

Literature in The Old Testament

IV

Hiromi Yamamoto

Persian Period
(538-333 B.C.)

As Haggai and Zecharian were contemporaries, the historical background of their books is the same. Haggai was a man of education and broad outlook. He composed his addresses in the form of poetry and his eloquence was great enough to incite his discouraged hearers to undertake a seemingly impossible enterprise. He had a knowledge of distant events which were threatening the continuance of the Persian empire in his day and his chief interest was in the political conditions of his time. The dominant power in Haggai's age was the empire which the Persian Cyrus had founded in 550 B.C.. In the process of expanding it, he overthrew the Babylonians in 539 B.C. and seized their provinces including Judah. To Haggai and Zechariah the tumult of nations meant to prelude to the advent of the Messianic Kingdom. (Ha. 2:6-7). The history tells us why both Haggai and Zechariah regarded the approach of the Messianic kingdom as imminent, and why Haggai was so insistent on the need of the temple being restored.

"Haggai was strongly influenced by Ezekiel in his view of the importance of the temple for the new community and his fear of its

profanation by foreigners, and like him, he combined priestly and prophetic interests." 1

It is necessary that the temple should be ready for the dawn of the Messianic kingdom. To Zechariah, there was no need to that urge, the rebuilding of the temple, for by the time he arrived upon the scene, this had been seriously taken in hand. (Zec. 4:9)

Haggai is called a prophet; but as compared with the pre-exilic prophets he is hardly deserving of the title, for "the chief activities of the prophet's had been the teaching of the ethical righteousness of Jehovah and His demand that his chosen people should show their faithfulness to Him by moral life and spiritual worship; stern denunciation of sin, whether in the social, political, or religious life of the people; the certainty of divine judgement on the wicked, and the promise of a restored people when purified. Of all this, there is scarcely a trace to be found in the teaching of Haggai.

Of the personality and life of the prophet Zechariah we know, apart from his book, nothing; that, unlike Haggai, he was in the true line of the prophets is true from his teaching, as shown in his visions. The prophet lived in an age in which the spiritual life was at a low ebb, in which the prophetic

spirit had almost disappeared. There was an urgent need for some tangible evidence of the presence of Jehovah among his people. And the prophet showed a vital concern over the spiritual restoration of Israel. Zechariah saw the night visions in which the problems of his days were solved in remarkable way. (Zec. I:8-17). There he sees in a deep valley a rider on a red horse; behind him are dark-eyed, pink and white horses, with riders who on their horses had travelled that day and heard them report to their superior, the angel of Jehovah.

"We have gone to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sits still and is at rest."

"The purpose of this vision is to assure the people, through the prophet, that the advent of the Messianic age is close at hand. And this vision is an introduction to the whole series." 2 In the second vision (I:18-21) he saw four horns and four smiths, symbols of strength; they represent the Gentiles in general, comprehended in the four corners of the earth. The prophet was sure that Jehovah's purpose of punishing the nations, which was an indispensable prerequisite to the coming of the glorious age would be carried out.

In the third vision (2:I-13), the prophet sees a man with a measuring-line who is about to measure the extent of Jerusalem in order to see how long and how wide the city to be. But he is told that Jerusalem will not need to be enclosed with walls because the multitude of men and cattle will come there

and Jehovah will be a wall of fire around the city.

In the fourth vision (3:I-10) his thoughts were greatly concerned with his people. Joshua the high priest stood before the angels of Jehovah in the solid garments of an accused person Satan. The angels of Jehovah command his servants to take away the filthy garments wherein the high priest is clothed, and to put on him clean garments and to place the high priestly head-dress upon his head. Joshua represents the people and his filthy garments symbolize their present social condition, and clear garments are symbolic of the national restoration. Satan was dismissed because his accusation was in futile and the people had stoned for their sins through the Exile. In the fifth vision (4:I-6a, 10b-14), he saw a golden candlestick with seven lamps and beside it two olive trees. The angel explains to the prophet that the seven lamps represent the eyes of Jehovah the seven times seven express intensity--and that the two olive trees are two song of oil, the two anointed ones, the high-priest and the Messiah. In the sixth vision (5:I-4) Zechariah saw how the thieves and perjurers among the people were to be exterminated by a terrible curse which was written on a huge flying roll. The vision is a symbolic picture of the purging of the land of sinners preparatory to the advent of the Messiaiah. The seventh vision (5: 5-11) is closely connected with the preceding one.

The very principle of wickedness was removed

from the country. The prophet sees a woman a large dry measure; she is Sin personified and she is taken to the land of Shinar by two women who have wings, to the land where she belonged and where she could carry on her wickedness. She had no place in the new community in Judah. In the last vision, the eighth (6:1-8), the prophet saw the heavenly patrol-guard riding forth on the work of the new day that had dawned. The prophet sees four chariots with differently coloured horses, coming forth from between two mountains. They go towards the four quarters of the earth after having stood before the face of the Lord of the whole earth, to receive his commands as instruments of the divine wrath against the Gentiles. The chariot with the black horse goes towards the north, the Babylon; in regard to this it is said; "Behold, they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country," punishment upon this country has been inflicted by Jehovah's messengers, so his wrath is appeased. This vision records the final preparation for the advent of the Messiah. (3)

In chapter 1 of Lamentation, the prophet laments over Jerusalem dealing with its disolate state and like the other chapters 2,3,4, the writer of chapter used the acrostic and the lamentation metre. It is arranged in three-line stanzas, each stanza beginning with its own letter of the alphabet.

He painted Zion's sad condition after 586 B.C. and let the unhappy one speak herself

later on. (1:12) His main thought is not of sin, but of the present distress; and this leads him to cry out for vengeance against the enemies who have caused it.

About 460, the prophet Malachi arose and argued with the people. He was a simple man, one of the circle of God-fearing people. He was in constant touch with life and insisted on Jehovah's love for Israel and around it to the people, who challenged him to point out an evidence of His love, by calling their attention to the terrible catastrophe that had befallen Edom. Malachi pictured the hate of Edomites and this we would expect of any Jew.

Malachi took up the question of inferior sacrifices and charged the priests with treating the obligation of perfect offerings with contempt. (Mal. 1:8) When speaking in the name of God, he says to the priest, "neither will I accept an offering at your hand" and "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place a pure offering is burned to my name; for great is my name among the Gentiles." (Mal. 1:11) The point is that the prophet wished to set in contrast against the sacrifices of the Jewish priesthood and the insincere worship of the people, the religion of the Gentiles. He also condemns the marriage with daughters of a strange God (2:10-16) and here in 2:17-3:5, he addresses himself to those impatient ones who, illogically enough, conclude that because the day of Jehovah does not come.

God is not really zealous for what is right. "Malichi noted that they fear Jehovah talked the matter over among themselves and Jehovah listened and had a book of remembrance written for them and promised to spare them on the day when all the wickedness will be burnt up root and branch." (Mal. 4:2) (4)

Malachi wrote the prophecy to show the people that the evils were not to be placed at the feet of God, but their own door-step; also he attempted to show the people their own sins, to hold out to them the hope that if they repent and return, God will abundantly bless them. He would turn them from skepticism to joyous faith.

From 450 to 350 B.C., Trito-Isaiah wrote the chapters from 56-66 for the book of Isaiah. Though there is no definite clue for exact dating of this section of the book within the Persian and Hellenistic period (538-200) the contents of this section show the practice of idolatry which cannot be before 586 B.C. or after 331 B.C. (5)

The striking similarities between styles of 40-55 and 56-66 shows us that 56-66 was written by one or more authors whose thought and diction were dominated by 40-55. In this writings, this author gives his interpretation of the Second Isaiah for a later generation. However, we cannot find the victorious camping of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon, returning of the Jews to Jerusalem. To him, the promised salvation was still in the future (56:1, 59:14-19). The miserable situation of

the Jews is no longer explained as atoning suffering for the sins of the Gentiles, nor is the author in the least concerned with the missionary endeavors of Israel. (6)

The salvation is delayed because of the sins of the congregation, especially in the ritual and moral obligation of the people (56:9-57, 58:1-59:15a). Jehovah does not wipe out the nation because of the pious Jews. But the glories of the New Jerusalem are shown more magnificently than the second Isaiah (60-62). Through his writings, he is more pessimistic and concerned about externalities and nationalism and legalism of Religion. He is more realistic but less spiritual, cosmopolitan and idealistic.

After the returning of the Jews from captivity, history was not written until the appearance of Nehemiah and Ezra in the latter half of the fifth century. They composed memoirs of the great work in their books, relating the history of the Jews during the century which elapsed from the edict of Cyrus allowing the Exiles to return (528 B.C.), to Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem. (7)

Nehemiah tells us his story of the return of the Exiles and the rebuilding of the Temple in a simple, straightforward, and vivid manner; how he learned to his utter dismay of the ruined condition of the walls of Jerusalem in Persian court, how he rebuilt it with mission increasing the population and dedicating the walls. Twelve years later, he came back to Jerusalem and

corrected the abuse of the temple, the payment of the Levites, the observance of the Sabbath and the intermarriage with foreigners. He wrought this for his people and his God; we can read his prayer throughout his writings like a refrain: "Remember this, O God, for good" as though he had consciously spread the record of his work before his Maker. (8)

There is no historical value in his autobiographical materials of the great leader. The literary style of the book of Nehemiah as well as that of Ezra shows that their author is the Chronicler and he utilized written sources. At any rate, the Memoirs of Nehemiah are the earliest autobiography written by a man who was not a king. (9) At the same time, the Hebrew language was gradually dying out as the vernacular of the Jews and was soon to be replaced by Aramaic, and this book became the last Hebrew work. (10)

During the fifth century B.C., the Priestly Code was written. It is the skeleton of the history about the origin of the people of Israel and their sacred institutions, written from the point of the view, or rather conviction of the priestly and legalistic people that the Israelites can be independent and strong only by religion. It is the story beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan leading up to the codification of Israel's ritual laws, the establishment of Israel as an imaginary commonwealth on

the earth which included sovereignty, a people, a country, and a body of laws, planned and organized by God. The content of the code were made up from four parts: from creation to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and Moses and Joshua. Stories follow the line of the histories of Israel. (11)

We may summarize the legislation of the Priestly Code which is given to Moses at Sinal (Ex. 25:1-31 to 31:17) and the laws in Numbers 1:1-10:10 on the journey from Sinal to Kadesh, and at Kadesh (Num. 15:1-13, 37-41:19) and in the plain of Moab (Num. 28-30) in the following way: Instructions for the building of the Tabernacle and the organization of the priesthood, execution of the instructions given in the preceding chapters, the five sacrifices, instructions for the officiating priests, laws on clean and unclean things and purifications, the day of atonement (Lev. 16), miscellaneous laws in Num. 5-6, ritual laws, scattered around these chapters. (12)

For the legislative purpose we can find the following stories: the story of creation leading up to the origin of the Sabbath, the story of the Deluge containing the laws prohibiting the eating of blood, the story of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham containing the commandment to circumcise all males when they reach 8 days old, the stories of the marriage of Esau and of Jacob to point out the commandment against foreign intermarriages, the story of Israel's deliverance

from Egypt containing ordinances for celebration of the Passover and the feast of the Unleavened Bread, the census of the twelve tribes and their arrangement in the camp, the story of the ordination of the priesthood of Aason and his sons to the priesthood concerning the law of Ex, 29:1-37, purification and installation of the Levites who were to serve from their 25th to their 50th years, and Moses and Aaron, given no admittance on account of their incredulity at Meribah, to the Promised Land, etc. (13)

Generally speaking, we can see the characteristics of the author of the priestly Code as optimistic in the concept of life. To him, God is primarily concerned about man, every created thing is good, the world is created for man. The cult of the Priestly Code was designed to expiate the guilt arising from sin. It is for the atonement of sin that the sacrifice is offered, the cult is not the spontaneous expression of the religious mind, but the form in which one must approach Yahweh in order to gain atonement. It must be planned in the national scale. The Priestly Code provides an annual ceremony called the Day of Atonement, for the expiation of sins. In addition to the sin offerings, the great annual expiation of sins would be accomplished by a rather primitive rite, magical rather than sacrificial way. Namely, the high priest placed his hands on the head of a goat, transferred the sin of the people to the goat, and sent the goat out into the wilderness of Azazel. In addition to these

rites (of the Day) of atonement, he gives more other sacrifices to atone for sins such as the sin offering of a he-goat on new moons and a bullock at the consecration of priests, followed by the sacrifice of a ram as a burnt offering and of another ram as heave offering, etc. In addition to these, the trespass offering was made atoning for the illegal retention of property belonging to Yohweh or to man after the restitution, plus one-fifth had been made.

Generally speaking, sacrifice was taken from private practice and made into a temple ceremony.

Apparently those who wrote this code were observed with sin, for it was not confined to moral transgressions, but included infringing, even unwitting, of ceremonial rules and prescriptions concerning the defilement of persons or inanimate objects.

The God of holiness had separated Israel from all nations and made it holy and thus, it was a matter of life and death that each one of his laws be observed in its minute details, lest Yahweh should be angered again to cause the end of the human life on the earth. (14)

Thus the Priestly Code is the law of holy nation, a theocracy, whose absolute ruler is the God of the world, although the author presents us Yahweh as the King of Israel primarily rather than as the King of the Universe.

The Priestly Code as given by Prof. Pfeiffer are:

Genesis: 1:1-2:4; 5:1-28, 30-32; 6:9-22; 7:6, 11, 13-16a, 17a, 18-21, 24; 8:1-2a, 3b-5, 13a, 14-19; 9:1-17, 28-29; 10:1a, 2-5, 6-7, 20, 22-23, 31-32; 11:10-26, 27, 31-32; 12:4b-5; 13:6, 11b-12; 16:3, 15-16; 17; 19:29; 21:1b, 2b-5; 23; 25:7-11a, 12-17, 19-20, 26b; 26:34-35; 27:46-28:9; 29:24; 28b-29; 30:4a, 9b, 22a; 31:18aB; 35:6a, 9:13, 15, 22b-29; 36:1-8, 40-43; 37:1-2; 41:46a; 46:6-7, (8-27); 47:5b (LXX), 6a, 8-11, 27b-28; 48:3-6, (7); Ia, 28b-33aAb; 50:12-13.

6:2-12, (13-30); 7:1-13, 19-20aA, 21b-22; 8:5-7; 16-19; 9:8-12; (11:9-10); 12:(1-28), 40-51; 13:1-2, 20; 14:1-2, 4, 8-9, 10bB, (in part: 14:15-18, 21-23, 26-29); 16 (with traces of JE); 17:IabA; 19:1-2a; 24:15b-18a; 25:1-31; 17; (34:29-35); (35-40).

Leviticus 1-27, including earlier codes like the capital Holiness Code (H) in Numbers (1:1-10:10); 10:11-12, (13-28); 13:1-17a, 21, 25-26a, 32abA; 14:Ia, 2, 5-7, 10; most of 14:26-38; 15; 16:Ia, 2aBb, 3-11, 16-24, 27a, 35-50; 17; 1-13; 18:1-32; (19:1-22); 20:IaA, 2, 3b-4, 6-8a, 10, 11bB, 12:13, 22-29; 21:4a, 10-11a; 22:1; (25:6-18); (26); (27:1-23); (28:1-30:16); (31); (32:Ia, 2b, 4a, 6-15, 18-19, 28-33); (33:1-26:13). Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-4 (in part); 34:7-9. Joshua 4:10, 16, 19; 5:10-12; 9:15b, 17-21, 27a; 12:1-24; 13:15-33; 14:1-2; (3-5); 15:1-12, 20-62; 16:4-8; 17:1-6; 18:1-21:42; (22:9-34).

The prose folk-book of Job (1-2; 42:7-17) is already mentioned before. Now, we are going to deal with the main part of the Book of Job. The author of the book was not satisfied with Job's absolute submission when he met the sufferings, but he gave us the story when his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zopher come to comfort Job, but did not know what to say. In order to have the approval of his friends,

Job gave way to despair and cursed the day of his birth (3:1f). Thus, the author begins the debate between Job and his friends on the reason of his suffering. In three cycles of Chapter 3-14, 15-21, 22-27, three times the friends take up his arguments each in his turn; to each Job answers until finally the friends have nothing left to say, and Job takes up his complaint afresh, to be answered God himself. (15) Outline of three cycles after the introduction (2:11-13) and Job's lament (3) are:

The first cycle of speeches (4-14)

- a. The first speech of Eliphaz (4-5)
- b. Job's reply to Eliphaz (6-7)
- c. The first speech of Bildad (8)
- d. Job's reply to Bildad (9-10)
- e. The first speech of Zophar (11)
- f. Job's answer to Zophar (12-14)

The second cycle of speeches (15-21)

- a. The second speech of Eliphaz (15)
- b. Job's answer to Eliphaz (16-17)
- c. The second speech of Bildad (18)
- d. Job's reply to Bildad (19)
- e. The second speech of Zophar (20)
- f. Job's reply to Zophar (21)

The third cycle of speeches (22-27)

- a. The third speech of Eliphaz (22)
- b. Job's reply to Eliphaz (23-24)
- c. The third speech Bildad (25:1; 27:7-10, 16-23)
- d. Job's reply to Bildad (26:1-4; 27:11f: 25:2-6; 26:5-14)
- e. The third speech of Zophar (27:13; 24:21-24; 24:18-20; 27:14f.)
- f. Job's reply to Zophar (27:1-6; 29-31)

The words of the friends represent the accepted teaching that all suffering is ultimately due to sin, but they knew the righteous life of Job, so they did not question

his piety, but tried to comfort him by pointing out the good intentions that God had with him in this discipline. He needs not despair, no man is sinless before God, his suffering is disciplinary, pedagogical means of God. Unlike with his expectation, they charge him with wickedness; Job spoke blasphemous words in despair. His friends repeat that only in repentance Job can find God's grace returning, and acknowledge his guilt and be saved. Their point changed from disciplinary, corrective character of suffering to punitive quality in later words. He could believe these words when he was living the happy life, but he can not because he knows that he is innocent, and suffering from much agony. He does not assert that he is sinless, for no mortal is without sin. But to make man so frail and then punish him for his mortal frailty is unjust. (7:20f.) However, He is so wise that no man can prove Him to be wrong; what He declares to be right is right. He agrees that God is omnipotent and omniscient, but he thinks His omnipotence and omniscience are not controlled by morality because He does not make moral distinction, destroying the righteous and wicked alike. (16)

God wants to put him in the wrong; He becomes his enemy. He longs to argue with God about his case, but this is out of the question; he would simply ask Him why He is persecuting him so terribly. (9:22f.) His friends seek the reason of the suffering in Job, but he seeks it in God. They declare

that Job is a sinner; Job declares that God is arbitrary, unjust, immoral.

But then the new element comes into the mind of Job when he thinks about the happy past when God showed him Justice and love. Job thinks it was the mistake of God because He was all the time cherishing a bitter hatred against him and His kindness to him was only a mask for His malicious purpose. But soon he throws out this idea. He came to realize that God's present attitude to him does not express His true character. His anger must be a passing mood and so he prays. (10:f.) But again, he sees in God once more his cruel foe when unbearable pain comes back. (16:18f.) We can find in this section the idea of dualism about God, the God of righteousness over against the God of arbitrary cruelty. One who knows Job will vindicate him, and he is God. He is arbitrary and cruel indeed, but this very fact shows that the reason for his suffering is in God and not in Job. The hope came back to Job for his vindications; he is convinced that God must be righteous in the end. This is not the question of Job only, but also the question of all righteous. The wicked prosper and that God does not do anything at all is indicating that He is truly moral in His dealing with men. When he thinks that God is dealing injustice with men, his high hopes fade, and he cries out. (23:3-9) Finally, after stating his innocence fully in a beautiful passage, he flings the bold challenge at God in 31:35-37. And God

answers him out of whirlwind. What does he know about the mighty work of creation and the marvellous wonders of the world of nature, about the realm of death, the home of light and of darkness? Does he control the forces of the world, does he know the wonders of God's animal creation? (31:13f.) Without knowing these, how can Job dare to criticize God's intention as immoral? He thinks that the whole world revolves around man and everything is created only for him. But God did all these wonders. Thus the great problem of human suffering grows small when it is seen in relation to the whole universe. Though God did not answer to the question of Job for the reason of the suffering, he gains peace. He does not need to know why he suffers, for he has been accorded a vision of God. His appearance to him implies his vindication; He did not charge Job with sin, instead He pointed out the wrong assumption. True piety needs no out-ward attestation of health, happiness, and prosperity; it does not even need the approval of the righteous; it should rest solely on the witness of conscience. God is righteous and governs the world righteously, even mysterious though His rule may be.

In epilogue, the author or the book concludes in the folk tale that Job's prosperity was restored and Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.

The long Elihu speeches of 32-37 were added probably by a later poet because it seemed incredible that Job should have won

the debate in previous chapters. However, Elihu says nothing new; he only formulated it at times more effectively. The beautiful poem on wisdom in 28 was added by another orthodox writer in later years, asking whence does wisdom come and where is its home. Only God knows the way to it, and its place. Man does not know; how can he then hope to understand the mysteries of God's rule? (17)

There are many arguments of the date when its original author lived, The only conclusion which may be regarded as generally accepted is that the poet lived between 700-200 B.C.. The secondary part of the book was added before 200 B. C.. (18)

The story of Ruth tells a story of the days of the Judges, which has been a bearing on the ancestry of David. The story of the loyalty of a young woman, Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi, her diligence and prudence and her great reward. A certain man of Bethlehem was compelled by famine to take refuge in Moab, together with his wife and two sons. The sons married Moabites women Orpha and Ruth, and both men and their father died, leaving three widows. So Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem and one of the daughter-in-law, Ruth insisted on going with with, saying,

Entreat me not to leave thee and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God; Where thou diest, will I die, and there

will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. (Ruth 1:16)

The two women reached Bethlehem at the beginning of the harvest, and Ruth went to glean in the fields of a certain Boaz, a kinsman of the family into which Ruth had married and was kindly treated. At the end of the harvest, on the advice of Naomi, Ruth sought out Boaz by night in his threshing floor and he agreed to see the family fortune restored. He purchased Naomi's land, and married Ruth, and thus fulfilling the family duty, both in the matter of land and of posterity. Ruth bore Boaz a son, who was the grandfather of David. No lesson is appended, no moral is affixed but the story is very simply and beautifully told. The tender-hearted Ruth could not be parted from the strong, warm-heart of Naomi. For pure love's sake and to serve Naomi's God, she forsook her mother's house and her country's God. We must note the sincerity and unselfish affection of a daughter for a parent in her old age, the romance of woman with a kind, broad-minded man. This strong relationship between mother-in-law and bride is often seen in Orient.

Long ago, in the time of Jeroboam II of Israel, Jonah had lived and prophesied the victory and national aggrandizement to that brilliant king. He was a nationalistic prophet. Jehovah had commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and prophesy God's punish-

ment on account of her wickedness, but the prophet refused to go and escaped. Jehovah sent storm and he was thrown into the sea. By Jehovah's order, a big fish came and swallowed Jonah, who spent three days and three nights inside of the fish before he was ejected upon the land.

"This part of the story has caused much difficulty and ridicule, because the whole story has taken as a historical tale recounting events that had actually happened." (19)

It is the story of Jonah, told by a preacher. The messenger of God has singled out a prophet well-known to his people and has entered his narrative about him, so that the work takes its name from its hero, not from its author. The opening scene is Joppa, where the hero embarked for his destination. His mission was to Nineveh as I mentioned before. At Jehovah's repeated command Jonah went to Nineveh, an immense city of three days journey. Going on the journey he cried to the astonished Ninevites, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." At once the people repented. Even the King joined the people, published a decree of fasting in his own and his noble's name, calling upon the people to repent and turn the evil away. The purpose of the author as well as his method becomes more clear if attention is fixed upon the central issue of his message rather than upon individual feature of the narrative. So it is recognized as a sermon, cast in narrative form, whose

message is one of the noblest and most truly spiritual and prophetic in the Old Testament.

About the same time with Jonah (350 B. C.), Joel was written. He was the sacramentarian among the prophets, believing that the daily sacrifices were the most important through which the mysterious yet real union with God can be done. He was, yet, a great poet rather than a great prophet. In the first part of the book (1:1-2:27), he described the invasion of the locusts with the vivid picture of its rapid advance and destructive activity. Then he called the people to repent because it was the only way the plague could be averted. Moreover, he called people for fasting and mourning and for a penitential assembly of all the people in the temple at Jerusalem with his wonderful poetical and oratorical power. (1:2-14, 16-20) All people came and prayed for mercy to which Yahweh answered with the promise of new fertility. (2:15-20, 25-27) Joel burst forth with great joy in the midst of His speech. In the next section of the book (2:28-3:21), Joel tells us the coming crisis which is much greater than the locust plague, the judgement day of Yahweh. Only the faithful will be saved on Zion (2:32). The heathen will be judged in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Yahweh judges), where they are called to come with arms and the angelic hosts will annihilate them, while the heavenly bodies are darkened and the Lord roars out of Zion. Then the Lord will be the refuge of his people, Jerusalem be holy and the land flourish; Egypt and

Edom will be desolate and Judah abides forever. (20)

The style of his writings especially in the first section is clear and fluent, rhythmic line is so swift and beautiful, graphic and dramatic in description, showing his ability, all the way, of poet as well as orator. Obviously, he shows the influence of classical and postclassical prophetic oracles. Prof. Pfeiffer evaluates his style:

Remarkably good at least for the silver age of Hebrew literature to which he unquestionably belongs. It is far better than that of Haggai or Malachi, who lived in an earlier period.

Probably, around 400 B.C. the third chapter of the present Book of Lamentation was written. The author bitterly cries out at the onslaught of Yahweh against him, but finds comfort and hope in the faith that Yahweh's mercies are for those who seek Him. Therefore, we should search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord. He will certainly take vengeance upon his foes. It is not certain whether he wrote from the standpoint of the personified nation or the poet himself.

LITERATURE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Notes

- 1) Bewer, g.a.: The Literature of Old Testament
LOT p. 135
- 2) Bewer, g.a.: LOT p. 236
- 3) Oesterley: Introduction to the Old Testament
pp. 413-418
- 4) Bewer: LOT p. 257
- 5) Pfeiffer: Introduction to The Old Testament
LOT p. 458
- 6) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 480
- 7) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 813
- 8) Bewer: LOT p. 281
- 9) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 837
- 10) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 838
- 11) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 192
- 12) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 253-257
- 13) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 251-252
- 14) Pfeiffer: LOT pp. 267-270
- 15) Bewer: LOT p. 318
- 16) Bewer: LOT p. 320
- 17) Bewer: LOT p. 320
- 18) Pfeiffer: LOT p.p. 675-676
- 19) Bewer: LOT p. 404
- 20) Pfeiffer: LOT p. 574

Bibliographies

- Bewer, Julious A: The Literature of The Old Testament: Columbia Univ. Press 1947 LOT.
- Buttrich, George A: The Interpreters Bible Vol. I. Abington-Cokesbury Press 1952.
- Leslie, Elmer A: Syllabus.
- Driver, Samuel R.: Introduction of The Literature of The Old Testament: N.Y. Scriders 1913.
- Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version N.Y. Thomas Nelson & Sons 1953.
- Pfeiffer, Robert H.: Introduction to The Old Testament: Harper & Brothers Puh. N.Y. 1948.