and righteous acts. Yahweh will bring man, not merely to another earthly life, but to an existence described here as celestial, where the righteous will shine with the brightness

⁶⁷ Albert Barnes, Notes on the Old Testament, Daniel, edited by Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), II, 259.

of the stars.⁶⁸ The passage from the Book of Isaiah declares that Yahweh will bring the dew upon the dwellers in the dust, and they shall be revived. As in Ezekiel thirty-seven, the return of life will be accomplished by the hand of Yahweh.⁶⁹ The proclamation of the defeat of death reaches its climax in the revelation that the end of man is not the grave or Sheol. In the Apocalypse of Isaiah the writer is expressing a prayer and a hope that the dead in the dust will awaken to life again (Is. 26:13). The prophecy of Daniel confidently declares that Yahweh will pluck His faithful ones from the shadows of Sheol and awaken His sleeping ones to the joy of life. Because of the statement of retribution, the resurrection in Daniel is a necessity, not merely a hope.⁷⁰ The evil will also rise, but to shame and contempt. The term, קִרְיָוֶן , is found only one other time in Scripture, Is. 66:24, "where it is used about the horror inspired by decomposing bodies."⁷¹ Of the passage Heidel remarks that it

speaks without qualification. . . . The lot of the ungodly will consist not merely in the deprivation of all happiness but will entail actual pain and suffering.⁷²

⁶⁸Jacob, p. 313.

⁶⁹Martin-Achard, pp. 131-132.

⁷⁰Jacob, pp. 313-314.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Heidel, pp. 203-204.

Daniel does not describe the place of existence after death, but he does point out that this rising will be to "everlasting life," $\text{לְחַיֵּי חַיִּים עֲדָתָא}$ (Dan. 12:2). This is the only instance that the term "eternal life" is used in the Old Testament.⁷³ The promise of permanent victory over death is held out in the Apocalypse of Isaiah, for God "will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken" (Is. 25:8). The ultimate purpose of God's creation will be realized in the life after death when the forces which work to separate man from God will be overcome. This is the day of victory which must come to God's people.

Daniel shows that for the righteous "death is the gateway to everlasting life and highest honor. Their lot, as we read elsewhere, will be a life of unalloyed happiness in the presence of God."⁷⁴ The Psalmist shares this promise of future life: "Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form" (Ps. 17:15). The faithful of Israel were massacred if they refused to

⁷³Leupold, p. 531.

⁷⁴Heidel, p. 204.

eat defiled foods or profane the covenant (1 Macc. 1:62-64).

Intertestamental literature declared that inequality and injustice would find its solution when the Lord confronts the oppressor on the day of his death, Eccclus. 2:10;

11:26-28. More was needed, and to bring hope and consolation the prophetic proclamation tells of the resurrection from the dead, God's final triumph in His deliverance of man.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The prophetic writings of the eighth century to the postexilic period did not formulate systematic statements on life and death and on an existence after death. The concepts of life and death are in the framework of ethical and moral relationships with God rather than abstract philosophical thought proposed by anthropological considerations and questions of the soul. An event, a continuous practice, or an impending danger prompted the prophets to make references to the origins of life, its conditions and purposes.

The prophets showed concern for the life of the individual and the nation. Life comes to a person as a gift of God. The prophets, however, are more concerned with the nature of life and how it is prolonged. The experience of life is prosperity, joy, laughter, strength, health, posterity, and many days. These are promised to the person who lives according to God's commandments. The goodness must come from the Lord, and the sign of His favor lies in blessings. When these are absent life is removed by the Creator.

The Israelite does not think a person is annihilated when life is removed. The being of man continues, but in a different perspective. Patriarchal concepts of the

afterlife described death as a "going to the fathers." Jacob tells his sons: "I am gathered to my people" (Gen. 49:29). A reunion thought is found in this phrase. Similarly, though it is poetic, the thought of a continued existence in a netherworld is evident in the Sheol passages. Because the poetic language which describes these conditions cannot be taken too literally, the belief in the kind of existence, or life, in the "other world" cannot be positively stated.

The state of mind of the individual influenced the attitude toward death and the existence in Sheol, rather than an expressed belief or knowledge. On the one hand, Job complains that Sheol is a dreary place, an existence apart from the living, without the hope of return (Job 10:21,22). Hezekiah shares this view (Is. 38:10,17). At another time death with its entrance into Sheol is considered a place of tranquility and peace (Job 3:13,17). The thoughts of death are stated in relation to the existence on earth.

Although death is a reality for every man, it is not his hope and joyful expectation. The announcement of death is a threat that earthly blessings will be removed. In this sense, then, death comes because of sin and is the wage of sin.

The concern of the preexilic prophets, however, is the continuing existence of the nation. Life is an ethical

and moral relationship with Yahweh. These conditions are described in the covenant. God gave Israel life as a nation, that is, brought it into existence, and set precepts, judgments, and statutes as the standards of measurement of life with its God. When these standards are overthrown and discarded, death results. Just as man enters into another existence at death, so the nation will enter into another existence, that of the exile, because the people do not live in covenant. The exile, therefore, is also described as Sheol, an existence resulting from disobedience. The separation from God, His temple and His chosen land, is the result of sin. Those in exile are in an existence comparable to those who have fallen by famine, plague, or sword.

The culmination of the prophets' message cannot be doom. Therefore, Yahweh, the creating God, also controls the power of Sheol. He can return the exiles, though they be destitute and pining away without hope. When the chances of deliverance seem at lowest ebb, the prophets promise that Yahweh will return them to their land. He will make them a nation again. It will be because of the mercy of Yahweh toward His people that He will restore them. When He does so, He will also place a new heart in them, and they will follow His commandments. Life is again measured by moral faithfulness. Spiritual Israel begins with a remnant returning and ultimately receives its king once

again. The One anointed by the Lord shall occupy the throne of David.

Finally, the prophets give expression to the resurrection faith. This was probably a part of Israel's hope before the eighth century, but the prophets did not declare it as such until the atrocities against Israel left nothing to hope for except the assurance that God would raise the dead from their graves. In the resurrection the persecutions and atrocities could not be repeated, for the faithful will rise to a life of brilliance and splendor before God.

Promise of return from exile and the resurrection of the dead have a common basis. Israel believes her God is almighty. The statement of Hosea, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up" (Hos. 6:2) and the vision of The Valley of Dry Bones (Ezek. 37) give evidence of a resurrection faith in Israel, but these prophets apply the faith to declare the national restoration after the punishment is completed. However, the prophetic concern for the nation prompts the question "Were the prophets themselves aware of a distinction in the promise of restoration? Did they recognize the occupant of the throne of David as a spiritual King, the Messiah, or were they only interested in applying this to an earthly monarch?" It would seem that the hope of Messiah and the deliverance accompanying His arrival continued to stress the sitting

upon the Jerusalem throne all the way to the time of Christ. It is obvious that there is a great difference between the Messianic expectations of the disciples and the religious leaders when they had contact with Jesus and the apostolic faith after the promise of the Comforter had been fulfilled.

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