



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Prophets: Jonah, Ezra, Nehemiah, undated.

1/ If there was even a perfect illustration of L. phrase "in them in
Paros. it is the little book of Jonah.
c. 400 B.C. together 4 chapters - 48 verses are told.

Regarded of such significance - placed in ritual of Day of Atonement -
as the Haftarah; the afternoon service to serve as a sort of
respite - for the great ~~sp. hours~~ ^{penitential} fast hours
during the entire Holy Day of Y. K.

Why was this little proph. book given this place, honor?
To most people book of Jonah is nothing more than the strange
and wonderful story of a man, thrown aboard from a sailing
vessel, swallowed up by a whale and after 3 days put out
again, very much alive and - that's that. - a perfect
tale calculated to excite the curiosity of adults - and
stamp the Bible as a book of bizarre legends & superstitions.

4. But a book cannot become the word of man & word book of the
manhood, and cannot move the heart & mind, cannot
penetrate / men - if it is only a collection of tall tales and
exaggerated narratives. And an ancient ~~fact~~ ^{fact} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~shows~~ ^{shows}
is the result of the labor many sages, scholars and thinkers
would not have selected ~~this~~ ^{such} ~~peaceful~~ ^{peaceful} tale of Jonah - and
assigned it to such an exalted position in the liturgy, the
holiest day in the rel. calendar of Israel.

3/ It was done with great weight and deliberation - for the book
is in very truth the very epitome, the great ~~sp. hours~~ ^{sp. hours} of Y. K.
The inspired author employed a popular legend, an actual
literary art to do so, to point a profound moral
truth, or rather a series of them. In the East a tale

[illegible]

Story can be quickly related:- Jonah son of Amittai - warned, the Lord:
"Arise go to Nineveh and proclaim unto it: 'Yet 40 days, the shall be
destroyed'." But J. - walked, long east to N. - which is on the right hand
of the Tigris in Mesopotamia - places as a ship sailing
to Tarshish, which is ~~Tartessus~~ ^{in Spain}. The sailors were afraid of him
for he was a prophet of the Lord and wanted
to take this prod. to N. - God kindled a great wind upon
the sea - storm overtook ship - in danger, heavy broken up -
Crew all aboard all their cargo - no relief. They pray - call to
his God. Only J. does not. He is fast asleep.

Serious cost lots to have for whose cause this evil is done (3)
 upon them. Who "provoked the wrath of the God. Not fell on J.
 J. tells them that he is a Jew a prophet - running away from the
 presence of God and his proph. mandate: "What shall we do unto
 these - to appear the wrath - 'Cast on into sea!'. Unwilling.
 They now stand to being vessel to shore - no avail. Sea men
 now turn & retreat in despair, and asking questions for what
 they are about to do - Cast J. into sea. Sea vessel from
relying. Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up
 J. & J. was inside fish 3 days 3 nights - Prayed - &
 came out after 3 days -

A 2nd time - ^{4th day} - planned - performed - repeated -
foot - meat to best - small - cloth - tasks - prayed -
 And God saw their works - that they turned from their evil
 way, & God repented, the evil which He had said He would do - &
He did it not!

This displeased I exceedingly! He was angry! What he
had feared - ^{- & what had troubled him} ~~came to pass~~ - He suspected that God was
not the same, regarding Peter that he could have liked him
to be - but a poor poor, unfortunate, very suffering
and abundant in money - who repents, the end - And
now He had made a fool out of - poor poor - perhaps
also came to doubt the power of Jehovah -

But then very angry!" I went out city - found
exceedingly glad - warm - + smooth - withered - Hot don't bend
7 in heart when his hand - painted - But then was angry

bec. the good - put on it - for which they don't not labor,
neither made it good, which came up in a way & troubled in a
way - Should not I have put a h. - that quality -
600,000 human beings - who are all poor mortal beings -
who cannot choose bet. their upland and their light?

5/ This is all! And yet how much it says - How much it says?
Why did I not wish to convey message, for to IV? For 2
reasons ① h. was the capital of Assyria - destroyed Israel.
It was the enemy of his people that had worked the land
of Israel and carried off into exile captivity 10,000 & 12,000
of Israel. The people, N. were heathen - They were
idolaters. They did not recognize J. as unlike him.
J. was the God of the people of Israel. His dwelling place is
in the land of Israel. Why should he J. have his
nation's land to carry a message of administration of salvation
to the heathen without for his people to
② Assyria - h. was a wicked city - the center of wicked and
corrupt Empire which had oppressed many nations & was
valleying in its opulence and magnificence. The prophet Nabum
had called it - "O, city bloody throughout, full of lies and
booby." ~~Why~~ Why should it be spared? ~~for~~ it be destroyed.
It deserved to be! If God were to send him to announce
inevitable down upon h. - nothing would please him more.
It would be a pleasure to be the messenger, a rod of God
And Israel - whose deeds are unpardonable, who are unpardonable.
But this God - who has chosen him as his prophet - had

7/ And so J. had to prophesy - tho he did not want to. And
the sea into which he had asked the carts he had to be
pitched back to perform his duty - and he had to learn
2 great lessons abt. the God whom he served and whom
he did as as yet ~~fully~~ understood.

The God of Israel is the God of Mankind. A God of P.
is the God of the Nations! Did Israel - as the people
first to recognize him - as the one God - and
as his servant chosen to proclaim him to Mankind -
but God also looked all other people - for they are all his
children - many prophets had taught that centuries
before but the many people in the time when God of J.
was written had ~~not~~ heard it. - God. was both a Nat. and
an internat. faith - Nat. to the Jew as the chief prophet
& spokesman, ~~therefore~~, that faith in the mind, internat. in
that all nations are welcome to it; ~~prophets~~ ^{doctrines} & others.
The God of J. is not a ~~local~~ ^{exclusive} deity - but the Universal
ruler & Father, the whole, Mankind. 70 or so

Israel had to learn too, that the God of Israel was
not a hard, ^{unfeeling} ~~stern~~ ^{unyielding} ~~tyrant~~ - and man, a slave, who must ^{obey} ~~obey~~
they, or else he crushed his end hope of power. Man is a child
of God, urged to seek God's peace & joy in the service
of God. This quest is hard, beset with many pitfalls. & man
is frail, a child of dust. If he fails - not power lost -
"Then demand not the death" -

(Battered, bruised, his soul cleansed in a narrow
fire - humble - confident - for you are here the vessel of
the universe - and the universe is in you)

Has J. a message for our day - for our people to-day? (7)
Eternal truth is eternally relevant & applicable.

1. B. R. TOL - ~~that~~ ^{these} are for to-day. Cities, flood.
Yet 40 days - a 40 months - 5 IV. will be destroyed.

~~It is easy~~ But is it ~~disturbance~~ that, then enemies that
we should want? Our righteous anger is great. Their evil
is unassailable - but cannot even pray - forgive them... for they
know what they are doing - but their fault & their leaders must
be destroyed - But it is the E.U.C. - will so much the evil done

2. ~~Reveal to what ends?~~

5, 16, 1, 11 - by means of -
unhappiness - & poverty - and the con-
ditions which make them possible.
Creating a new order which will be
free from violence, recurring war,
& recurring oppression, unkindness.
Not vengeance - but universal
reconciliation, but reconciliation - and
a birth for mankind under God.

3. ~~Escape to old times~~

2. J. to unveil a total sol. - ^{was} to narrow nationalism. - Does
this sound modern. Nazis have lost their tribal gods from
Valhalla - here. Sol & for. Rh - was too merciful, too loving, too
universal. They want a bloody Teutonic god - who loves, who
shakes all peoples. They want a fatherly god. For how
could they do what they ~~do~~ ^{do} in Gd. - handsome under
they would be a god / cruelty - who delights in the slaughter
& torture of other people.

No wonder they hate with a burning fury - the ^{the} universal
for this religion. The 2 cannot live in the same
world either god or Beast. Either Jehovah or Than L.

1) If there was ever a perfect - Consist - Regarded - Why?

To most people - incredible - ridiculous -

But a Brook - An ancient Hebrew - applies to me -

Great Deliberation - Inspired Author employed pop. folk-tale

Oriental writers - In East, great, abstract -

Not enough allowance - Not naive children - August

But being men from East - chaotic - parables -

Listener was trusted - Israel one of worst - 3

2) Story can be quickly told - Word of the Lord - ceased from raging

3) This is whole story - compressed - Why did Jerah - 2

Minerch was capital - destroyed - Heathen - Why

Minerch was a wicked - center - corrupt - despised - Nabun

If God were to send him - Pleasant - Deceives unknave

But this Lord - Baffled - straight-lined moral disfigurement

So he runs away - from yr land - Divest

4) But one cannot - Flee to Tarshish - Renounce Mission

Depth of Sea - All prophets - Cups of fury - Rashed

Hated - Rashed - Jeremiah - Amos - 1:2, 11:14 - 22:14

A prophet who stifles his words -

5) And so Jerah had to flee - From Sea - Learn 2 things

(A) God, know - God love know -

Many Prophets had -

Jud. was both a national and an International Faith - chief
protagonists - welcome - all would come - — 7/11/3 2001 -
God of Israel is not an exclusive tribal deity -
(Solemn) - 70 oxen -

(B) God of Israel - not stern, unforgiving tyrant - as Kibbutz
Man is not slave - must obey - as he craved - Free -
Justice is hard - must be - 2001/11/10
— 7/11/3 2001 —
When soul - battered, hands bruised - humbled - uncomfortable

6) Message for Today? Berlin, Rome, Tokyo - an Niagara City -
Evil unspeakable - Know not - In war to destroy them?
But is it destruction of those countries - people - ?
Is it vengeance we seek? - irreparable done?
Evil - not evil does - 7/11/3 2001 - Aggression -
Knock sword - reconciliation - New Order -

7) Jonah believed in a National God - Modern? Nazis -
Valkalla - Jud. & Chr. God too full of mercy -
Thor - God of Thunder, War - Bloody Tenton Deity
Hidice - God of Cruelty - slaughter, torture -
All their emphasis on "National" - exclusive - competition - Argument
No wonder they hate - for this Religion
Either God or Baal - Jehovah or God.
As long as men serve National Gods - no Intern. Brotherhood

8) And finally - Message of Jonah - to us - no escape -
Our country - ocean -
Our generation - 2 world wars - Ours is lot - blood, sweat
Tears - 7/11/3 2001 - 12/11/3 2001 - martyrs - Double

When I so blithely volunteered to take the assignment Ezra & Nehemiah, I little knew that I was assuming the responsibility of summing up in a brief, popular way, material over which the most erudite Hebrew scholars have long pondered, never agreed, & on which they have written many large & heavy tomes.

Except for some rather tedious & unpronounceable genealogical tables, the text of Ezra & Nehemiah forms an interesting historic narrative covering in main just two important events - ① Return from Exile - ② The Rebuilding of the Temple. These books are written in a loose manner - ~~there is a~~ skillful easy juggling of events to bring out the ethical significance rather than accurately to record historic fact. One feels a people living, ~~throbbing~~ ^{sinning} & repenting - ~~the~~ process of evolution - one ~~feels~~ ^{sees} an editor editing & adding to prove his theory, which is I believe that Israel is predestined to be God's chosen people & whether she wills it or not, she must fulfill her mission - serving God & then God humanity - One thrills at each success & mourns at each failure - This history reads like a vivid living drama.

The books are written in the form of memoirs - Nehemiah having the intimacy of a personal diary - The style is striking & terse - The two books we are told were originally one - and really ought to be

2
Combined now - the evidence of this fact is over-
whelming - 1st the story of Ezra is partly in the book
of Ezra & partly in the Book of Nehemiah - 2nd At the
end of each book of the O.T. there are certain
traditional notes - there are no such notes at the
end of Ezra & those contained at the end of
Neh. cover both books - showing that the two
constituted a single book when these notes were
made.

It is generally agreed among critics that E & N,
was originally part of the book of Chronicles - so
that the whole work was a complete history from
Adam down thru the Persian period - The content
& structure, the recurring use of odd words, & the
literary style - ~~discovered~~ beyond a doubt that
they were all edited by the same hand, the hand of
Ezra the scribe - insert

When I had finished reading the biblical books
Ez & Neh - I sought to set down just what
historic facts I had gleaned - I was confronted
with a strange tangle of events which could not be
put in logical sequence - My most reliable source
of critical information was not in the library -
he was speaking in ~~Boston~~ I think - but after consulting
~~other equally reliable~~ sifting & resifting & due help
from the ~~critical~~ ^{literary} commentary I was able to secure this

Chain of events—

The Persian Period extended from 538-332 B.C.E.—
 a period of 200 yrs— Even if every word in these
 books were authentic our knowledge would be
 meager— for while detailed information is given
 about specific events, each of which occupied
 but a short time— long periods are passed over
 in complete silence—

In the 1st year ^{date?} of the rule of Cyrus in Babylon ^{539 B.C.}
 he issued a decree authorizing, the Jewish exiles to
 return to Jerusalem & rebuild the Temple— He
 restored the sacred objects removed from the Temple by
 Nebuch—, gave them to Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah
 and he in company with a caravan of returning
 exiles carried them back to Jerusalem—
 What Zerubbabel & his followers did after their
 return to Jerusalem— we do not know— The account
 in the book of Ezra, of his rebuilding the Temple
 is discredited. He may have tried but his task
 was not easy— His followers were few in number—
 with no other resources for the colossal work
 than a few temple vessels & such meager funds
 as the Jewish exiles had seen fit to contribute.
 The people who did come with him were
 not the rich, they are never the 1st to emigrate—
 but the poor, who would of necessity be compelled
 to devote their energies to keep the wolf from the
 door—

In the succeeding rule of Darius. There was a change -
 to new government - a high priest Joshua full of zealous
 enthusiasm - at least two active prophets - Haggai & Zachariah
 and an ever increasing no. of returned exiles. Now the
 work could be carried on - The 1st step was the restoration
 of the altar to its ancient site. Attending the erection of
 the altar on the spot where our fathers had worshipped
 for many generations - the observance of the Passover
 festival - the resumption of sacrifice - & the fervent
 appeals of Haggai & Zachariah - sufficient enthusiasm
 was kindled to make the people feel the necessity
 of building a sanctuary - making possible the
 residence & work of an adequate priesthood -
 with blast of trumpet & prayerful thanks the foundation
 of the new temple was laid -

The Samaritans, a hybrid people, descendants of
 Israel who had mingled their blood with foreign
 colonists - whose religion was a corrupt monotheism
 marred by idolatrous practices - proffered assistance
 in the building of the Temple, claiming to be kinsmen -
 But they coupled with their offer a request to be
 one & the same people. There was a great deal of
 looseness in the religious practices of the Jews - who
 mingled with their foreign neighbors, much too freely -
 often to the extent of intermarriage - and if this offer
 had been accepted - a complete assimilation would
 have occurred - Joshua, - the high priest was particularly
 anxious to see the Temple restored as an effective
 move toward the preservation of a pure religion - It was

largely due to his⁵ influence that this tempting offer of assistance was refused -

The Samaritans now became bitter enemies of the Jews - & did all they could to hinder the work of building - They probably foresaw that the restoration of the Temple would bring with it a revival of some of the ancient city's prosperity - the attraction of the wall around would bring Jews from far & wide - and in this prospect they perceived a menace to their own position in Palestine - For in back of every hatred there is fear -

It is stated in Ezra that the Temple was completed in 4 years - 516 B.C. - Knowing what we do of temple building & considering the outside opposition to meager financial resources & lack of modern machinery - this seems an almost incredible short time for the ~~erection~~ ^{construction} of a suitable structure -

After the dedication of the Temple there is a silence of almost 60 yrs - The building of the Temple must have taxed these poor people - & a period of recuperation followed - When the curtain lifts again - the generation of Jerubbabab & Joshua of Haggai & Zachariah had passed away & those in whose hands the authority rested were no longer the stern religious zealots - These were weaker men eager to conciliate the neighboring peoples who were most unfriendly - It is in this period that the Book of Esther has its setting - & while it shows a few Jews high in the court

life of Persia - it also depicts an ugly story of the
inbred animosity of Persian officials against the
Jewish people -

In ancient times a city ^{without walls} could not prosper - Jerus.
with its scattered houses a sparse population was
easy prey to any belligerent force - Jerusalem
could not become a place worthy of its temple - &
of being the relig. center of the Jewish world unless
it was enclosed in walls -

464-424 BC
Early in the reign of Artaxerxes - a caravan of
exiles returned & immediately set to work to rebuild
the walls - Return, a Persian official issued a letter
relating the operations in Jerusalem and ~~warned the king~~
~~that such the walls were up his peaceful rule in the Judean province~~
~~that such the walls were up his peaceful rule in the Judean province~~
Artaxerxes who endorsed the charges & ordered all work of
the Jews to cease - The opposition force went to Jerus.
& destroyed the walls which had been almost completed -

Soon after this, certainly within 20 yrs - Nehemiah
a Jewish cupbearer cajoled the king into granting
permission ~~to him~~ to return to Jerusalem, as Governor
to rebuild the walls - Nehemiah a natural strategist
knowing the failure of his brethren a few years
before - screened his plans until time for action
came - He made no move until his plans could
be carried out speedily - so if another appeal
he made to Artaxerxes - by the time a reply could come -
his work would be complete & impregnable -

The walls were rebuilt in 52 days - it is said -
a most remarkable feat. The city once
fortified Neb. busied himself with political
& social reform -

He - passed laws abolishing usury -
" obtained from the moneylenders permission
to restore mortgaged property which had changed
hands -

He secured forgotten payment of tithes -

It is at this juncture that most authorities
agree - Ezra, priest & scribe made his appearance -
He received permission to return to Jerusalem with
full control over things religious - When he & his
followers met at the River Ahava, probably a
tributary to the Euphrates - he noted that there
were none of the priestly tribe in his following ^{of 1500} so he
induced 38 Levites to join his expedition. Observing a day
of fasting & prayer, this mighty pilgrimage made its
way to Jerusalem - Arriving there Ezra learned that a
large no. of people, including the priests had intermarried.
He bowed his head & wept - He could see ~~that~~ his
plan to glorify the house of God was quite hopeless -
He perceived that to maintain a temple ritual
required a people of pure blood - for assimilating
of a people inevitably leads to an assimilated
religion - He used the most drastic measures to check

intermarriage - He ⁸ insisted upon a policy of
repudiating all foreign wives - The people realizing
the wisdom of this move - followed the guidance
of their high priests - It was a triumphant ~~but~~
sad day in Jerusalem - ~~then families were torn~~
~~apart~~ ^{to}

Ezra was not only a wise ruler & a prudent
reformer - He was author & editor as well -
We know that Ezra was a Levite, who during
his years in Babylon was leader of a priestly
school - These schools were the reservoirs of all sacred
literature - which was a vast collection, containing
not only the historical books of the Pentateuch -
Joshua - Judges - Samuel - Kings - but also a vast
amount of poetic writings, as well as some of
the works of the prophets - The collecting &
transcribing & collating of these sacred books
belong to Ezra's time & the actual editor &
collector could be no other than Ezra - Working
to facilitate the study of the Law & other works
of his collection he undertook the task of
transcribing this literature from the old
Hebrew which was difficult to read to a
~~more~~ more modern, simpler form - He had
spent years of his life labouring over the

Law & when he took up his abode in Jerusalem - he collated such copies as he found there thus forming the text which our Bibles now contain -

Besides these labors of a pure literary character, Ezra was responsible for the organization of the great Synagogue - an assembly of 120 members of which Ezra was president. This group established the feast of Purim as a national holiday - issued decrees on all religious subjects - assigned portions of the Torah to be read on specified occasions - & also acted as a legal court where regular trials were held by him. Ezra established schools & specified the programs of these schools. He reinstated the practice of Sabbath observance - He made the Jews renew their ancient covenant with their God - & pledged themselves to live up to all the precepts contained within the Law. For his work as leader preacher & lawgiver - the rabbis are wont to call him our second Moses -

These books are saturated with a
God idea as no other history I have ever
read & Most remarkable of all - the people were
willing to make real sacrifices for this idea.
The knowledge of divine displeasure was
more unbearable to them than the ~~weapons~~ slings & arrows
of their enemy - These children of dust
were weak & err'd but a great spiritual
leader like Ezra could bring the word of
God to them & ~~the~~ ^{WRHS} could lead his teaching
& guidance - "Remember me, O my God for good -"
with the simple touching prayer

It is interesting to note how many of
the problems of those ancient days still exist.
lack of sabbath observance - intermarriage - temple
maintenance - ^{wicked} practices of money lenders & shark
extorting of tithes for charity - ~~even hostility to the Jews~~ ^{Really} There is little
difference between the Jewish problem of 512 BC &
1924 AD.
of other nations